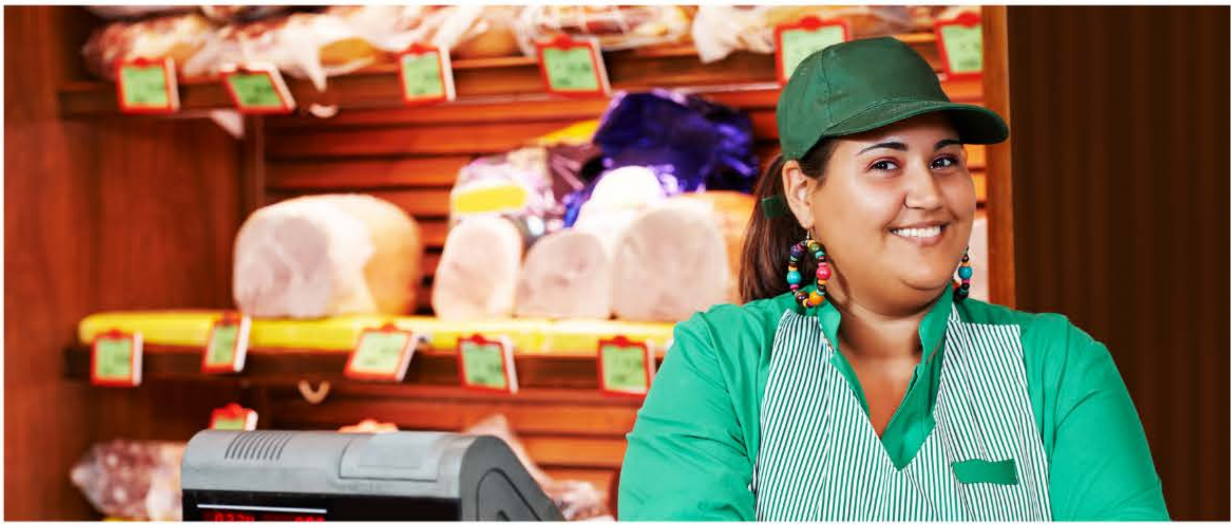
Southwest Alberta Regional Skills Study
Regional Report: Town of Cardston



September 2020

Acknowledgements

We take this opportunity to thank those that contributed to this important regional initiative, including local businesses, associations, organizations, job seekers, students, educators, and government representatives. Your input has been invaluable.

We would also like to thank the Southwest Alberta Regional Skills Study Partnership members that guided this project, composed of representatives from; SouthGrow Regional Economic Development, Lethbridge College, Economic Development Lethbridge, Community Futures Alberta Southwest, Vulcan County, Alberta Southwest Regional Alliance and Taber Economic Development.

The project is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of Alberta

Funded by:

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Glossary of Terms

AI: Artificial Intelligence

Apprenticeship: This form of training results in a skilled certification qualification, generally acquired through a combination of in-class and on-the-job learning.

Co-op: A Cooperative program (Co-op) combines classroom education with practical, structured work experience. It differs from the apprenticeship as it is usually facilitated through an educational institution.

Economic Development Officer: An employee that is responsible for planning, developing, coordinating, and implementing economic development policies, strategies, and initiatives that improve a community or region's economy.

Employability Skills: Skills needed to enter, stay, and progress in the world of work. Examples of Employability Skills include essential skills such as communication, personal management skills, and teamwork skills.

ESDC: Employment and Skills Development Canada

Internships: Internships are usually completed as part of the coursework, and students receive credit towards final program completion. They can be full time or part-time and can be paid or unpaid

LMI: Labour Market Information is intelligence that helps inform about the current job market in a geographic region, province, or nationally. It informs decisions by sharing information about jobs, companies, industries/sectors, wages, etc.

Micro-credentials: A single, shareable endorsement or attestation of a learner's achievement of specific knowledge, skills or even competencies. Some micro-credentials utilize a badge system.

NAICS: The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is the standard used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments to collect, analyze, and publish statistical data related to the economy.

NOC: The National Occupational Classification (NOC) system is a federal statistical standard used by federal agencies to classify workers into occupational categories to collect, calculate, or disseminate data.

SME: Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Study Area: For this study, the Southwest Alberta region (study area) is defined as the area spanning east of the BC border, south of Calgary, and west of Brooks.

Transferrable Skills: Transferable skills are any skills you possess that are useful to employers across various jobs and industries. These might include skills like adaptability, organization, teamwork, or other qualities employers seek in strong candidates.

Soft skills: The Collins English Dictionary defines soft skills as "desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive, flexible attitude.

Workforce/Labour Force: The people engaged in or available for work in the Study Area.

Preamble

The Southwest Alberta Region Skills Study Partnership is a collaboration between regional stakeholders to help identify regional skills and competency gaps and explore ways to address them. The partnership is made up of Lethbridge College, Alberta SouthWest, Economic Development Lethbridge, SouthGrow, Community Futures Alberta Southwest, Vulcan County and Town of Taber.

The Regional Skills Study is designed to support greater alignment between job vacancies of local employers with those looking for work. For this study, the Southwest Alberta region is defined as the area spanning east of the BC border, south of Calgary, and west of Brooks.

The final product is a strategy that offers tangible solutions to local challenges related to the labour market, ensuring that resources are being best allocated and that efforts are coordinated for maximum results. The overarching goal of this work is to ensure Southwest Alberta Region has a productive and valued workforce that meets the needs of local employers and contributes to the local and regional economic competitiveness today and into the future.

Emerging from this work will be a series of reports specific to:

- Southwest Alberta
- SouthGrow
- City of Lethbridge
- Town of Taber
- Vulcan County
- Town of Fort Macleod
- Town of Cardston

Methodology – Phased Approach

The first phase of the project included a full background review and situational analysis for the study area. This report included labour supply and demand projections, definitions of the focus sectors identified by the project team, the development of a lifestyle asset inventory and an analysis of the education pipeline and graduation rates in the region.

The second phase of the project focused on community engagement, which collected a wide range of inputs from approximately 780 individuals within Southwest Alberta. Activities included surveying the study areas business, and job seeker communities (delivered in two phases due to COVID-19 interruptions), stakeholder interviews, and a series of 6 workshops focused on key stakeholder groups, including industry and educators.

The third and final phase of the project combines data from the earlier phases into regional and community level skills reports. Seven reports have been developed in this phase for Southwest Alberta, SouthGrow, The City of Lethbridge, Town of Taber, Vulcan County, Fort Macleod and Cardston.

These regional and community level skills reports delve into three main areas:

- The economic context and projections for each region and community which provide a data-driven understanding of which sectors are projected to grow, decline, and require replacement workers due to retirements. This section also breaks down projected growth in targeted sectors identified by the project team, which include:

    - Renewable Energy
    - Agricultural Manufacturing
    - Other Manufacturing
    - Tourism
    - Transportation Logistics and Warehousing
    - Agriculture
    - Healthcare and Social Assistance

- The Education Pipeline and Graduation Rates/Patterns projected for each community are included to provide an understanding of the number of graduates projected in the region and their skill levels.
- The final section combines data from the previous sections to align the projected number of graduates and their skills levels to the projected labour demand looking out to 2025. This section identifies skills gaps or oversupply in each of the top occupations in the targeted sectors.

These profiles will support the development of the final deliverable, the Southwest Alberta Regional Skills Strategic action plan.

About the Data

Where does the data presented in this report come from?

MDB Insight Inc. gathers Statistical data from Manifold Data Mining; this tool use census data to calculate current year estimates with the following approaches: enhanced cohort survival methods, collaborative filtering techniques, and structural coherence techniques. The cohort survival method is used as a foundation for developing population forecasts. In addition to historical trends from 1991 to 2016, Manifold Data Mining considers the current birth and mortality rates, migration and immigration statistics, labour force activities and economic indicators. This tool has developed nonlinear modelling techniques for estimating other demographic variables and preserving the coherence structure in the census data.[1]

Other sources include the Canadian Business Counts and employment projection developed by metroeconomics.

About the Canadian Business Counts

Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Counts provides a record of business establishments by industry sector and size. This data is collected from the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA). The Canadian Business Counts data records business counts as either "Without Employees" or "With Employees." The establishments in the "Without Employees" category include the self-employed (i.e. those who do not maintain an employee payroll but may have a workforce consisting of contracted workers, family members or business owners). It should be noted that the Canadian Business Counts data use the Canada Revenue Agency as a primary resource in establishment counts; therefore, businesses without a business number or indicating annual sales less than $30,000 are not included.

This section includes all registered companies that have a Goods and Services Tax number, as registered through the Canada Revenue Agency. Results should not be compared directly to existing business directories in Ajax as the criteria for registering are different for both. The Canadian Business Counts data are used primarily so that comparisons can be made to the Provincial Distribution of businesses across the same categories. In some cases, companies are registered in a community but operate in another community in the proximity.

About the Employment Projections

Employment by industry in any given area can be decomposed into economic base jobs (those that drive the overall economy) and community base jobs (those that serve the local population). The population growth of an area typically depends on its potential for growth in economic base employment, while an area's growth in community base employment depends on its population growth. In recognition of this interdependence between population and employment growth, *metroeconomics* has developed a community-based projection system that takes account of the economic and demographic factors influencing an area's growth potential. The system takes these factors into account as follows:

[1] https://www.polarisintelligence.com/resources/

- The economic base of the community is identified through the de-composition of local jobs on a place of work basis by industry into those that are *economic base* jobs and those that are *community base* jobs; this is achieved using a location quotient process.
- Economic base industries produce goods and services consumed primarily by businesses or people outside of the local community; these industries – also called export-based industries – produce agriculture, mining or manufactured products for consumption elsewhere or provide tourism or higher-order education/health care services to visitors/temporary residents.
- The potential for growth of a local community's economic base jobs is identified through assessing how many such jobs exist today and how many might exist in the future, drawing on *metroeconomics*' extensive forecasts of economic base industrial job trends nation-wide and province-wide.
- An assessment is also made of the potential for residents to commute to jobs in nearby employment locations drawing on existing patterns and *metroeconomics*' base case forecasts of such jobs by sub-provincial areas across the country.
- The potential for job growth within the local area and job growth in nearby locations determines the potential for job growth among residents.
- The *metroeconomics* system ties this resident job growth potential to the demographic side of the community; if potential job growth among residents exceeds the current supply of workers (based on age and gender assessment of the current population, age-specific rates of labour force participation, the level of unemployment, and the need to replace retiring workers), in-migration occurs; thus job growth potential determines population growth potential recognizing that each new job-holding resident typically brings along one or two dependents.
- The system further takes into account the fact that each new resident job-holder increases the need for workers who service the local population – the community base jobs – and that these additional community base jobs, in turn, create the need for more workers, more residents, etc.
- Employed residents' growth, in other words, drives the community's net in-migration requirements, which, along with standard assumptions regarding fertility and mortality rates, provide the parameters needed to develop local area population projections by age and gender.
- Projected economic base jobs by industry are added to projected community base jobs by industry to determine the total number of jobs by place of work that will exist in the community in the decades ahead.

About the NOC Skill Levels – how NOCs are classified to a skill level

According to Statistics Canada[2], the skill level is defined first of all by the amount and type of education and training required to enter and perform the duties of an occupation. In determining skill level, the experience required for entry, and the complexity and responsibilities typical of an occupation are also considered in relation to other occupations. Four skill level categories are identified in the NOC. Each major, minor and unit group is assigned to one of the skill levels. The skill level categories are broad aggregates, reflecting four commonly accepted educational, training or preparatory routes for entering

[2] https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/subjects/standard/noc/2016/introductionV1.1

employment. Requirements for individual unit groups or occupations may overlap between the boundaries of the skill levels. For example, some occupations can be entered with either a university degree or a college diploma. When the entry requirements for a unit group or occupation reflect a range of possible educational and training specifications, skill level placement of the group was determined by considering several factors. These include the requirements most generally demanded by employers, the minor group context, complexity of overall responsibilities and knowledge requirements, as well as further training and specialization acquired on the job.

