

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2024 - 2025



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## CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

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Hello everyone,

I want to thank you all for your faith in me as Chair of the SouthGrow Regional Initiative at the close of another productive and transformative year. With all his connections he made, and Government meetings he attended, Jim left some very big shoes to fill.

I have always felt that the success of any organization, is the work of the incredible staff that is the base of its' foundation. Throughout 2024 and 2025, SouthGrow continues to demonstrate that our unique staffing model is delivering results. This past year has seen us grow in both capacity and impact. By expanding our team of talented professionals, we're better equipped than ever to support the diverse needs of our member communities. I'm pleased to welcome several new additions to our team, including **Annie Ebenmelu**, Economic Development Coordinator, **Mark Serebryansky**, who has taken on the role of producing our newsletter, and **Morgan Elemans**, our new Grants Manager, who works closely with **Peter Casurella** and **Kim Welby** to support municipalities and nonprofits in navigating the grant landscape.

This year also marked the launch of a significant initiative to enhance local-level impact: the **Community Economic Development Support Project**. This new direction was made possible through funding from the **Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade's NRED Program** and enabled the promotion of **Makayla Gross** as our full-time Economic Development Officer. Makayla is already accelerating progress toward the strategic priorities set by our Board to help our communities identify opportunities in their own communities and succeed at implementing them.

Together, our expanding team offers robust, practical support to communities across Southern Alberta and I encourage all members to take full advantage of these resources. Whether your challenge lies in economic development planning or finding funding for your next project, the SouthGrow team is ready to guide you in the right direction.

Beyond these staffing successes, our team has continued to deliver meaningful work on major regional projects that often operate behind the scenes, including our award-winning international marketing of Southern Alberta's agrifood sector, the completion of our **Regional Supply Chain Study** which was timely considering the international environment we are contending with, and the coordination of the build-out of over **200 EV charging stations** across Alberta in partnership with **Natural Resources Canada**.

Perhaps most impactful has been our work with the **Energy Futures Lab** to help shape the rapidly evolving policy of the Energy sector as the Government of Alberta renovates the sector wholesale. SouthGrow has been at the centre of this initiative working to ensure that rural perspectives and the priorities of Southern Albertan's have been respected throughout. Each of these initiatives reinforces SouthGrow's role as a forward-thinking, action-oriented partner in rural economic development. We are not only responding to change, but we are also helping to shape it.



Importantly, we are also building a **sustainable future**. SouthGrow has taken steps to secure its operations and ensure ongoing service to our members without adding further financial strain to municipal budgets which you will no doubt agree is an increasingly vital consideration. As we contend with an uncertain partnership in Edmonton, we are well positioned to chart a path forward by ourselves if necessary.

Finally, with the appointment of **Minister Joseph Schow** to the Ministry of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration, we are hopeful that this signals a renewed opportunity for partnership between the Government of Alberta and the Regional Economic Development Alliances. Rural Alberta has much to contribute to provincial priorities, and we stand ready to collaborate if they choose to do so.

To our members, thank you for your trust and participation. To our Board and staff, thank you for your tireless work. Together, we are advancing the prosperity of Southern Alberta.

Sincerely,



Laurie Lyckman  
Vulcan County Councillor  
Division 4  
403-423-0143  
[Laurie.Lyckman@vulcan.ca](mailto:Laurie.Lyckman@vulcan.ca)



## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Chairperson	Councillor Laurie Lyckman	Vulcan County
Vice Chairperson	Councillor Jim Willett	Village of Coutts
Director	Councillor John Turcato	MD of Taber
Director	Mayor Lyndsay Montana	Town of Coalhurst
Director	Councillor Matt Evans	Town of Raymond

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND REPS 2023 - 2024

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Director	Councillor Colin Bexte	Village of Arrowwood
Director	Councillor Shayla Anderson	Village of Barnwell
Director	Diandra Bruised Head	Blood Tribe
Director	Mayor Gordon Reynolds	Town of Bow Island
Director	Councillor Marsha Jensen	Town of Cardston
Director	Councillor Roger Houghton	Cardston County
Director	Councillor Doug Fraser	Village of Carmangay
Director	Councillor Dale Pickering	Town of Coaldale
Director	Councillor Allen Kuizenga	County of Forty Mile
Director	Councillor Mark Sayers	Lethbridge County
Director	Mayor Byrne Cook	Town of Magrath
Director	Mayor Dean Melnyk	Village of Milo
Director	Councillor Shayne Johnson	Town of Milk River
Director	Councillor Henry de Kok	Town of Picture Butte
Director	Councillor Justin Davis	Village of Stirling
Director	Councillor Joanne Sorensen	Town of Taber
Director	Councillor Henry Zacharias	Town of Vauxhall
Director	Councillor Cole Dunham	Town of Vulcan
Director	Councillor Marty Kirby	Village of Warner
Director	Councillor Terry Penny	Village of Champion
Director	Councillor Mike Cutler	Town of Claresholm
Director	Councillor Blake Klatt	Village of Foremost
Director	Councillor Ross Ford	Warner County
Associate	Mr. Trevor Lewington	Economic Dev. Lethbridge
Associate	Mr. Phillip Wright	Milk River Cable Club
Associate	Unassigned	Exhibition Park
Associate	Mrs. Cyndi Bester	Lethbridge Chamber
Associate	Mrs. Erin Crane	Tourism Lethbridge
Associate	Mr. Scott Alexander	D-Com
Associate	Mr. Bill Chapman	Highway 3 Twinning Assoc.
Associate	Mrs. Michelle Day	Nikka Yuko Japanese Gardens
Associate	Mr. Rishikesh Kumar	FortisAlberta
Associate	Mr. Troy Grainger	Community Futures Lethbridge
Associate	Mr. Scott Donselar	Ridge Utilities



Associate  
Associate  
Associate

Mr. Jared Bell  
Mr. Bryon Anderson  
Mrs. Heather Mackenzie

Taber Chamber of Commerce  
Lethbridge Polytechnic  
Solar Alberta

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S GREETINGS

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Dear Members and Stakeholders,

It continues to be one of the greatest honours of my life to serve as your Executive Director. Thank you — truly — for entrusting me and my team with this work. Your support gives us the opportunity to do meaningful things every day in service of the region we all care about.

This year, SouthGrow leaned into the challenges and opportunities facing our communities with creativity and determination. Our work with the Energy Futures Lab has helped ensure that southern Alberta has a strong voice in shaping the province's energy future. We've also pivoted to provide more direct support to municipalities, helping local leaders get the tools and resources they need to make things happen.

I'm especially proud of the way our team supported the Village of Warner in securing funding to establish a new daycare, one of many examples of what can happen when we work side by side with our members. Watching my team go above and beyond in moments like that fills me with pride and gratitude. They are smart, dedicated, and deeply committed to the success of this region.

It hasn't always been easy. Uncertainty at the provincial level has forced all of us to adapt. But that pressure has revealed something important: we are more resilient than we thought. We've found new ways of thinking, new partnerships, and new energy. This moment has shown us that economic development doesn't have to follow the old rules — we can do it differently, and maybe even better.

Thank you again for your trust, your collaboration, and your belief in what we're building together. I'm excited for what's ahead, and I'm so grateful to be on this journey with you.

Sincerely,



**Peter Casurella**

Executive Director



# OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

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The summary below details the operational highlights from the year.

## Administrative Highlights

**Sustainability Planning:** The intent of the Government of Alberta to withdraw from their 20-year partnership with the regions forced us to reconvene our sustainability task force. This group brushed off our old work from the pre-pandemic years, strategized new paths forward, and has advanced work to be recommended to the Board in 2025. SouthGrow is in a good position, and we are confident in our ability to sustain the work of the association without having to levy big increases on our members. Stay tuned for news in 2025!

**A Growing Team:** SouthGrow has retained a contractor to manage its administration since 2011. This used to mean just one person, but our relationship with our primary contractor has grown as the times have changed. Progressive West Consulting under the leadership of Peter Casurella and Kim Welby provides us with access to the full range of skill sets from their entire team while we contract a defined scope of service from them. This gives access to subject matter experts spanning a range of applicable skill sets under the supervision of our Executive Committee. This unique arrangement continues to serve us well with the quality of the work showing the value. Thank you to our hard-working staff!



**More Partners:** Our partnerships in 2024 continued to grow and diversify, reflecting SouthGrow's evolving role as a connector, collaborator, and regional voice for innovation. We we're thrilled to welcome *Solar Alberta* and *Lethbridge Polytechnic* as associate members this year, two organizations that bring deep expertise and forward-looking vision in renewable energy and workforce development. Their inclusion strengthens our regional network and helps position southern Alberta as a leader in the transition to a sustainable, future-ready economy.