The classification describes the educational and training requirements for occupations. However, the education and experience of particular job incumbents may not correspond exactly to the level described. Individuals may be over-qualified for their work, or they may work in occupations for which the entry requirements have changed after they became employed.

It is important to note that the skill level categories are not intended to designate socio-economic status or prestige. Rather they are intended to reflect actual occupational entry requirements. These requirements are expressed in terms of the formal educational system and other types of training specified by employers. NOC skill level criteria are presented below:

Skill level A

- University degree (bachelors, masters or doctorate)

Skill Level B

- Two to three years of post-secondary education at community college, institute of technology or CÉGEP
- Two to five years of apprenticeship training
- Three to four years of secondary school and more than two years of on-the-job training, occupation-specific training courses or specific work experience
- Occupations with supervisory responsibilities are also assigned to skill level B.
- Occupations with significant health and safety responsibilities (e.g., firefighters, police officers and licensed practical nurses) are assigned to skill level B.

Skill level C

- Completion of secondary school and some short-duration courses or training specific to the occupation
- Some secondary school education, with up to two years of on-the-job training, training courses or specific work experience

Skill level D

- Short work demonstration or on-the-job training
- No formal educational requirements

1. Executive Summary – Town of Cardston Skills Profile

The Town of Cardston is located in the Southwest region of the study area and has 1.4% of the Study Area's total workforce as of 2018. The Town had a population of 3,731 in 2018 and is projected to grow by 14 residents by 2028.

Due to data suppression, 4-digit NAICS and NOCS labour force projections for the Town of Cardston are not available. At the 2-digit NAICS level, Cardston is projected to lose one net worker by 2025. This represents a decrease of 0.1% compared to the employment estimates in 2020. Most of the growth will take place in the transportation and warehousing, and educational services sectors. Meanwhile, most of the decrease will be seen in the utilities sector. The Southwest Region is projected to require a net total of 54 new workers by 2025. This growth represents 0.4% more than the employment estimates for 2020.

Engagement Findings

The Town of Cardston is a part of the Southwest Region, which is the most rural region in the study area and does not include large urban centres.
Key themes that emerged in the Southwest Region and specifically in Cardston included:

- COVID-19 has had a significant effect on the economy, causing businesses some business to change business hours and job seekers to change their approaches to employment and the sectors they are pursing
- The top workforce challenges for businesses in this region were the availability of qualified candidates, followed by the availability of affordable housing and the availability of childcare.
- The top three occupations/positions that Southwest businesses indicated they are likely to require included: cashiers/helpers/general labourers, sales/service workers and other technical occupations.
- Southwest businesses indicated that the most challenging attributes to hire or retain are employees with strong technology skills (e.g., computer literate), those that possess a strong drive and take the initiative and possess technical skills. These themes fit within the overall findings for the study area.
- 59% of business respondents in the Southwest indicated that they are not planning to hire new employees within the coming year, higher than the overall survey area results of 52%.
- 64% of respondents were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with the overall availability of qualified workers in line with the study area. 71% were satisfied with the availability of workers with the appropriate education compared to 56% satisfied by the availability of experienced workers and 64% satisfied with the availability of workers with the necessary soft skills.
- 51% were 'very dissatisfied' or 'somewhat dissatisfied' with the availability of a trained local workforce and 55% with the availability of a diverse workforce. Overall, these factors indicate that while are sufficient workers with the appropriate level of education, there is a disconnect with experienced and trained workers.

- Likelihood of staying in the Region – A majority of Southwest respondents (64%) indicated that difficulties with skilled labour retention or recruitment are 'likely,' 'somewhat likely,' or 'very likely' to influence their decision to stay in the Region.
- Job seekers indicated a lack of suitable job opportunities and a lack of adequately paying jobs as challenges in the region.
- The most requested educational/training services were computer education courses, promotion of existing training resources, and courses for skilled trades (e.g., heavy equipment operators).

Education Pipeline: Town of Cardston

During the last five years, an average of 216 students each year enrolled in grade 12 in the Town of Cardston. If the number of final-year secondary students remains constant for the next five years, this will result in approximately 1,082 new young workers graduating secondary school and beginning post-secondary education/training or entering the workforce. While the number of expected graduated higher than the anticipated demand for new workers in the Town, Cardston's ability to provide labour will depend on the career paths that these students pursue. To ensure that there is an adequate number of qualified individuals within each discipline, the Town will require a pipeline of young workers that is proportionate to the employment needs and opportunities in the local labour market.

Education Pipeline: SouthWest

The Southwest Alberta Region is part of the Lethbridge Service Area, which includes the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College.

- During the last five years, the University of Lethbridge has graduated 9,120 individuals, most of them in program bands such as business and languages, social sciences, arts, and humanities.
- Lethbridge College has graduated 7,541 individuals since 2015, most of these graduated in areas such as trade and technologies and health science.

Workforce Projections: SouthWest

Among all the sectors analyzed, health care is expected to have the highest projected demand by 2025. In total, the health care sector will require 45 new workers, followed by the agriculture sector, which will require 23 new workers. Over the next five years, if the current educational pipeline maintains its trends and the region is successful in retaining graduates, the Southwest should meet projected demand. However, the presence of graduates in the region does not mean they will remain to fill these projected jobs. The region should focus both on how to increase the supply of skilled workforce and connect these individuals with local opportunities to retain them. Cardston will have to make efforts to attract the needed talent to the community, against the trend of workforce shifting to larger centres.

COVID-19 is likely to have a depressing effect on many sectors in the short term; from the selected sectors, Tourism is expected to take the most significant hit. The other sectors are likely to see continued or increased growth, particularly healthcare, which has been stress tested throughout the pandemic.

The Southwest Region has a significant oversupply of new graduates in the target sectors identified in this study. However, many new graduates do not have the necessary soft skills employers require.

2. Community Economic Context and Projections

2.1 Labour Supply and Demand/Projections/and Assessment

2.1.1 Population Growth

According to Manifold Data Mining, in 2018, the town of Cardston had a population of approximately 3,731 people; this represents 2% of the Study Area's total population and 0.1% of Alberta's residents. During the next ten years, the town's population is expected to experience a small growth of 0.4%; this means that the Town of Cardston would gain 14 people by 2028. The town is expected to grow at a slower rate than the broader regions during the same time.

Figure 1: Population growth projections, 2018-2028

Year	Cardston	Study Area	Alberta
2018 Total population	3,731	206,271	4,417,880
2023 Total population	3,739	227,253	4,925,270
2028 Total population	3,745	250,136	5,490,940
10-year net change	14	43,865	1,073,060
10-year % change	0.4%	21%	24%

Source: Manifold Data Mining. 2018

2.1.2 Labour Force and Industry Sectors

In 2018, Cardston recorded a labour force of approximately 1,583 people; this represents 1% of the Study Area labour force. Due to data availability, it was not possible to calculate labour force growth for Cardston.

Figure 2: Labour Force Change, 2011-2018

Period	Cardston	Study Area	Alberta
Labour force 2018	1,583	108,281	2,559,960
Labour force 2011	Not available	80,455	2,115,640
% Change	Not applicable	Not applicable	21%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey | Manifold Data Mining Inc. 2018

Note: Highlighted figures have been calculated using data from limited communities. Do not use for labour growth analysis

Most of the labour force in the Town of Cardston is employed in sectors such as healthcare and social assistance (19%) and educational services (13%). Cardston has a larger share of the labour force employed in all the industries above in comparison to the Study Area and province.

Figure 3: Labour Force (15 years and over) Employed by Industry Sector (2-Digit NAICS)

2-Digital Labor Force	Cardston	Study Area	Alberta
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	3%	8%	3%
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	3%	3%	6%
22 Utilities	2%	1%	1%
23 Construction	9%	9%	10%
31-33 Manufacturing	5%	7%	6%
41 Wholesale trade	1%	3%	4%
44-45 Retail trade	9%	12%	11%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	3%	4%	5%
51 Information and cultural industries	0%	1%	2%
52 Finance and insurance	3%	3%	3%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	1%	1%	2%
54 Professional, scientific, and technical services	4%	4%	7%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0%	0%	0%
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	4%	4%	4%
61 Educational services	13%	8%	6%
62 Health care and social assistance	19%	13%	11%
71 Arts, entertainment, and recreation	3%	2%	2%
72 Accommodation and food services	5%	7%	7%
81 Other services (except public administration)	3%	5%	5%
91 Public administration	7%	5%	5%

Source: Manifold Data Mining. 2018

2.1.3 Labour Demand Projections

Metroeconomics have projected that that by 2025, approximately one job would be lost (net loss) in Cardston; this represents a decrease of 0.1% compared to the employment estimates in 2020. Most of the growth will take place in the transportation and warehousing, and educational services sectors. Meanwhile, most of the decrease will be seen in the utilities sector.

Figure 4: Employment Projections (Place of Work) by Industry Sector, 2020-2025

Industry Sector	2020	2025	Net Change	% Change
Total all industries	1,424	1,422	-1	-0.1%
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	42	43	1	2%
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0	0	0	N/A
22 Utilities	12	11	-1	-10%
23 Construction	71	71	0	-1%
31-33 Manufacturing	71	70	0	0%
41 Wholesale trade	24	22	-2	-9%
44-45 Retail trade	164	158	-7	-4%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	16	16	1	4%
51 Information and cultural industries	0	0	0	N/A
52 Finance and insurance	27	25	-1	-5%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	17	16	0	-1%
54 Professional, scientific, and technical services	47	45	-2	-4%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	64	64	0	0%
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	227	226	-1	0%
61 Educational services	381	395	14	4%
62 Health care and social assistance	25	26	0	1%
71 Arts, entertainment, and recreation	51	53	2	3%
72 Accommodation and food services	77	75	-2	-2%
81 Other services (except public administration)	109	107	-2	-2%

Source: metroeconomics 2020

2.2 Labour Profile and Sector Analysis

The Town of Cardston, along with the regional partners, identified the key industry sectors for the regional economy. These sectors are:

Sector	Total Labour	Total Businesses
Renewable Energy	23	2
Agricultural Manufacturing	3	0
Other Manufacturing	71	11
Tourism	139	39
Transportation Logistics and Warehousing	58	24
Agriculture	62	107
Healthcare and Social Assistance	306	48

This section will showcase the total labour force employed within these sectors and analyze the total number of businesses with employees in each of the industry subsectors.

Renewable Energy

A total of 23 residents were employed in the renewable energy sector; most of these people were employed in electric power generation, transmission, and distribution. In terms of businesses, a total of two companies were recorded in this sector in Cardston: all of them in the electric power generation, transmission, and distribution sector.

Figure 5: Labour Force and Business in Renewable Energy

NAICS	Labour Force	Total Businesses
2211 Electric Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution	17	2
3336 Engine, Turbine, and Power Transmission Equipment Manufacturing	6	0
5629 Remediation and Other Waste Management Services	0	0
Total	23	2

Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2018 | Statistics Canada; Canadian Business Counts, December 2019

Agricultural Manufacturing

A total of 3 residents were employed in the agricultural manufacturing sector; most of these people were employed in bakeries and tortilla manufacturing. In terms of businesses, Cardston did not record any businesses within agricultural manufacturing (as per Statistics Canada Business Counts methodology).