**LETHBRIDGE  
POLYTECHNIC**

**Award Winning Work:** In April, SouthGrow was recognized **AGAIN** with awards at the Economic Developers of Alberta. For the third year running, we won the Marketing for Economic Outcomes Award for a large region for our global marketing campaign. We also won an award for our Zero Emissions Infrastructure program under which we built ~200 EV charging stations across the province. Special thanks to Jessie Stilson for her marketing expertise and to Peter Casurella for slogging through three years of federal paperwork!



## Strategic Collaborations

**Impactful Lunch & Learns:** Our lunch and learns this year really took off with attendance in the low hundreds across six impactful sessions! Thank you to everyone who attended and learned together. What's more, our only expenses on the program were marketing due to the generosity of our speaker lineup!

### Economic Summit Reaches New Heights:

The Economic Summit that we now host with 5 partners organizations hit a new this year with **189 attendees**, packing out the event space. We had excellent speakers who turned heads, and the event was a huge success.



**SOUTHERN ALBERTA ECONOMIC SUMMIT 2025**

**MARCH 27, 2025**  
Lethbridge Agri-food Hub & Trade Centre  
Lethbridge, Alberta | 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM

Join us for this annual SouthGrow event to discuss the topics that matter to Southern Albertan's and their communities!

**IN PARTNERSHIP BY:**

- SOUTHGRQW REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- PrairiesCan Canada
- GOOD THINK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- Community Futures Lethbridge Region
- Community Futures Alberta Southwest

**Strategic Pivot:** In the fall of 2024 our board met to review and renew our strategic framework. The feedback was clear! Our communities want more focus at the local level, and we are pivoting to deliver. In February, SouthGrow secured a grant for a 3-year community economic development program from Job's Economy and Trade and Makayla Gross was promoted to take over the role!



**Energy Policy:** Energy is one of the most important and fundamental inputs to the economy, and right now the world is facing a LOT of changes in this field. With the GOA undergoing a wholesale retooling of the provincial energy system, we have spent the past few years engaged heavily with a think tank called the Energy Futures Lab. This group represents every corner of Alberta's energy industry, and we have positioned ourselves as rural advisors on the 10-person leadership council, as part of the formal Fellowship, and on specific projects like Alberta's Energy Future. In this capacity we have successfully kept rural priorities front and centre and have done the legwork to test our representations with rural stakeholders and industry.



**Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative:** Together with our partners, we ran the third full year of our global marketing campaign and went from around 20 million views to over **46 million views**. We also sent two representatives on a Canada Trade Mission to Australia, and virtually attended an Agrifood show in Singapore to learn more about new markets. We refunded the initiative for 2025 as well! We also won an award for the third year in a row from the EDA!

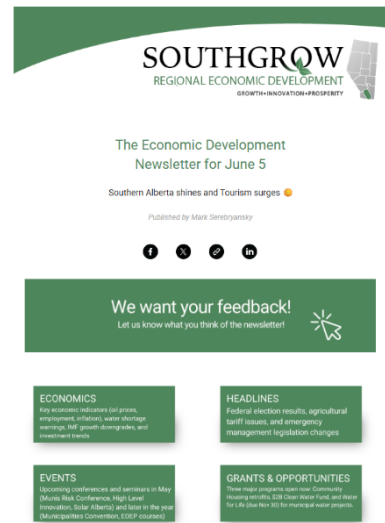


**Highway 3 Twinning Development Association:** We continued to support H3TDA this year, providing them with organizational support so that they can achieve their mandate. Together, we have preserved the Premier’s commitment to twinning the entire corridor. SouthGrow was instrumental in helping the H3TDA board hire a new staff member with the retirement of Victoria Chester, filling the administrative gap and supporting the cost overlap involve. Please welcome **Tenille Doram** as the new Director of Advancement for the association!

## Marketing and Communication

**Sponsorships:** We continued to sponsor important events throughout the region this year, including *Taber’s Table* and a mental health program for farm employees out of Vulcan County!

**Newsletters:** Our newsletter reach outs continued to increase as well with gradually growing numbers. The quality of the resources continues to improve, and we were specifically complimented by a member of the Minister’s office for the high quality of the bi-weekly publication. Subscribe!



## Economic Development

**Agri-food:** Our scholarship program ran again at \$8000 and we gave out 3 scholarships of \$2500 each to deserving students and spent \$500 marketing the opportunity to young people across the region. Thank you to MNP Taber, D-Com Electrical Solutions Ltd, and Community Futures Lethbridge Region for your partnership and support!

**ZEVIP:** We hit the finish line for the ZEVIP project in early 2025! We built over 200 charging stations for a total project spend of nearly 5 million. Our little association has made the widespread adoption of electric vehicles in Alberta much more possible as numbers continue to climb and demonstrated that we can serve effectively as a delivery organization for big government programs. We also won an award for this project from the EDA!



**Supply Chain Identification:** Our Supply Chain Identification project reached the finish line with 125 high value interviews completed and recommendations and final reports delivered! Just in time as well, as we have begun leveraging the information gleaned to inform our export development efforts in the face of trade impacts from changing US policy.

**Housing Needs Assessments:** We have completed and delivered 5 Affordable Housing Needs Assessments to member communities that were not able to otherwise get them done. Those members now have a critical document to use in building housing plans and applying for housing accelerator funding from the Provincial or Federal Government.

**Grant Advice Hotline:** Our team accelerated our work to support grant development for our communities, with 19 consultations held throughout the year with municipal or non-profit staff! Notably, the team quietly went behind Peter’s back and wrote the majority of an application for one small community that lacked the capacity to complete the work. As a result, a group in the Village of Warner secured funding for a new daycare facility that is moving forward towards reality.



**Blackfoot Signage Project:** While visiting the Raymond Museum Peter Casurella spotted a newspaper article from many decades ago which listed the Blackfoot names for local towns and locations that are familiar to us. From this inspiration the Blackfoot Signage Project was born. Administered by Community Futures Lethbridge Region with support from SouthGrow, this is a partnership project that involves several CF offices, Alberta SouthWest, Tourism Lethbridge, The Lethbridge Reconciliation Committee, and the Blackfoot Confederacy. The partnership completed their second year, with dozens of signs funded across the region and has more funding lined up for year 3! Well done all!



### SouthGrow Solar Project:

The wheels are back on the proverbial bus with a workable business case again! We've advanced through several very important stages and the solar project looks more likely to succeed than ever. Land and capacity are reserved, our costs have decreased, and we have advanced our funding options on several very promising fronts. Even better, the price of power is climbing, and our risk is going down. Stay tuned, we'll get this thing done yet! Sponsorships from Jobs Economy and Trade and FortisAlberta have enabled us to retain expert help to push it across the finish line.



# OPERATIONAL OUTCOME TRACKING 2024-2025

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An evaluation of the operational plan from 2024-2025 tracking our independently evaluated work items in our operational plan. SouthGrow met or exceeded most of its operational objectives. Several were not achieved. Where our outcomes deviated from our goals, explanations are provided.

## Operational Update

### PILLAR 1. STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

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#### 1. MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

##### Annual Council Presentations

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	The Executive Director will endeavor to deliver a direct report to council to 40% of our members on an annual basis. (12) Staff will also provide a monthly update to councils in the form of Mayors and Reeves reports which track progress on our operational plan.
OUTCOME	40% of the SouthGrow members receive a report directly to council. All members receive monthly operational reports.
MEASURE	Numbers of councils that receive reports on an annual basis.
TARGET	40% of councils are visited within the year. A recorded report goes to all members and associate members.
WORKPLAN	Book visits to councils in July after release of the annual report and attend councils in August through November.
Budget	Administrative work.
Progress	12 presentations complete. (40%)
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Target Met</b>



## Regional Training

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow hosts at least 6 training webinars across the calendar year to provide high-quality information on topics of the day to councilors, staff, and other interested parties.
OUTCOME	Staff and councilors across the region have access to high-quality information on topics of the day to help them advance their progress on local initiatives.
MEASURE	Did training session (s) occur. How many occurred. How many people attended.
TARGET	6 sessions held throughout the operational year. Minimum of 20 attendees per session.
WORKPLAN	Brainstorm appropriate topics with staff, Executive Find appropriate date and venue, book trainer, advertise event and fill up attendance, secure catering and value-added elements, host training, report.
Budget	\$1000
Progress	Trainings all Occurred. Session #1: September. Opportunities with Travel Alberta. Hosted by Andi Dzilums. 16 registrants. 8 attended. Session: #2: October. Doing Business with China. Hosted by William Wang of Invest Alberta. 29 Registrations, 12 attendees. Session #3: EDA Economic Development Training. 24 attendees Session #4: Community Grants. 20 attendees. Session #5: Statistics Canada held in January. 15 attendees Session #6: International Trade Q and A with Carlo Dade. 26 attendees
Outcome	Target Met