Figure 6: Labour Force and Business in Agricultural Manufacturing

NAICS	Labour Force	Total Businesses
3111 Animal food manufacturing	0	0
3112 Grain and oilseed milling	0	0
3113 Sugar and confectionery product manufacturing	0	0
3114 Fruit and vegetable preserving and specialty food manufacturing	0	0
3115 Dairy product manufacturing	0	0
3117 Seafood product preparation and packaging	0	0
3118 Bakeries and tortilla manufacturing	2	0
3119 Other food manufacturing	0	0
3121 Beverage manufacturing	1	0
3122 Tobacco manufacturing	0	0
Total	3	0

Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2018 | Statistics Canada; Canadian Business Counts, December 2019

Other Manufacturing

A total of 71 residents were employed in other manufacturing industries; most of these people were employed in cement and concrete product manufacturing (18). In terms of businesses, a total of 11 businesses were recorded in this sector in Cardston. Most of these businesses were in cement and concrete product manufacturing, and other fabricated metal product manufacturing.

Figure 7: Labour Force and Business in Other Manufacturing

NAICS	Labour Force	Total Businesses
3132 Fabric mills	0	0
3133 Textile and fabric finishing and fabric coating	0	0
3141 Textile furnishings mills	0	0
3149 Other textile product mills	0	1
3151 Clothing knitting mills	0	0
3159 Clothing accessories and other clothing manufacturing	0	0
3161 Leather and hide tanning and finishing	0	0
3162 Footwear manufacturing	0	0
3169 Other leather and allied product manufacturing	0	0
3211 Sawmills and wood preservation	0	0
3212 Veneer, plywood, and engineered wood product manufacturing	1	1
3219 Other wood product manufacturing	1	0
3221 Pulp, paper, and paperboard mills	0	0
3222 Converted paper product manufacturing	1	0
3231 Printing and related support activities	9	0
3241 Petroleum and coal products manufacturing	0	0
3251 Basic chemical manufacturing	0	0
3252 Resin, synthetic rubber, and artificial and synthetic fibres and filaments	0	0
3253 Pesticide, fertilizer, and other agricultural chemical manufacturing	0	0
3254 Pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing	1	0
3255 Paint, coating, and adhesive manufacturing	1	0
3256 Soap, cleaning compound and toilet preparation manufacturing	0	0
3259 Other chemical product manufacturing	9	0
3261 Plastic product manufacturing	1	0
3262 Rubber product manufacturing	1	0
3271 Clay product and refractory manufacturing	0	0
3272 Glass and glass product manufacturing	1	0
3273 Cement and concrete product manufacturing	18	3
3274 Lime and gypsum product manufacturing	0	0
3279 Other non-metallic mineral product manufacturing	0	1
3311 Iron and steel mills and ferro-alloy manufacturing	0	0
3312 Steel product manufacturing from purchased steel	0	0
3313 Alumina and aluminum production and processing	0	0
3314 Non-ferrous metal (except aluminum) production and processing	1	0
3315 Foundries	0	0
3321 Forging and stamping	0	0
3322 Cutlery and hand tool manufacturing	0	0
3323 Architectural and structural metals manufacturing	1	0
3324 Boiler, tank, and shipping container manufacturing	2	0
3326 Spring and wire product manufacturing	0	0
3327 Machine shops, turned product, and screw, nut, and bolt	0	0
3328 Coating, engraving, heat treating and allied activities	0	0
3329 Other fabricated metal product manufacturing	0	3

NAICS	Labour Force	Total Businesses
3331 Agricultural, construction and mining machinery manufacturing	0	0
3332 Industrial machinery manufacturing	0	1
3333 Commercial and service industry machinery manufacturing	0	0
3334 Ventilation, heating, A/C, and commercial refrigeration equip.	1	0
3335 Metalworking machinery manufacturing	1	0
3336 Engine, turbine, and power transmission equipment manufacturing	6	0
3339 Other general-purpose machinery manufacturing	0	0
3341 Computer and peripheral equipment manufacturing	0	0
3342 Communications equipment manufacturing	1	0
3343 Audio and video equipment manufacturing	0	0
3344 Semiconductor and another electronic component manufacturing	0	0
3345 Navigational, measuring, medical and control instruments	0	0
3346 Manufacturing and reproducing magnetic and optical media	0	0
3351 Electric lighting equipment manufacturing	0	0
3352 Household appliance manufacturing	0	0
3353 Electrical equipment manufacturing	0	0
3359 Other electrical equipment and component manufacturing	0	0
3361 Motor vehicle manufacturing	6	0
3362 Motor vehicle body and trailer manufacturing	0	0
3363 Motor vehicle parts manufacturing	2	0
3364 Aerospace product and parts manufacturing	2	0
3365 Railroad rolling stock manufacturing	0	0
3366 Ship and boat building	0	0
3369 Other transportation equipment manufacturing	0	0
3371 Household and institutional furniture and kitchen cabinet	1	0
3372 Office furniture (including fixtures) manufacturing	1	0
3379 Other furniture-related product manufacturing	0	0
3391 Medical equipment and supplies manufacturing	1	1
3399 Other miscellaneous manufacturing	1	0
Total	71	11

Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2018 | Statistics Canada; Canadian Business Counts, December 2019

Tourism

A total of 139 residents were employed in tourism-related industries; most of these people were employed in full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places (65 people), and other amusement and recreation industries (31 people). In terms of businesses, a total of 39 businesses were recorded in this sector in Cardston. Most of these businesses were full-service restaurants and limited service eating places (14), and traveller accommodation (7).

Figure 8: Labour Force and Business in Tourism Related Industries

NAICS	Labour Force	Total Businesses
4532 Office supplies, stationery, and gift stores	0	3
4811 Scheduled air transportation	0	0
4812 Non-scheduled air transportation	1	0
4821 Rail Transportation	10	0
4872 Scenic and sightseeing transportation, water	0	0
5615 Travel arrangement and reservation services	0	1
7111 Performing arts companies	0	2
7112 Spectator sports	0	2
7113 Promoters (presenters) of performing arts, sports, and similar events	4	1
7114 Agents and managers for artists, athletes, entertainers, and other public figures	0	0
7115 Independent artists, writers, and performers	0	2
7121 Heritage institutions	9	1
7131 Amusement parks and arcades	0	0
7132 Gambling industries	0	0
7139 Other amusement and recreation industries	31	3
7211 Traveller accommodation	17	7
7212 Recreational vehicle (RV) parks and recreational camps	0	3
7213 Rooming and boarding houses	2	0
7223 Special food services	0	0
7224 Drinking places (alcoholic beverages)	0	0
7225 Full-service restaurants and limited service eating places	65	14
Total	139	39

Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2018 | Statistics Canada; Canadian Business Counts, December 2019

Transportation Logistics and Warehousing

A total of 58 residents were employed in transportation logistics and warehousing industries; most of these people were employed in rail transportation (10 people), farm product merchant wholesalers (9 people), and couriers (9 people). In terms of businesses, a total of 24 businesses were recorded in this sector in Cardston. Most of these businesses were in lumber, millwork, hardware, and other building supplies merchant wholesalers (3) and general freight trucking (3).

Figure 9: Labour Force and Business in Transportation Logistics and Warehousing

NAICS	Labour Force	Total Businesses
4111 Farm product merchant wholesalers	9	0
4121 Petroleum and petroleum products merchant wholesalers	0	2
4131 Food merchant wholesalers	0	1
4132 Beverage merchant wholesalers	0	0
4133 Cigarette and tobacco product merchant wholesalers	0	0
4142 Home entertainment equipment and household appliance merchant wholesalers	0	0
4143 Home furnishings merchant wholesalers	0	1
4144 Personal goods merchant wholesalers	0	0
4145 Pharmaceuticals, toiletries, cosmetics, and sundries merchant wholesalers	0	0
4151 Motor vehicle merchant wholesalers	0	0
4152 New motor vehicle parts and accessories merchant wholesalers	0	1
4153 Used motor vehicle parts and accessories merchant wholesalers	0	0
4161 Electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies merchant wholesalers	0	1
4162 Metal service centres	0	0
4163 Lumber, millwork, hardware, and other building supplies merchant wholesalers	0	3
4171 Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment merchant wholesalers	8	1
4172 Construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment, and supplies merchant wholesalers	0	0
4173 Computer and communications equipment and supplies merchant wholesalers	0	0
4179 Other machinery, equipment, and supplies merchant wholesalers	0	1
4182 Paper, paper product and disposable plastic product merchant wholesalers	0	0
4183 Agricultural supplies merchant wholesalers	0	1
4184 Chemical (except agricultural) and allied product merchant wholesalers	0	0
4189 Other miscellaneous merchant wholesalers	0	1
4191 Business-to-business electronic markets, and agents and brokers	0	2
4811 Scheduled air transportation	0	0
4812 Non-scheduled air transportation	1	0
4821 Rail Transportation	10	0
4841 General freight trucking	8	3
4842 Specialized freight trucking	5	1
4851 Urban transit systems	0	0
4852 Interurban and rural bus transportation	0	0
4853 Taxi and limousine service	0	0
4854 School and employee bus transportation	3	0
4855 Charter bus industry	0	1

NAICS	Labour Force	Total Businesses
4859 Other transit and ground passenger transportation	0	1
4862 Pipeline transportation of natural gas	0	0
4869 Other pipeline transportation	0	0
4871 Scenic and sightseeing transportation, land	0	0
4872 Scenic and sightseeing transportation, water	0	0
4881 Support activities for air transportation	0	0
4882 Support activities for rail transportation	0	0
4883 Support activities for water transportation	0	0
4884 Support activities for road transportation	2	0
4885 Freight transportation arrangement	0	0
4889 Other support activities for transportation	0	0
4911 Postal service	1	0
4921 Couriers	9	0
4922 Local messengers and local delivery	1	1
4931 Warehousing and storage	1	1
5615 Travel arrangement and reservation services	0	1
Total	58	24

Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2018 | Statistics Canada; Canadian Business Counts, December 2019

Agriculture

A total of 62 residents were employed in agriculture industries, most of these people were employed in farms - except greenhouses and aquaculture (33 people), and aquaculture (10 people). In terms of businesses, a total of 107 businesses were recorded in this sector in Cardston. Most of these businesses were farms - except greenhouses and aquaculture (97), and support activities for farms (6).

Figure 10: Labour Force and Business in Agriculture

NAICS	Labour Force	Total Businesses
1110 Farms (except Greenhouses and Aquaculture) (1111 to 1124 and 1129)	33	97
1114 Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production	0	0
1125 Aquaculture	10	0
1141 Fishing	1	0
1142 Hunting and trapping	0	1
1150 Support activities for farms (1151 and 1152)	1	6
1153 Support activities for forestry	0	0
4111 Farm product merchant wholesalers	9	0
4131 Food merchant wholesalers	0	1
4132 Beverage merchant wholesalers	0	0
4133 Cigarette and tobacco product merchant wholesalers	0	0
4171 Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment merchant wholesalers	8	1
4183 Agricultural supplies merchant wholesalers	0	1
Total	62	107

Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2018 | Statistics Canada; Canadian Business Counts, December 2019

Healthcare and Social Assistance

A total of 306 residents were employed in the healthcare and social assistance sector; most of these people were employed in nursing and residential care facilities (87 people), and individual and family services (52 people). In terms of businesses, a total of 48 businesses were recorded in this sector in Cardston. Most of these businesses were offices of physicians (12) and offices of other health practitioners (11).