## Government Relations

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow will work to secure multi-year funding for SouthGrow (at or above current funding levels), to retain the promise of a 10-year commitment to twinning all of Highway 3, to retain the core elements of the present rural economic development strategy, and to secure other regional priorities that only partnerships with other levels of governments can bring. We will do this by proactively communicating the value of our priorities to all personalities



	involved that we can in a politically neutral fashion and by providing them with data that substantiates our claims.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow has met with the Ministers responsible for economic development, agriculture, transportation, and other files as they become important. SouthGrow has met with the bureaucrats in these ministries as well. SouthGrow makes tangible progress on its relationship building efforts on key files.
MEASURE	Did the meetings occur? How many meetings were held? What were the narrative outcomes of the meetings? Did the REDA funding get extended?
TARGET	Favorable communications are re-established with Government of Alberta Ministers and staffs for the extension of the REDA partnership and the retention of core priorities listed above.
WORKPLAN	Organize meetings, prepare notes, brief officials, follow ups, consistent messaging. Prepare briefing notes for councillors for AB Munis and RMA Conferences. Have representatives attend these conferences and discuss issues with key Ministers. Recruit champion ministers to advance issues within government.
Budget	\$3000 (Specifically sourced from Membership dollars)
Progress	Meetings occurred Met with RMA policy team, invited UCP to AGM, Premiers Dinner in June, UCP stampede forum in July, Premiers Open House in Coaldale in fall, attended AB Munis and RMA fall conferences and held meetings, multiple letters sent to Premier, to all of caucus, and to Minister. Met with Minister Neudorf to discuss JET and REDAs. More letters were sent to all of caucus expressing concerns. Premier met with SouthGrow, RMA, and Minister Jones in Calgary. Favorable communications with JET re-established in early 2025 with pivot towards 'making lemonade'. Good experience with sustainability consultant provided by JET. Alberta Municipalities passed a very strong resolution in support of the REDAs with 80% support. JET awarded SouthGrow with a large NRED grant award for a 3-year project. Minister has publicly praised SouthGrow. No movement on REDA funding.
Outcome	<b>Target only partially met. Favorable communications re-established, but no commitment to funding yet despite substantial work on this item</b>



## Economic Development Summit

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow hosts a regional Economic Development Summit in 2024 that provides stakeholders with access to speakers and engagement on important economic development topics, trends, and issues that affect our region. We continue to include active partnerships with stakeholders in the region with the intent of growing the event into a pan southern-Alberta partnership.
OUTCOME	The summit is held in a member community with local hosts and excellent attendance as measured against previous years. (2023-24 - Est 100 people)
MEASURE	Was the event held? Attendance levels? Feedback from attendees. Were partnerships expanded? How much money was leveraged from other sources?
TARGET	Greater than 100 attendees from member communities, partners, and stakeholders.
WORKPLAN	Reach out to members to secure host community. Secure venue in member community. Develop list of speakers and agenda. Develop invites and issue to members, especially new council members. Secure catering for event. Host event.
Budget	\$5000
Progress	Event was held and SOLD OUT 182 attendees. Feedback was excellent (except with the venue) Partnerships were expanded (3 sponsors, 5 partners) \$5000 from partners, \$13000 from sponsors leveraged.
Outcome	<b>Target Substantially Exceeded.</b>



## SouthGrow Strategic Review

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow hosts a strategic review session by Q3 of the operational year to review the strategic framework for the organization, renew our mandate for another three years, and discuss the operational future of the organization.
OUTCOME	The Board approves an updated strategic framework for the organization and meaningfully explores the long-term sustainability of the organization in the event that the Government of Alberta exits as a partner.
MEASURE	Did the session occur? Was the strategic framework updated? Were there decisive decisions taken on long-term planning?
TARGET	The strategic framework is renewed by the end of Q3 of the 2024/25 operational year.
WORKPLAN	Facilitator is secured through Jobs, Economy, and Trade to facilitate Session is booked and held at appropriate venue Facilitator runs session and produces recommendations. Updated strategic framework is presented to Board at December Quarterly Meeting (2024) Framework is approved.
Budget	\$2000
Progress	Planning session occurred. Strategic framework was updated and approved Decisive decisions were taken on long-term planning. Sustainability committee also produced excellent outcomes and recommendations in conjunction with this.
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Target Met</b>



## 2. BUILD OR SUSTAIN COLLABORATIONS

### Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-Enabling Infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow sustains the work of SAAEP by leading the partnership through another operational year. The partners look for funding opportunities to a.) rework the website to provide a tighter focus on investment attraction, b.) to identify geographical investment zones in the partnership region under the new regulations, and c.) to host an investment opportunity workshop once that project is done. Funding is identified and applied for within the operational year, with the hope of initiating a large identification study early 2025.
OUTCOME	The SAAEP partners pivot back to investment attraction and work together to fund a large investment identification opportunity project. The website is updated to focus stronger on investment attraction.
MEASURE	Did the partnership remain active and working together on a plan? Was the website updated? Was a funding stream for the projects identified? Was the application submitted? Were we successful? Is there a path forward to implement?
TARGET	The partnership agrees to a scope of work in 2024. The website is updated. Funding is identified for the identification study and investor workshop. The project is advanced towards implementation.
WORKPLAN	Plan with SAAEP Partners Assign website audit and upgrades internally Do Website upgrades and test Discuss larger projects with potential funders Prepare applications and submit.
Budget	Target of Opportunity Budget
Progress	Partnership remained active and working together Website was updated (tools were retained) Partners declined to chase mapping funding. Secured help from Geography class to deploy a pilot project. Mapped the MD of Taber for optimal renewables sitings based on regulatory and community preference inputs. Path forward to creating provincial mapping project with JET has been identified.



	Substantial work advanced with Energy Futures Lab by SouthGrow on Rural Priorities informing Ministerial work. Renuwell regulatory pathways project sponsored with \$5000 contribution.
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Targets mostly met and additional pivots advanced work substantially</b>

### Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow maintains its participation and leadership in the Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative, pursuing meaningful projects under its umbrella. The website is audited and improved by Q2 of 2024. A lead generation pipeline is setup to respond meaningfully to leads coming in through saiti.ca A representative is sent on a trade mission with Invest Alberta to an event in our target market region. 6 new video ads are created for SAITI. The global marketing program runs through till the end of the year and metrics are tracked.
OUTCOME	SAITI continues to grow its direct marketing program and develops a lead-generation pipeline while marketing our regional advantages to North America and Europe.
MEASURE	Partnership is active and has ongoing projects. Was the website upgraded? Was a lead generation pipeline built? Did a trade mission occur? Were the videos created? Was the marketing maintained? What were the marketing metrics?
TARGET	The partnership has an active slate of work. The website is upgraded. The lead generation pipeline produces 6 active leads. 6 videos are produced and put into the marketing rotation. Marketing is maintained. Metrics for marketing exceed 10 million views across all platforms.
WORKPLAN	Meet with partners to establish work plan Source out website audit to Lethbridge County Source out trade mission to EDL



	Develop pipeline together with EDL Commission video production from Output Media Maintain marketing program internally and track metrics.
Budget	CanExport Grant and Partner funding. \$10,000 internally.
Progress	Partnership remained active with ongoing projects Website was audited and upgraded Lead generation pipeline was built. Robots were weeded out of pipeline A trade mission did occur (Australia) Videos were created Marketing was maintained Metrics were record levels. Awards won for 3 years in a row. Project refunded for 2025/26
Outcomes	<b>Targets Exceeded. Metrics extremely high (see report). Award won from EDA for 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row</b>

### Canada's Premier Food Corridor and Canada's Western Gateway

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow supports the growth of sub-regional collaborations that promote industry clusters by convening them when necessary, hosting meetings, providing advisor services, connecting them with resources, and by actively using those brands in our own communications efforts. This support is ongoing and continual.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow is home to active sub-regional marketing brands that independently invest additional money in Initiatives that raise the profile of the region.
MEASURE	Do the brands have marketing projects underway? Are they being Independently managed by their members? Are they investing money in their own initiative?
TARGET	CPFC and CWG remain active and managed by their own membership.
WORKPLAN	Attend meetings of both groups. Invite them to participate in SouthGrow initiatives. Check in with managing partners periodically to stay apprised of their efforts. Send opportunities to both brands as opportunity allows.
Budget	Administrative work.