Figure 11: Labour Force and Business in Healthcare and Social Assistance

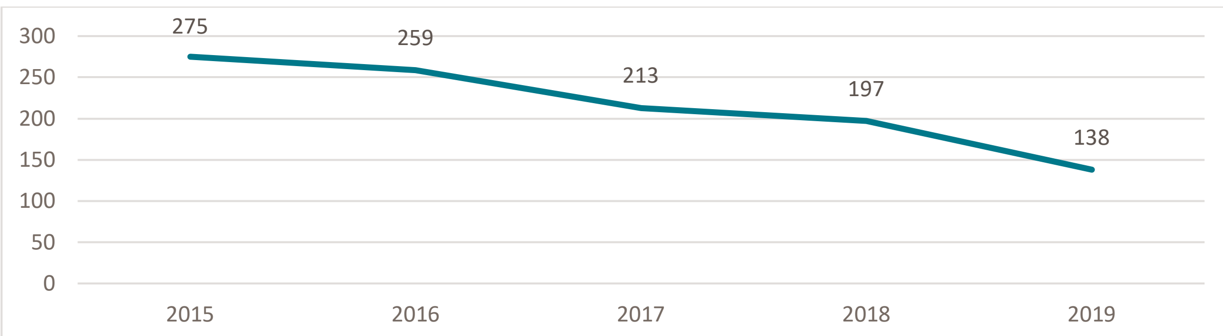
NAICS	Labour Force	Total Business
6211 Offices of Physicians	14	12
6212 Offices of Dentists	29	8
6213 Offices of Other Health Practitioners	35	11
6214 Out-patient care centres	11	1
6215 Medical and Diagnostic Laboratories	1	1
6216 Home Health Care Services	5	0
6219 Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	19	0
6220 Hospitals (6221 to 6223)	33	2
6230 Nursing and residential care facilities (6231 to 6239)	87	3
6241 Individual and Family Services	52	1
6242 Community Food and Housing, and Emergency and Other Relief Services	0	1
6243 Vocational Rehabilitation Services	0	1
6244 Child day-care services	20	7
Total	306	48

Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2018 | Statistics Canada; Canadian Business Counts, December 2019

2.3 Education Pipeline and Graduation Rates/Patterns

During the last five years, an average of 216 students per year have enrolled in grade 12 in schools within the town of Cardston. The data shows a decline in the number of grade 12 enrollments from 2015 to 2019. If the number of final-year secondary students remains constant for the next five years, this will result in approximately 1,082 new young workers graduating secondary school and beginning post-secondary education/training or entering the workforce. While the number of expected graduated higher than the anticipated demand for new workers in the town, Cardston's ability to provide labour will depend on the career paths that these students pursue. To ensure that there is an adequate number of qualified individuals within each discipline, the town will require a pipeline of young workers that is proportionate to the employment needs and opportunities in the local labour market.

Figure 12: Grade 12 Enrollment in the Town of Cardston 2015-2019



Source: Alberta Open Data. https://open.alberta.ca/opendata/high-school-enrollments-by-municipality

In terms of post-secondary graduates, the data was divided into college graduates and university graduates to identify those individuals within the skill levels better A (university education) and B (college education). The data presented bellow identifies individuals who completed a program at a public post-secondary institution in the Lethbridge Service Area (Figure 15). These institutions include the University of Lethbridge and the Lethbridge College.

University Education

Most of the individuals who graduated from the University of Lethbridge between 2014 and 2019 obtained a degree in business, followed by languages, social sciences, arts, and humanities.

Figure 13: Estimates of numbers of graduates - University of Lethbridge (2014 to 2019)

Program Band	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	Total
Business	470	461	473	448	409	2,261
Education	239	245	252	226	249	1,211
Health Science	383	381	324	317	332	1,737
Languages, Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities	457	458	428	414	424	2,181
Legal & Security	0	0	0	0	0	0
Physical, Natural & Applied Sciences	235	242	251	266	266	1,260
Recreation	95	94	99	90	92	470
Trades & Technologists	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,879	1,881	1,827	1,761	1,772	9,120

Source: LERS Cubes

College Education

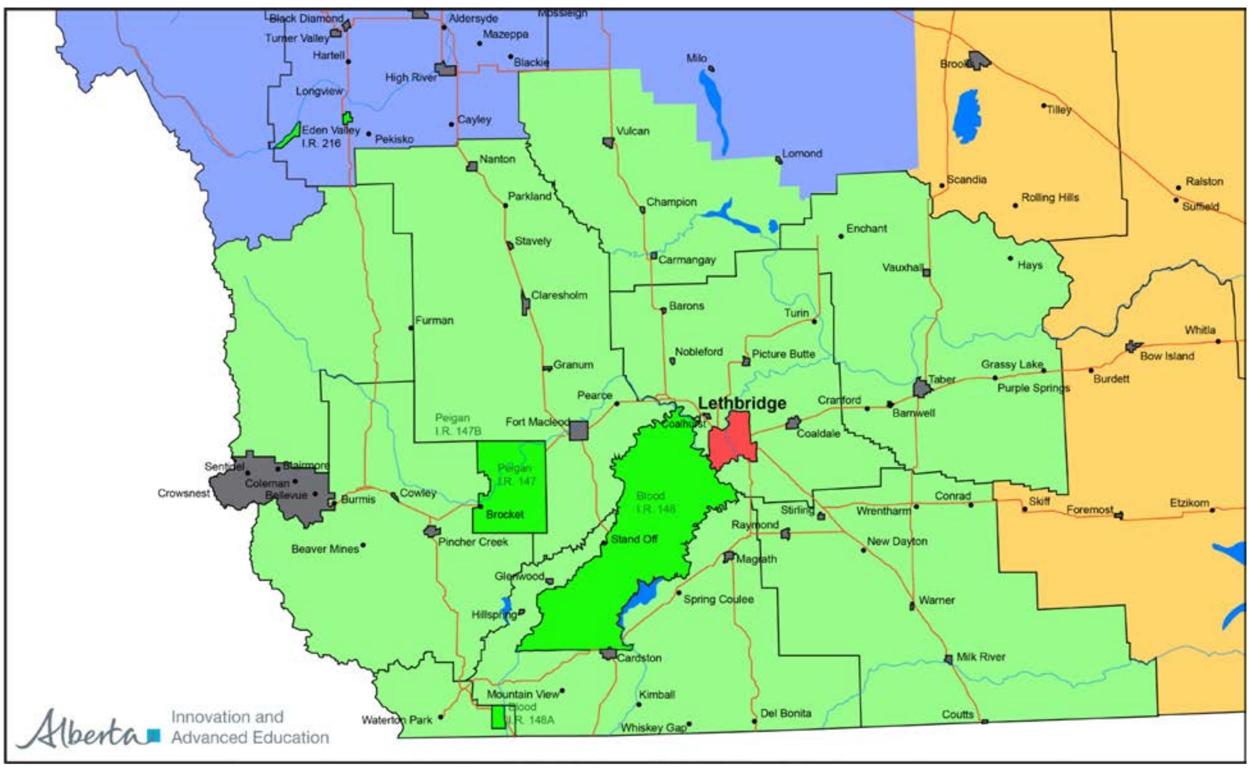
Most of the individuals who graduated from Lethbridge College between 2014 and 2019 obtained a diploma in trades and technologies, followed by health science, and legal and security.

Figure 14: Estimates of numbers of graduates – Lethbridge College (2014 to 2019)

Program Band	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	Total
Business	161	148	162	137	148	756
Education	12	21	38	47	39	157
Health Science	362	336	313	308	363	1,682
Languages, Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities	229	159	186	164	197	935
Legal & Security	200	144	211	220	302	1,077
Physical, Natural & Applied Sciences	183	181	192	212	239	1,007
Recreation	16	15	20	18	18	87
Trades & Technologists	393	396	378	361	312	1,840
Total	1,556	1,400	1,500	1,467	1,618	7,541

Source: LERS Cubes

Figure 15: Lethbridge Service Area – Innovation and Advanced Education Alberta



Source: Alberta Ministry of Innovation and Advanced Education

3. Community Engagement

Engagement activities were designed to encourage participants across Southwest Alberta to share their experiences and insights related to workforce issues and challenges, and gaps and opportunities that would improve the region's positioning in having a strong pipeline of talent. The comments in this section reflect the views, perceptions, and opinions as received. They have not been vetted for accuracy, instead reflect individual participant perspectives and viewpoints. Insights gathered, and conclusions drawn from the engagement and consultation activities reflect the collective responses. They should not be taken as generalizations about all employers or job seekers within the study area.

A wide range of inputs from approximately 780 individuals in the Study Area has helped form this local consultation and engagement report. Drawing from the extensive consultative initiatives that were held between February and June 2020, this report offers a synopsis of the emerging themes and priorities that have evolved through a comprehensive analysis of all inputs relating to Carston. It is these themes and priorities that reflect the perceptions of participants.

Each section below highlights the themes most relevant to Southwest Alberta. Themes related to the Town of Cardston have been included where possible. For the full engagement report, see the Southwest Alberta Regional Skills Study Consultation Input Summary Report.

3.1 Business Telephone Survey

Employer surveys were completed across the Southwest Region through direct telephone interviews and supplemented with an online web link to allow for flexible participation. The activity was interrupted and delayed as a result of COVID-19 emergency measures causing businesses to close temporarily. This resulted in the data collection being separated into two parts. Part one ran until mid-March, resulted in 309 completes. To achieve the goal of 400 total completes, the survey was relaunched in late May, resulting in an additional 95 completes, surpassing our goal. The part two survey was revised to include several COVID-19 specific questions to inform how the pandemic has influenced skills requirements. The surveys probed workforce demand, skills need, challenges, and immigration considerations. The part one survey collected 41 responses from Southwest businesses: part two, totalled six businesses for a total of 47. The part one survey included three respondents from the Town of Cardston, three in part two for a total of six. Due to the low response rates, no separate analysis was conducted.

The purpose of this section of the report is to highlight key insights from the survey that are relevant to Southwest Alberta.

3.1.1 Local Employer Survey Part 1

NOTE: Numbers of respondents varied per question, causing a variance in the number of businesses noted in question analysis.

Profile of Local Businesses and Employees

- **Business location –** Out of the 309 business survey respondents, 41 were located within the Southwest region 3 in Cardston. 95% reported being locally owned and operated, 10% higher than the total study area.

- **Years of operation –** 81% of respondents stated they had been operating for more than ten years. Four respondents indicated that they were new businesses in operation for 1 to 5 years. The last four have been in operation between 6-10 years.
- **Industry type –** Out of the 41 businesses that identified themselves as operating within the Southwest region, the top two industry types included: agriculture (15%), healthcare and social assistance (12%). Note, 61% of respondents indicated 'other' as their response, which included business in the oil and gas, accounting, and retail sectors.
- **Total number of employees –** 73% of Southwest respondents are small businesses, with 1 to 10 employees.
- **High level of business satisfaction** – Overall, 90% of respondents indicated that they were either 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with operating a business in the Southwest Alberta region, slightly lower than the study area.

Key Business Talent Attraction and Retention Satisfaction Indicators

- **Key challenges related to recruiting, hiring, and retaining employees –** 49% of businesses indicated they have experienced difficulties recruiting or retaining talent; of these, 90% of respondents indicated that the availability of qualified candidates was either 'a significant' or 'somewhat of a challenge.' The top workforce challenges identified were the availability of affordable housing (45%), ageing workforce/retirements (40%) and the availability of childcare (35%).
- **Difficult skills, knowledge, and abilities to hire or retain –** Southwest businesses indicated that the most challenging attributes to hire or retain are employees with strong technology skills (e.g., computer literate), those that possess a strong drive and take the initiative and possess technical skills. These themes fit within the overall findings for the study area.
- **12-month hiring intentions –** 59% of respondents from Southwest indicated that they are not planning to hire new employees within the coming year, higher than the overall survey area results of 52%.
- **In-demand occupations/positions –** The top three occupations/positions that businesses in Southwest indicated they are likely to require included: sales/service workers, cashiers/helpers/general labourers and other technical occupations.
- **Level of satisfaction regarding workforce development –** 64% of respondents were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with the overall availability of qualified workers in line with the study area. 71% were satisfied with the availability of workers with the appropriate education compared to 56% satisfied by the availability of experienced workers and 64% satisfied with the availability of workers with the necessary soft skills.
    - 51% were 'very dissatisfied' or 'somewhat dissatisfied' with the availability of a trained local workforce and 55% with the availability of a diverse workforce. Overall, these factors indicate that while are sufficient workers with the appropriate level of education, there is a disconnect with experienced and trained workers.
- **Likelihood of staying in the Region –** A majority of Southwest respondents (64%) indicated that difficulties with skilled labour retention or recruitment are 'likely,' 'somewhat likely,' or 'very likely' to influence their decision to stay in the Region.

Support Requirements

- **Needed educational/training services –** More computer education courses, promotion of existing training resources, and courses for skilled trades (e.g., heavy equipment operators) were the key themes that emerged from the Southwest survey data. Overall, some respondents felt there are lots of training services in the Region, and others felt there is a lack of them. This may indicate a lack of awareness of what support is available.
- **A tendency to hire local talent –** 39% of Southwest respondents indicated that they recruit labour from outside of the Region, indicating a trend to hire local talent. When hiring outside of the Region, other areas in Alberta is the most common choice, followed by BC and Saskatchewan.
- **Limited R&D investments within Southwest –** 68% of respondents indicated that they do not allocate any percentage of revenue towards R&D activities. Of those firms that do engage with R&D, 20% spend less than 10% of total revenue.
- **Talent retention and recruitment should be prioritized in this strategy –** The top three labour force issues identified by businesses were the retention of talent, a better understanding of what the Region has to offer and recruitment of talent to the area.
- **Current employee retention and attraction tactics –** Employers noted that the most common way they attract or retain employees is through financial benefits such as above-average wages, better benefits, or investments in ongoing training. Some companies also mentioned providing excellent work environments or flexible work hours. These themes are in line with the overall study area.
- **Spending on professional development activities –** Of those respondents who knew their professional development spend, 17% of SouthWest respondents indicated that they do not spend anything. Of those that do spend money on professional development, most (72%) spend between $1 and $1,000 on development activities. When asked what they expect their professional development spend to total the following five years, 32% of respondents felt that it would increase, whereas 49% felt it would remain the same.
- **Southwest businesses encourage employee training and development –** 83% of Southwest respondents indicated that they ‘strongly agree’ or ‘somewhat agree’ that they encourage and support employees that want to learn new skills by helping them complete accredited training programs.

Hiring Immigrant Workers

Only four respondents from the Southwest region completed the immigration questions in the survey, which was not enough to develop statistically significant data. Results from the entire study area are below.

- **Nearly half of the respondents saw no barriers to hiring immigrants (45%)**
- **Barriers identified -** The most mentioned barriers to hiring immigrants were ESL/Language, followed by concerns regarding the qualification’s professional designations.
- **Training and Support to increase immigrant hiring** – The most mentioned supports required were improved access to language and culture training, followed by strategies to create and maintain a diverse workforce.

- **Businesses preferred method to obtain support and information** – The most preferred methods were sharing of best practices, workshops, ESL providers and mentorship from other employers.

3.1.2 Local Employer Survey Part 2

Only six respondents from the Southwest region completed the local employer survey part 2, which was not enough to develop statistically significant data. For the results from the entire study, see the Southwest Alberta Regional Skills Study Consultation Input Summary Report.

3.2 Job Seeker Survey

The survey targeted job seekers that were unemployed, underemployed, or employed and looking for new opportunities. The survey was available through a web-based linked and resulted in 56 online completes in Part 1, which launched in early March and closed in mid-March. For the relaunch in late May, the survey was revised to include additional questions focused on COVID-19 impacts. Part two resulted in 215 completes for a total of 271 completed surveys. The Southwest Alberta Skills Partnership organizations promoted the survey broadly across the region to maximize awareness and engagement and offered a prize draw to promote participation.

3.2.1 Job Seeker Survey Part 1

An online survey was advertised to Job seekers in Southwest Alberta in March 2020. The survey ended with one response recorded for Cardston.

Some key points identified from the overall study area included the following:

- **Job seekers' current job status:** The largest proportion of respondents are currently working in a management or a cashier/helper/labourer role, and 75% of them are making less than $35 an hour.
- **Job seekers view of the job market:** If respondents could work in any industry, 22% are not sure where they would like to work. When looking at job seekers' view of the job market, respondents often feel there are relevant educational programming and poor or fair jobs that match their skillset.
- **Job seekers view the job search support system:** Jobseeker respondents primarily use online job boards such as indeed and Workopolis for their job search and rely on job description information and employer websites to decide on their career paths. A large proportion of them use federal and provincial government websites to find relevant labour market information and do not work with an employment service organization.
- **Job seekers' view on skills and training**: A large portion of job seeker respondents feel access to opportunities and career/employment counselling would help them achieve their full employment potential. They also feel on the job training and a professional designation would enhance their employability.

3.2.2 Job Seeker Survey Part 2

An online survey was advertised to Job seekers in the Southwest Region in June 2020. The survey ended with 15 responses recorded for Cardston. Respondents were asked about their perceptions of the local labour market and the available jobs in the Southwest Region.

Cardston made up 83% of the respondents contributing to the results of the Southwest Survey. Some key points that the responses identified in the Southwest survey included the following:

Implications of COVID-19

- 83% of respondents mentioned they were very likely or likely going to consider employment in occupations that they may not have considered in the past.
- The most mentioned sectors seeing an increase in job postings post COVID-19 were food services (39%), healthcare (33%) and agriculture (11%).
- 33% of respondents feel no sectors had increased postings.
- Furthermore, 33% of respondents are temporarily or permanently laid off, and 22% have had their hours reduced.

Profile of Job Seekers:

- A large proportion (50%) of respondents are aged between 25-44 and would be considered a part of the core workforce in the Southwest region. 28% of respondents were over the age of 55.
- 72% of respondents have lived in the Southwest for longer than ten years. 67% of respondents have lived in the city for over 20 years.
- 17% of respondents had a university degree, and 83% of respondents had education beyond a high school diploma.

Employment Characteristics of Job Seekers:

- 33% of respondents were employed in this second wave survey.
- 78% of respondents were seeking new/additional employment.
- On the other hand, 60% of respondents are considering moving out of the Southwest Alberta Region to secure employment.
- 60% of respondents have been actively seeking employment for less than six months.

Job seekers current job status:

- The most significant proportion of respondents are currently working in skilled trades (17%) or a cashier/helper/labourer role (17%).
- 86% of respondents are making less than $35/hour in the overall study area.

Job seekers view of the job market:

- The majority of respondents feel there are poor or fair jobs that match their skillset (56%), opportunities to enhance their skillset (56%), relevant education programs (61%), employment assistance services (72%), and adequately paying jobs (56%).
- Most job seekers in the Southwest region mentioned the following sectors have a significant or somewhat of a factor in hindering their ability to get a job: A lack of suitable job opportunities (mentioned as a significant or somewhat of a factor by 94% of respondents), a lack of adequately paying jobs (65%) and their age (47%).

- One respondent from Cardston also mentioned their criminal history is hindering their ability to get a job.

Job seekers view on the job search support system

- The majority of Jobseeker respondents rely on word of mouth (78%), online job boards (72%), social media or online job boards such as indeed and Workopolis (67%) when looking for a job.
    - A respondent from Cardston also mentioned the WCB job search program
- They also rely on job description information (mentioned by 50% of respondents), wage rates and benefits (mentioned by 44% of respondents) and job/resume banks (mentioned by 44% of respondents) to decide on their career paths.
- A large proportion of them use federal government websites (mentioned by 39% of respondents) and local business associations (mentioned by 33% of respondents) to find relevant labour market information and do not work with an employment service organization (83%).

Job seekers view on skills, training, and local support:

- A large portion of job seeker respondents feels access to opportunities (mentioned by 72% of respondents) and skills training (mentioned by 39% of respondents) would help them achieve their full employment potential.
- Many respondents also feel a certification (mentioned by 56% of respondents), essential skills (mentioned by 39% of respondents) and a college diploma (mentioned by 39% of respondents) would enhance their employability.

3.3 Key Informant Interviews

A total of 35 key informant interviews were completed with identified stakeholders throughout the region; these included educational representatives, businesses, immigration service providers, local government, and workforce service providers. Four individuals were interviewed from the SouthWest region, one from Cardston and three from Fort MacLeod.

3.3.1 Employers Point of View on the Local Regional Skills Gap

Economy in transition has a ripple effect

The loss of manufacturing jobs and the downturn in traditional oil and gas has been detrimental to associated service sectors, such as agri-food, IT, and others. As a result, jobs in some industries have moved out of province, so luring highly qualified employees back from further afield is very difficult.

Difficulty finding workers

Employers described the job market as tight, with a lack of qualified individuals to draw from. One established small business felt comfortable with the workers on staff but expressed concern that he had no training institution to assist him. A health care employer expressed concern about burn-out among existing workers due to the economies of scale of expanding services in a small community. One employer is interviewing international candidates and from Toronto because graduates from nearby universities were "OK, not great."

Work ethic and training quality

Employers acknowledged a general lessening of work ethic among job seekers, although expressing concern that their employers are abusing some young people while other young people "act like King Tut." Another employer voiced concern about the quality of education and training students were receiving. There is more demand for jobseekers to have a degree or diploma, but even if they do have the papers, they are not necessarily ready to work. One employer expressed concern that a worker could do an excellent job if they are balancing two or three responsibilities simultaneously.

3.3.2 Job Seekers Point of View on the Local Regional Skills Gap

Lack of full-time opportunities

People are working two or three part-time jobs to make ends meet, which empties the pool of qualified candidates.

Cost of training

Jobseekers are challenged to pursue the right education stream for full-time jobs, without going into debt with tuition. Education is costly, and many jobs require specific degrees or certificates that demand individual prerequisites. Jobseekers are concerned the jobs will be gone by the time they complete their training.

Quality of life is good, but

Many students and job seekers from other parts of Canada like the area and want to stay, but the length of contracts and hours available is a limiting factor. Eventually, they need to move to a community where employers provide a much more stable income. Then they can consider buying a house or taking a loan, something they cannot do on part-time hours.

3.3.3 Education and Training – Challenges and Opportunities

Challenge – Education institutions are disconnected from industry

Employers felt the education system is failing employers and job seekers in terms of a lack of career fairs, job placements, field trips to universities and colleges, and generally enhancing communication between those who train and those who employ. Some felt criteria and guidelines for programs developed by the education system do not meet the needs of employers.

Challenge – Who does what

Interviewees felt there were a variety of solutions and opportunities to assist employers and jobseekers but seemed confused about who was responsible. A general lack of leadership, collaboration, and understanding of the next steps were evident.

Opportunity – On the job experience

Stakeholders felt the focus should be placed on trying to get new graduates as much as experience and opportunity as possible. Students should be provided on-the-job experience while they are still in school. Employers should be asked to provide input into these programs, so they see the graduate as employable when they are being considered for a job.

Opportunity – Incentives for employers to hire full-time

Interviewees encouraged the government to find ways for employers to provide full-time jobs for job seekers, as opposed to casual workers. Also, providing incentives and highlighting the benefits of living and working in rural Alberta could help draw more jobseekers

3.4 Regional Roundtables

To facilitate direct input from regional representatives with a wide variety of perspectives on workforce development, six roundtables were conducted with a focus on industry, education, and immigration. Efforts were made to include geographic representation from SouthGrow, Southwest, and Lethbridge. Discussions informed on the labour market situation and talent pipeline in the Region.