Progress	The brands have marketing projects and work underway. Both have been funded by Prairies Canada They are being independently managed by their members. All of the communities have invested in them. We have provided support and continue to do so.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Target Met</b>

### Southern Alberta Tourism Collaboration

EDRAP Alignment	Marketing and Promoting Rural Tourism
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow will partner with Tourism Lethbridge to enable digital marketing of regional tour routes that are under development or have been developed through previous partnerships and will ensure that marketing is run for the region within the operational year.
OUTCOME	A funded digital marketing project is launched by SouthGrow with support from Tourism Lethbridge which promotes regional tours to tourists in the Calgary - Edmonton corridor
MEASURE	Partnership dollars leveraged, ad campaigns created, ad metrics and impact.
TARGET	Double our contribution through partner leveraging Baseline year-1 ad metrics to establish future campaign targets. Tourism Lethbridge contributes matching dollars to a campaign run by SouthGrow.
WORKPLAN	Solicit and secure partnership. Participate in ad campaign planning Participate on steering committee Run ads directly Collect metrics.
Budget	\$10,000
Progress	Partner committed in-kind matching dollars, but project was delayed and never materialized. No advertising was advance because base project was not built. Tourism Lethbridge facing stakeholder pressures within the City regretfully had to sideline this project for now. Executive Committee decided to shelve our work here for the time being and re-consider in the future.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Target not Met – Executive approved shelving project</b>



## Highway 3 Twinning Development Association

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-enabling Infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow supports the Highway 3 Twinning Development Association towards Its goals by providing matching funding, board representation, In-kind support, and by helping to continually secure regional buy-in from our membership. SouthGrow ensures that the H3TDA remains a vibrant, active, and impactful organization.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow gives up to \$3000 in matching funding to Highway 3 and the association remains active and achieving its own goals.
MEASURE	Money Spent Annual Report on H3TDA operations (Are they making progress?). Evaluation of retention of Highway 3 Twinning promises
TARGET	H3TDA maintains a slate of work advancing the goal H3TDA appears to be on track to accomplish their strategic goals.
WORKPLAN	Participate In board meetings Contribute funding upon request and review.
Budget	\$3000 available for matching
Progress	Most of our money was spent in support of H3TDA. Importantly we helped manage staff transitions and provided administrative and monetary support to the Board for that transition. Annual Report shows considerable progress by H3TDA. Many new industry members. So far Highway 3 twinning promises have been retained. Two counties have dropped membership in H3TDA, BUT there have been a dozen private businesses that have joined.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Target Met</b>

## REDA Collaboration

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow collaborates with the other Regional Economic Development Alliances to promote the value of regional partnerships, encourage government interaction with, and leveraging of, the REDAs, and helps to position the REDAs as key players in the provincial Economic Development ecosystem. Within 2024, at least one meeting of the Chairs is held and one meeting is held between the Chairs and the Minister in charge of the provincial Economic Development portfolio.



OUTCOME	SouthGrow and the REDAs achieve their own internally defined goals on this file with respect to communication, relationship building and advancement of our multi-year efforts.
MEASURE	Collaborative efforts undertaken Extension of Government partnerships Government partnership activities achieved.
TARGET	The REDA Chairs meet with the Minister of JET to discuss collaboration goals. The REDAs attend both the AB Munis and RMA conferences. The REDAs partner to sponsor the Economic Developers Alberta Conference. The REDAs contribute to the Invest Alberta Magazine. The REDA Chairs meet to discuss provincial collaboration.
WORKPLAN	Help arrange REDA chairs meeting and attend. Contribute to both RMA and AB Munis conferences Contribute representatives to one of the RMA or AB Munis conferences Contribute funding to EDA sponsorship Have representatives attend all three identified events in some capacity or another.
Budget	\$5000 available for matching
Progress	Collaborative Efforts have been maintained. Secured additional funding from GOA, but no movement on REDA partnership from Jobs, Economy and Trade despite very aggressive work to communicate value. We have successfully re-ignited partnerships with Jobs, Economy and Trade with help from Prairies Canada. Local peer group will be starting back up again in 2025.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Target Partially Met</b>

## RINSA

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow continues to serve on the RINSA board and support the work of the organization, sharing their initiatives with the region, providing a regional perspective to their work, ensuring that their initiatives provide value to rural Alberta, and referring relevant clients in to their programs.
OUTCOME	RINSA maintains its work in the region and covers the needs of our rural stakeholders.