3.4.1 Educator Roundtable

An education roundtable was conducted via Zoom to gather perspectives from education and training representatives on the labour market situation and talent pipeline in the Region. A total of 12 individuals participated in this session. Key themes included:

- COVID-19 is creating a great deal of uncertainty, creating high unemployment, and shifting the skills required by employers
- Improving accessibility to training through micro-credentialing and encouraging employers to invest in training is a primary focus
- There is broad consensus that youth need to have more opportunities for experiential learning, including tours, co-ops, and internships
- Participants agreed that new graduates are having difficulty articulating soft skills and experience when they apply for their first job, making it more difficult for them to find employment

According to educators, the top challenges facing employers are:

- Soft Skills, disconnect between employers and job seekers, COVID Uncertainty and Difficulty clarifying soft skills and experience
- The top challenges the education sector is facing are:
- Funding, New program competencies in skills areas, Employers not funding professional development
- There is a consensus that due to lack of funding and the need to be more effective, education institutions will need to work together with industry to:
    - Develop and access LMI, including alumni tracking
    - Provide more up to date, flexible and online programming
    - Connect Students to jobs by making them aware of the opportunities
    - Improve Experiential Learning
    - There is a consensus that a wide variety of excellent programs are available but not always easy to access or do not have broad awareness, highlighting the need for improved LMI and coordination

3.4.2 Industry Roundtables

An Industry roundtable was completed with identified stakeholders throughout the Region.

Top Workforce Challenges Employers are Facing:

- Lack of Soft Skills
- Wages and the high expectations of new graduates
- Recruitment and attracting workforce to the Region is difficult, lack of awareness of the area and what it has to offer in both lifestyle and work opportunities
- Continuous learning access and support
- Transition Training
- The ratio of new grads to retirees is concerning to several businesses, particularly in the trucking industry

- Micro credentialing, including a system of recognition of soft skills, was an area of interest for the employers
- Lack of awareness of all the programming and supports that exist in the Region
- A clear desire to collaborate more closely with Secondary and Post Secondary institutions to improve student awareness of local opportunities, career pathways and experiential learning
- A desire to make the process of connecting with students more accessible and less labour intensive
- Employers would like to see KPI's relating to post-secondary outcomes, placements, and retention in the Region
- Employers are also interested in collaborating on training to make it more accessible locally at a lower cost, particularly in LEAN Manufacturing
- Employers suggested making co-ops mandatory

Positions Employers are having difficulty filling

Sheet metal mechanics, Engineers, Technologists, Production Staff (Technology Ready), Management, LEAN Trained, Mechanical Millwrights, Qualified truckers

- Skills Gaps Employers are facing
    - Leadership, Communication, Continuous Learning mindset, Divers Licenses, Soft Skills, Digital Literacy (HTML)
    - People who can code or do programming and design websites etc. and people who are competent using a computer and using software related to their job.

3.4.3 Immigration Roundtables

Working in collaboration with Lethbridge Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) / Lethbridge Family Services, two roundtables were conducted via Zoom. The first session engaged immigrant-serving organizations and some local businesses to gather perspectives on immigrant integration to the workplace and into the community. The second session engaged new immigrants to the Region. A total of 20 individuals participated in these sessions.

Themes from the First Session with Support Providers

- The service providers agree there are significant barriers to attracting and retaining immigrants in the Southwest Alberta Region
- There are a wide variety of services available to support both businesses and immigrants, but there have been disconnects in both awareness and access
- There is a desire to collaborate and engage with additional partners to improve services and access

Themes from the First Session with Support Providers

- Newcomers are facing barriers in getting jobs and integrating into Southwest Alberta, including:
  - ESL, getting the first job and recognized Canadian experience or references and recognition of skills as compared to credentials
- Supports Requested include:
  - Improved access to existing services, transition programming, career bridging, job shadowing and resume writing
- Participants would like to encourage employers to be more open to hiring immigrants and have more inclusive corporate cultures
- Continue to promote and make information more accessible to the immigrant community

4. Aligning Talent Supply and Demand

Due to data suppression, specific projections for talent requirements were unavailable for the Town of Cardston. The section below showcases the labour force gaps identified in the SouthWest region, which includes the Town of Cardston.

4.1 Local Labour Force Analysis

This section examines the top 10 occupations employed in each identified industry sector, as well as the employment projections for these occupations, the skill level required according to Stats Canada, and the current pipeline of workers, to identify the labour skill gaps. This analysis only considers individuals graduating from post-secondary institutions in the Lethbridge Service Area, and high-school students enrolled in grade 12 in regional schools. Occupations under the skill level A are matched to university graduate number, skill level B to college graduates, and skill level C and D are matched to the grade 12 enrollment number.

Renewable Energy

Based on retirements and economic activity, it is projected that the renewable energy sector will require a total of four new workers by 2025. Considering only the individuals graduating from post-secondary institutions in the Lethbridge Service Area, it is evident that if the graduate numbers trend continues, workers graduating just from Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge could meet the demand for workers in the top in-demand occupations in the renewable energy sector. However, it is recognized that graduates are mobile and may not remain in the community post-graduation. This suggests an opportunity to engage graduates further, and promote the assets of the Region, as a means of retaining them upon graduation.

Due to data limitations, projections for specific occupations were not available.

Figure 16: Labour Force Demand – Renewable Energy

NOC	2025 Projection Demand	Skill Level
Total (All NOC in Renewable Energy)	4	N/A

Source: metroeconomics | LERS Cubes | Alberta Open Data

Agricultural Manufacturing

The agricultural manufacturing sector will grow by a total of seven workers by 2025. Considering only the unique individuals graduating from post-secondary institutions in the Lethbridge Service Area, and individuals enrolling in grade 12 in local high schools. It is evident that if the graduate numbers trend continues, the pipeline of workers could meet the demand for workers in the top in-demand occupations in the agricultural manufacturing sector if retained in the Region. Due to data limitations, projections for specific occupations were only available for two occupational categories: bakers and labourers in food processing.

Figure 17: Labour Force Demand – Agricultural Manufacturing

NOC	2025 Projection Demand	Skill Level
Total (All NOC in Agriculture Manufacturing)	**7**	**N/A**
6332 Bakers	2	B
9617 Labourers in food and beverage processing	1	D

Source: metroeconomics | LERS Cubes | Alberta Open Data

Other Manufacturing

Other manufacturing will experience a decline in the next five years. Metroeconomics projections show the net decrease would be approximately -10 people for the whole sector; this considers the industries that will increase, minus the industries that will experience declines. Due to data limitations, projections for specific occupations were not available.

Figure 18: Labour Force Demand – Other Manufacturing

NOC	2025 Projection Demand	Skill Level
Total (All NOC in Other Manufacturing)	**-10**	**N/A**

Source: metroeconomics | LERS Cubes | Alberta Open Data

Tourism

The tourism sector will require ten new workers by 2025. Most of these workers will be needed in occupations such as food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations, and food and beverage servers. Most of these occupations do not require formal education, with some exceptions. Thus, considering only the unique individuals graduating from post-secondary institutions in the Lethbridge Service Area, and individuals enrolling in grade 12 in local high schools. It is evident that if the graduate numbers trend continues, the pipeline of workers could meet the demand for workers in the top in-demand occupations in the tourism sector.

Figure 19: Labour Force Demand – Tourism

NOC	2025 Projection Demand	Skill Level
Total (All NOC in Tourism)	**10**	**N/A**
6711 Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations	3	D
6513 Food and beverage servers	2	C
6322 Cooks	1	B
0631 Restaurant and food service managers	1	A
5254 Program leaders and instructors in recreation, sport, and fitness	1	B

Source: metroeconomics | LERS Cubes | Alberta Open Data

Transportation, Logistics and Warehousing

The transportation, logistics and warehousing sector will require six new workers by 2025. Most of these workers will be needed in occupations, such as transport truck drivers. This occupation does not require formal education and can be filled with individuals with a high school diploma or less educational attainment.

Considering only the unique individuals graduating from post-secondary institutions in the Lethbridge Service Area, and individuals enrolling in grade 12 in local high schools. It is evident that if the graduate numbers trend continues, the pipeline of workers could meet the demand for workers in the top in-demand occupations in the transportation, logistics and warehousing sector.

Figure 20: Labour Force Demand – Transportation Logistics and Warehousing

NOC	2025 Projection Demand	Skill Level
Total (All NOC in Transportation, Logistics & Warehousing)	**6**	**N/A**
7511 Transport truck drivers	4	C
7512 Bus drivers, subway operators and other transit operators	1	C

Source: metroeconomics | LERS Cubes | Alberta Open Data

Agriculture

The agriculture sector will require 23 new workers by 2025. Most of these workers will be needed in occupations such as managers in agriculture, and general farm workers. Although the top occupation is in managerial occupations, the rest of the top occupations are mostly skill level C, "occupations usually require secondary school and occupation-specific training."

Considering only the unique individuals graduating from post-secondary institutions in the Lethbridge Service Area, and individuals enrolling in grade 12 in local high schools. It is evident that if the graduate numbers trend continues, the pipeline of workers could meet the demand for workers in the top in-demand occupations in the agriculture sector.

Figure 21: Labour Force Demand – Agriculture

NOC	2025 Projection Demand	Skill Level
Total (All NOC in Agriculture)	**23**	**N/A**
0821 Managers in agriculture	11	A
8431 General farmworkers	6	C
8252 Agricultural service contractors, farm supervisors and specialized livestock workers	1	B

Source: metroeconomics | LERS Cubes | Alberta Open Data

Healthcare and Social Assistance

The healthcare and social assistance sector will require 45 new workers by 2025. This sector will experience the most significant employment growth among all the key industries in the SouthWest Alberta Region. Most of this growth will take place in occupations such as registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses, and nurse aides, orderlies, and patient services associates.

Considering only the unique individuals graduating from post-secondary institutions in the Lethbridge Service Area, and individuals enrolling in grade 12 in local high schools. It is evident that if the graduate numbers trend continues, the pipeline of workers could meet the demand for workers in the top in-demand occupations in the healthcare and social assistance sector.

Figure 22: Labour Force Demand – Healthcare and Social Assistance

NOC	2025 Projection Demand	Skill Level
Total (All NOC in Healthcare & Social Assistance)	**45**	**N/A**
3012 Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses	6	A
3413 Nurse aides, orderlies, and patient service associates	5	C
1414 Receptionists	2	C
4212 Social and community service workers	2	B
3112 General practitioners and family physicians	2	A
3233 Licensed practical nurses	2	B
1411 General office support workers	1	C
3411 Dental assistants	1	C
3111 Specialist physicians	1	A
4214 Early childhood educators and assistants	1	B

Source: metroeconomics | LERS Cubes | Alberta Open Data

4.2 Workforce Challenges

The following figures depict workforce challenges and requirements in the Study Area that have been identified throughout the stages of the project. The figures illustrate the challenges in General / Soft Skills, Specialized Skills, Technologies and Tools and Equipment and the sources through which they were identified. Rankings were determined through a weighted point system, Vicinity Jobs (3), Common Skills Matrix (2), Engagement Activities (1 for a mention in each activity for a possible total of 3), Trends (1). Key themes reiterated through these phases include the need to improve on soft skills (e.g., interpersonal skills), reducing the experience gap for new graduates entering the workforce, and providing more training and support to help individuals upskill. These can include introductory technology courses (e.g., Adobe Suite) or more specialized training for skilled trades and project management.

Figure 23: Identified Workforce Challenges: General / Soft Skills

General / Soft Skills					
Challenge Area	**Engagement**	**Common Skills Matrix***	**Trends**	**Vicinity Data**	**Points****
Ability to Learn	Business Survey, Interviews, Workshops	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Interpersonal Skills	Business Survey, Interviews, Workshops	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Work Ethic	Business Survey, Interviews, Workshops	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Computer Literacy	Business Survey, Workshops, Interviews	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Communications Skills	Business and Job Seeker Survey	Yes	Yes	Yes	8
Time Management and Prioritization	Business Survey	Yes	Yes	Yes	7
Teamwork	Business Survey	N/A	Yes	Yes	5
Customer Service	Business Survey	Yes	N/A	Yes	4
Sales/Service Skills	Business Survey	Yes	N/A	Yes	4

*Technical Report: Southwest Alberta Regional Skills Study Skills Gaps Analysis, Common Skills Matrix ** Rankings were determined through a weighted point system Vicinity Jobs (3), Common Skills Matrix (2), Engagement Activities (1 for a mention in each activity for a possible total of 3), Trends (1).

Figure 24: Identified Workforce Challenges: Specialized Skills

Specialized Skills					
Challenge Area	**Engagement**	**Common Skills Matrix***	**Trends**	**Vicinity Data**	**Total****
Analytical Skills	Business Survey, Interviews, Workshops	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Budgeting	Business Survey	Yes	N/A	Yes	6
Project Management	Business Survey	Yes	N/A	Yes	6
Skilled Trades	Business Survey, Interviews	Yes	Yes	N/A	5
Report Writing	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	5
Marketing	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	5
Ability to operate agricultural equipment	Interviews	Yes	Yes	N/A	4
Training/Teaching	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
Maintain Equipment	Business Survey	Yes	N/A	Yes	4
Maintain Financial Records	Business Survey	Yes	N/A	Yes	4
Management/Leadership skills	Business Survey	Yes	Yes	N/A	4
Inventory Management	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	3
Food Service	Business Survey	Yes	N/A	N/A	3
Electricians	Business Survey, Workshops	N/A	N/A	N/A	2
Millwrights	Business Survey, Interviews	N/A	N/A	N/A	2
Plumbing	Business Survey, Interviews	N/A	N/A	N/A	2
Engineering	Business Survey, Workshops	N/A	N/A	N/A	2
Safety Training	Business Survey	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Ability to operate construction equipment	Interviews	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Heavy Equipment Technician	Business Survey	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Mechanics	Business Survey	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Animal Husbandry	Business Survey	Yes	N/A	N/A	1
Graphic Design	Business Survey	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Carpentry Skills	Business Survey	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Accounting	Business Survey	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Culinary Skills	Business Survey	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Welding	Business Survey	N/A	N/A	N/A	1

*Technical Report: Southwest Alberta Regional Skills Study Skills Gaps Analysis, Common Skills Matrix ** Rankings were determined through a weighted point system Vicinity Jobs (3), Common Skills Matrix (2), Engagement Activities (1 for a mention in each activity for a possible total of 3), Trends (1).

Figure 25: Identified Workforce Challenges: Technologies

Technologies					
Challenge Area	**Engagement**	**Common Skills Matrix***	**Trends**	**Vicinity Data**	**Total****
Technical Skills (Comfort using machinery)	Industry Sessions, Business Survey, Job Seeker Survey	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
General Labour	Business Survey, Workshops, Interviews	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Ability to communicate in English	Workshops, Business Survey	Yes	Yes	Yes	8
Microsoft Office Suite	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	6
Driver Licenses and Certification	Business Survey, Workshops, Interviews	Yes	Yes	N/A	6
Adobe Suite (Photoshop)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	4
LEAN Manufacturing	Workshops, Business Survey, Interviews	N/A	Yes	N/A	4
Critical thinking and problem-solving skills	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	3
Technical Skills (Comfort using machinery)	Industry Sessions, Business Survey, Job Seeker Survey	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Data and statistical analysis	Business Survey	Yes	N/A	N/A	3
Recruiting/Hiring	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	2
Purchasing	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	2
Computer Programming	Business Survey	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Robotics Expertise	Interviews	N/A	N/A	N/A	1

*Technical Report: Southwest Alberta Regional Skills Study Skills Gaps Analysis, Common Skills Matrix ** Rankings were determined through a weighted point system Vicinity Jobs (3), Common Skills Matrix (2), Engagement Activities (1 for a mention in each activity for a possible total of 3), Trends (1).

Figure 26: Identified Workforce Challenges: Tools and Equipment

Tools and Equipment					
Challenge Area	**Engagement**	**Common Skills Matrix***	**Trends**	**Vicinity Data**	**Total****
Forklifts	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	3
Power Tools	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	3
Conveyors	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	3
Boilers	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	3
Skid steers	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	3
Disposal units	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	3
Lawnmowers	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	3

*Technical Report: Southwest Alberta Regional Skills Study Skills Gaps Analysis, Common Skills Matrix ** Rankings were determined through a weighted point system Vicinity Jobs (3), Common Skills Matrix (2), Engagement Activities (1 for a mention in each activity for a possible total of 3), Trends

5. Strategic Directions

This strategic plan is the culmination of all research, analysis, and community stakeholder input. While each pillar offers a series of objectives and tactical actions, they are designed to work in concert, each building on and influencing the overall impact towards addressing identified labour force challenges and skills gaps in the Study Area.

Pillar 1: Labour Market Information

Access to relevant and recent LMI is paramount to informed decision making. Regional service providers, residents, businesses, and academia all need to be current in their knowledge and understanding of what is happening in the labour market, both locally at the community level, regionally, and beyond. Keeping informed on provincial policies and their implications, economic shifts, employment and unemployment activity, employer hiring or downsizing, enrollments all support the identification of challenges, opportunities, trends, and priorities. Making this information available in a clear, concise, and useable manner expands knowledge to employers, job seekers, students, businesses, local intermediaries, and governments. It also supports opportunities for greater collaboration and collective efforts to prioritize and respond in a timely manner.

It has been long identified in Canada that access to local labour market information is still challenging, even though our labour market intelligence (LMI) system is recognized as one of the best in the world[3].

Currently, in the Study Area, employer and job seeker needs and education pipeline data are not broadly understood, not easily accessible, or consolidated for easy access. Completed employer surveys, interviews, and the talent pipeline analysis all illustrated gaps.

The majority of job seekers surveyed indicated that there is a lack of suitable job opportunities in the region. In contrast, nearly half of all businesses surveyed indicated a lack of suitable applicants. These perceptions indicate that a gap exists between supply and demand for labour that may be addressed through better LMI.

An essential aspect of this pillar is the establishment of a centralized, shared and accessible platform for data that is currently being collected by the members of the partnership, or through established and credible organizations that focus on LMI collection and dissemination. One such organization is the newly formed Labour Market Information Council, which would serve as a great resource and potential link from a regional LMI site. The next step is collecting data to fill gaps, including alumni tracking, improving LMI literacy, job postings and relevant data that can be extracted, and simplifying the language and methods used to communicate skills proficiencies or deficits. Understand that different audiences, such as job seekers and employers, require a different approach than researchers, institutions, and government. It is not simply putting information on a website, instead of disseminating it in a manner that can be used.

There was a wide variety of perceptions of which skills existed and were needed in the workforce that clashed with available data. Stakeholders indicated they would like to have access to better information.

[3] Advisory Panel on Labour Market Information; Working Together to Build a Better Labour Market Information System for Canada Final Report, May 20, 2009;

Pillar 2: Talent Retention

Demand for talent, particularly specialized talent, is growing, locally, regionally, and worldwide. It is recognized that COVID 19 has slowed this demand in select geographies and sectors due to the economic fallout and business closures. However, to remain competitive in the battle for talent, it is necessary to remain vigilant and responsive to identified talent needs. Talent retention demands proactive and thoughtful consideration of targeted strategies that support an evidence-based understanding of what talent is needed, what talent is available and the influencing factors that support talent retention and skills development. Significant efforts will be necessary to ensure that local talent remains in the area, beginning with those who come to the region for education and migrants. As with business retention, there is a greater return on investment to keep workers in the area than to try to attract new workers. The region is projected to see population growth over the coming years, and this creates an opportunity to further build the available labour pool, through retention and attraction. The assets of the region can play a significant influencing role in that regard.

A significant component of retention is aligning the workforce with the jobs available now and through sector growth into the future. This spans occupations across all skill levels, and all who chose to be active in the labour market. Communities can improve retention by improving access to reskilling, retraining, workplace integration, and workforce readiness services.

A survey conducted by Lethbridge College indicated that 6-months post-graduation, 51% of graduates were no longer living in the Lethbridge area. The local labour pool attracted to the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College represents the most promising long-term pipeline of talent into the region. Efforts to integrate this population into the community and strengthen their exposure to life in Southwest Alberta may prove favourable and support retention.

Engaging broader community support to help facilitate experiential learning prospects such as co-ops and internships to link graduates to local businesses is a prime opportunity. These may include maker spaces, familiarization tours, and hands-on learning at the secondary and post-secondary level, further exposing students with the community and providing local employers with the opportunity to interact with potential future employees.

Employers have indicated they want to participate in experiential learning, but they perceive the current programs as onerous. Educational institutions can benefit from understanding the barriers experienced by employers and students and strengthening the process to achieve positive outcomes. These efforts support talent retention.

Pillar 3: Skills Alignment

At the core of an aligned labour market is the need to ensure that those skills, competencies, and abilities that employers are seeking are present in the labour force. Where specific skills are absent, the role of local post-secondary and training providers is amplified. Talent readiness to enter the labour market, to transition within the labour market, and to remain current in skills, knowledge, and abilities support a community's competitiveness and attraction for both business and labour force participants. This benefits from a deep alignment between education and trainers and employers. Employers are best positioned to inform on what skills they need and where the gap exists within the existing labour force. Educators are well-positioned to be responsive to these needs and to create an opportunity for skills development and upskilling.

There has been a significant workforce shift over the last few decades wherein employers are less willing or able to train entry-level employees. A growing share of the responsibility for training falls to individuals, and educational institutions must be responsive. Combine this trend with the lower direct employment experience of recent graduates; it is not surprising the most commonly identified labour force gaps with new graduates was lack of experience. Based on the research, this was followed closely with the lack of soft skills.

A significant challenge identified by employers was the relatively slower pace that education institutions could adapt their programming to support the integration of newer technology. Given the recent rise in the use of technology to carry out business as a result of COVID, the importance of a responsive strategy to improve on technology use and technology learning rises in importance.

Preparing the next generation of Alberta workers starts with integrating work and learning. As automation erodes entry-level jobs, companies will expect students to mix higher-level technical and soft skills. [4] Addressing the skills gap ensures a focus is placed on the specificity for skills development, through responsive and flexible learning channels and credentialing.

One issue raised through interviews and workshop sessions was the lack of commonly understood terminology to describe soft skills and non-work skills experience. A component of this project has been the development of skills profiles of top occupations projected to be in demand over the next five years. Building on these profiles, it would be helpful to continue to articulate the specific skills required and to ensure clear communication of this insight to those looking to develop or enhance their skills. These profiles lay the groundwork to develop career pathways, skills transferability, and employer identified skills needs. They may also inform on programming development, the introduction of micro-credentialing, or programming updates.

[4] https://coppoa.ca/; accessed 8-31-2020

Pillar 4: Talent Attraction

A key factor impacting the ability of businesses to recruit talent successfully is the narrative and persona of the community and surrounding region. The study area, and particularly the smaller communities within, has recognized challenges to attracting residents, who are often active participants in the labour market. This amplifies the necessity of a reflective and common message that showcases the area and all it has to offer. A clearly stated value proposition supports consistent communication that can be utilized by local employers in the promotion of their business and their employment opportunities. Part of this message should showcase the success stories of those that have chosen the region and the assets that drew them to the area.

Communities are encouraged to utilize existing professional associations, established entrepreneurs, employment support organizations, and other networks to connect newcomers with those that call the region home. This is an important aspect of promoting a welcoming community.

Documenting and sharing with employers' best practices in modernizing workplaces and adapting to the needs of the changing labour market reflects input received through the consultation process. This could include best practices addressing ESL/Language and cultural barriers, which were the most mentioned factors to businesses hiring immigrant workers. These businesses' best practices are critical as they were the most preferred method identified by employers on engaging with further immigration support information.

The Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) was viewed as a complementary program that helps build a connection between youth, educational institutions, and employers, providing the all-important on-the-job experience job seekers need to explore career pathways. There were negative aspects of RAP (e.g., transportation challenges for apprentices, higher insurance costs for employers), but the benefits outweigh the burden.

6. Moving from Strategy Development to Action

This skills gap study has resulted in the identification of common themes emerging through the data analysis and the engagement undertaken over the lifecycle of the project. It is this evidence that grounds the formation of a strategic plan to respond to the emerging priorities and advance Southwest Alberta towards a more balanced labour market. While the emphasis is placed on validating what skills gaps exist, and how that might be addressed, additional priorities were also identified as requiring attention. In total, the strategy presents four independently important foundation pillars, and collectively they are necessary to achieve the desired goal, that being an aligned labour market.

In the regional strategy, a series of thirteen objectives are offered as recommendations with tactical actions applied to support implementation and impact. Actions have been assigned a timeline that informs on which actions should move forward in the short (0-18 months), medium (2-3 years), and longer-term (3-5 years). Actions have also been identified as regional, local or both and assigned an estimated cost $ (0-$5,000), $$ ($5,000 -$10,000 and $$$ ($10,000+). Again, it is important to take into consideration changes in the economy and the region, as this may shift timelines for implementation.

In its simplest form, this strategic plan addresses the disconnect between labour supply and labour demand. It articulates and informs on existing skills gaps and the important role post-secondary institutions and local training providers can play in bridging this gap. For the region to remain competitive in their economy, it is necessary that a proactive, evidence-informed approach be utilized to ensure the labour force is best positioned to contribute actively. This means employers can access talent with the skills necessary to perform services or create products, and job seekers recognize and respond to the assets that make Southwest Alberta a place they are happy to call home.

It is important to note that this must be fluid, as unforeseen circumstances will drive the necessity to review the strategy regularly to validate its relevance. Never has this been more evident than in current times, where COVID forced the shutdown of many local economies and shifted the tight labour market to one that saw record unemployment rates.

6.1 Critical Path Action Plan

The Southwest Alberta Skills Study Partnership includes communities and educational institutions within the Study Area with differing levels of resources and capacity. Recognizing these differences has led to the development of critical path action plans specific to each partner community. The following action plan represents the objectives and actions identified for the Town of Cardston from the larger regional strategy.

Pillar 1: Labour Market Information

Objective #1	Develop a Comprehensive, Central and Current Labour Market Information System	Priority Timing			Cost	Scale
		S	M	L	$	L&R
Action #1	Support the development of or contribute to a regional/community business database to support future business outreach and engagement. (Business database developed through this initiative will be shared as a starting point).	✓			$$	L&R
Objective #2	**Disseminate Relevant LMI to Inform Decisions and Promote Opportunity**	**Priority Timing**			**Cost**	**Scale**
		S	M	L	$	L&R
Action #2	Develop/Share New and Existing training resource guides for job seekers and students that showcase career pathways to high demand occupations and local training options and micro-credentialing that support necessary skills and knowledge development and credentials. The guide should clearly outline the career paths, educational requirements, local training options, and available resources, assistance, and potential grants.		✓		$$	L&R

6.2 Pillar 2: Talent Retention

Objective #3	Foster Work Integrated Learning	Priority Timing			Cost	Scale
		S	M	L	$	L&R
Action #3	Continue to engage local business associations and local businesses to promote and encourage experiential work term opportunities (internships, co-ops, apprenticeships) to increase participation and career awareness for local secondary and post-secondary students.	✓			$	L&R
Objective #4	**Create In-depth Awareness of Local Careers**	**Priority Timing**			**Cost**	**Scale**
		S	M	L	$	L&R
Action #4	Host "familiarization tours" with local businesses that are experiencing growth to expose faculty members, career counselors, and administration from local educational institutions to local workplaces. These tours should be tailored to educators and foster education – business relations. This strengthens educators understanding of how workplaces have changed over time and promote economic sectors in the region.		✓		$	L

Objective #5	Retain Graduates	Priority Timing			Cost	Scale
		S	M	L	$	L&R
Action #5	Promote mentorship programming for businesses and education institutions to foster graduate connections within the community and within a sector or local business. This further supports knowledge exchange, career exploration, and skills development.	✓			$	L&R
Objective #6	**Support Business Talent Retention Efforts**	**Priority Timing**			**Cost**	**Scale**
		S	M	L	$	L&R
Action #6	Continue to work with businesses to promote existing provincial and federal COVID-19 recovery initiatives to rehire workers.	✓			$	L&R

Pillar 3: Skills Alignment

Objective #7	Support Career Development and Upskilling	Priority Timing			Cost	Scale
		S	M	L	$	L&R
Action #7	Support the development of deeper alignment between local school boards, colleges, and universities and employers, ensuring students, graduates, and teachers understand career paths and required skills. Consider the formation of a Talent Supply Table to foster regular discussions and information sharing.		✓		$	L&R
Objective #8	**Support the Integration of the Immigrant Workforce**	**Priority Timing**			**Cost**	**Scale**
		S	M	L	$	L&R
Action #8	Connect businesses with immigrant services providers and support the development of transitional employment programming for new immigrants that include ESL and cultural training.	✓			$	L

Objective #9	Support the Development of Indigenous Talent	Priority Timing			Cost	Scale
		S	M	L	$	L&R
Action #9	Work with Indigenous Governments and Economic Development Agencies to share LMI data and opportunities.	✓			$$	L&R

Pillar 4: Talent Attraction

Objective #10	Promote Welcoming Communities	Priority Timing			Cost	Scale
		S	M	L	$	L&R
Action #10	Continue economic development efforts on diversifying and growing the economy (e.g., renewable sector) to grow the overall number of jobs in the region. Focus on areas that create long term, meaningful employment opportunities.		✓		$	L&R
Action #11	Create a targeted marketing campaign encouraging skilled workers to relocate to the region. Provide materials and support to businesses that are recruiting talent.		✓		$$	L&R
Action #12	Continue to work with local employers and employees who recently moved to the region and have been successful and promote their positive experiences via online and offline channels.		✓		$	L

Objective #11	Foster Business Culture, Inclusiveness and Diversity	Priority Timing			Cost	Scale
		S	M	L	$	L&R
Action #13	Encourage businesses to promote corporate culture as a company benefit and a key consideration for potential employees. Focus on leveraging regional brand, local assets, employer perks, and workplace culture, incentives, and inclusive practices. This may be in the form of an employer guide, webpage, or a publication that depicts the return on investment.	✓			$	L&R
Action #14	Utilize on-line resources designed to guide stronger inclusiveness[5], and share with employers to foster the concept of a "welcoming and inclusive workplace culture" among businesses to promote diversity in the workplace.		✓		$$	L&R
Action #15	Consider creating a welcome package bundle for workers who relocate to the region for work. This package could include discounts for local services (e.g., community gyms, pools, etc.), local deals from businesses, and more. Collaboration with the business community to develop appropriate incentives is advised. Investigate creating a promotion campaign highlighting the package and sense of community across the region.	✓			$	L&R

[5] See for example: https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0418/pages/6-steps-for-building-an-inclusive-workplace.aspx; https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/diversity/2017/50-ideas-for-cultivating-diversity-and-inclusion-in-the-workplace

Local Assets Inventory

A lifestyle asset inventory was conducted for the broader Study Area, excluding the city of Lethbridge. Data from D&B Hoovers was used to assess the number and type of amenities available within the region. As talent becomes more mobile and jobs are less location-specific, the quality of life a community can offer is a more significant factor in the recruitment and retention of labour. Beyond job opportunities, more attention is now given to understanding the influencing factors of quality of life, including affordable housing, transportation and walkability, tourism and cultural assets, post-secondary and life-long learning accessibility, health care, school, social and sports programming for children. The study area has a wide variety of lifestyle assets that present a significant opportunity to showcase the value proposition of the region as a component of the talent attraction and retention effort.

The lifestyle assets examined in the Study Area in Southwest Alberta (not including the city of Lethbridge) include health care amenities (78), education institutions (92), social services (39), cultural and recreational assets (52), and environmental assets (5). The number of each of these asset categories indicates that the Region offers a relatively small variety of services and opportunities for residents outside Lethbridge. Communities need to leverage these assets to be competitive and attract and retain the talent required to meet the demand for workers in the future.

The lifestyle assets examined in the Town of Cardston included 20 health care amenities, 19 education institutions, eight social services, and five cultural and recreational assets. As a small town, the number of these lifestyle assets is limited.

For further detail, see complete the Asset Inventory – Study Area

Source Note: Data for this report has been sourced from D&B Hoovers, which maintains the world's largest commercial database from Dun & Bradstreet[6]. The Categories in this report correspond with the 2017 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). This industry classification system was developed by the statistical agencies of Canada, Mexico and the United States[7].

[6] D&B Hoovers, dnb.com/products/marketing-sales/dnb-hoovers.html

[7] Stats Canada NAICS Codes, statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=1181553

7. Conclusion

The Southwest Alberta Regional Skills Study Partnership was formed to provide leadership and direction to address regional skills and competency gaps and explore strategic approaches to best position greater supply and demand alignment. The Partnership has recognized that local and regional competitiveness is significantly influenced by the business's ability to access the talent and skills needed to deliver products and services. In this ever-changing global environment, access to talent is no longer constrained by geography, rather ease of mobility and the speed at which technologies are transforming sectors, processes, and strategies are further influencing where talent works and lives. As a result of COVID-19, many communities are experiencing a slowdown or stall in the economy, while the labour force is seeing increased unemployment rates and displacement from the labour market. It is still unclear how long these disruptions will last, nor do we fully understand the implications and fall out. Communities that are being proactive and thinking longer-term will be best positioned to respond accordingly.

The convergence of workforce and economic development has also evolved in recent years. Recognition that a community's strongest asset is its talent pool is now guiding economic activity such as investment, site selection, and business expansion.[8] Where once serviced land was the key driver for investment interest, today, this is being upstaged by the availability of talent and the capacity through which communities can support talent development. Southwest Alberta is strongly positioned in talent development, with its post-secondary institutions being an attractor of students pursuing post-secondary education. Additionally, the region offers significant benefits that influence the quality of life, a second key factor that influences the job seeker decision on where to live.

This strategy positions Southwest Alberta to be responsive and proactive to the opportunities that will influence the capacity and capability to not only build the talent needed to drive local competitiveness but to attract and retain the talent necessary to fill those difficult-to-fill vacancies. Through a collaborative and collective effort, the Southwest Alberta Regional Skills Study Partnership, with the inclusion of additional partners that may choose to come to the table, has the roadmap to forge ahead with a future-focused plan that will support its communities and the region as a whole.

[8] https://aboutdci.com/2018/03/episode-40-next-practices-site-selection-insights-site-selectors-guild/; accessed 9-22-2020