MEASURE	Programming available to rural stakeholders List of partners engaged in RINSA
TARGET	A SouthGrow representative actively participates on the Board of RINSA SouthGrow shares out RINSA programs with our membership, both through newsletters, emails, and social media.
WORKPLAN	Attend Board Meetings Supply Newsletter and Social Media with RINSA content
Budget	Administrative Budget
Progress	Kim Welby is representing SGRI on RINSA board. Program updates from RINSA are now going into our regular newsletters. RINSA partnerships have been maintain. Programming ongoing. RINSA initiatives have somewhat more visibility regionally.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Target Met</b>

### **3. SUSTAIN OR EXPAND MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Sustain Membership**

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow sustains its paying membership within 10% of its current membership income levels (+ or - \$10,000).
OUTCOME	Membership remains relative stable despite rapidly changing fiscal environment.
MEASURE	Municipalities that paid their memberships. Amount of money received vs amount of money invoiced.
TARGET	Retention of membership dollars within 10% of expected income level.
WORKPLAN	Issue Annual Report Issue Invoices Provide council presentations Follow up with any councils seeking to exit and provide value proposition. Leverage board members for Individual conversations.
Budget	Administrative work.
Progress	Memberships were all paid.



	Receivables matched invoices. MD of Willow Creek currently exiting partnership as previously indicated but remains in Alberta SouthWest
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Target Met</b>

### Expand Associate Memberships to Industry and Institutions

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow retains at least 6 existing associate members and adds 2 more for a total end of year of no fewer than 8 associate members. (Current 12)
OUTCOME	SouthGrow has a growing number of associate memberships who care about the success of our initiatives and see value in giving of their time and expertise to further regional opportunities.
MEASURE	Numbers of industry or institutional members recruited.
TARGET	Associate memberships are sustained at 8 members for the current year.
WORKPLAN	Consult with existing associate members to retain all who can be retained. Brainstorm target prospects in the spring of 2024 Draft recruitment letter and 'sales sheet' Discuss special arrangements with Executive Committee, such as reciprocal memberships, special pricing for institutions, or other issues that arise. Present in person to interested prospects by the fall of 2022. Welcome representatives of these members to the Board as associate members by March 2024 at the latest.
Budget	Administrative work.
Progress	Lethbridge Polytechnic joined as a member Solar Alberta joined as a member. Current Associate members are at 10. Terralta has presumably dropped off due to internal restructuring. Status of Exhibition park unclear due to their transition.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Target Met</b>



## PILLAR 2: MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

### 1. REGIONAL PROMOTION

#### Website Improvements

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow updates its website toolkit with additional resources for our communities and enhances the content on our website to host information for site selectors looking at the region. This site selector information is also plugged into our other core websites (SAITI, SAAEP) and is provided to our partner brands or municipalities for their use.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow’s websites are kept fresh and current, with functioning links, more resources, and are useful tools for the region and beyond. The website has content specific to providing site selectors with the information they need for the region to fill out their decision matrix’. Our other websites and partner websites have access to this information.
MEASURE	Website traffic Links clicked. Websites supported.
TARGET	Website is refreshed by end of August 2024 with opportunities for additional improvements throughout the year.
WORKPLAN	Allocate staff resources, review toolkits and update with new content, remove out of date content, review full site for updates and functionality, secure Local Intel tools, set up plugins and arrange on southgrow.com, saaep.ca, saiti.ca, and others. Ensure partners have access.
Budget	\$4000 for local intel plus administrative work.
Progress	Website metrics up Websites supported – southgrow.com, saaep.ca, saiti.com, canadaswesterngateway.com. All websites upgraded and maintained.
Outcomes	Target Met



## 2. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

### Newsletters

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow keeps its internal members and stakeholders well-advised of trends, opportunities, threats, and events that impact community and regional economic development. We also keep them well informed of Provincial Government initiatives.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow members are well-advised on these topics through our newsletters
MEASURE	Numbers of newsletters issued. Number of subscribers Open rate vs. past
TARGET	Newsletters are issued bi-weekly to a distribution list of anyone who wants it. Board members receive a daily Government Relations newsletter forwarded from the SouthGrow office.
WORKPLAN	Maintain production and distribution of newsletters.
Budget	\$2400 for newsletters
Progress	Newsletters consistently issued. 24 for the year. 417 Subscribers AB Today Newsletters still in circulation
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Target Met</b>

### Regional Sponsorships

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow supports stakeholder or partner initiatives with sponsorships to help enable their success. Sponsorships are selected on a case by case basis. Requests that provide benefits in the economic sphere to as many of our member communities as possible are prioritized. The sponsorships will not go to any organizations that exist outside of member communities.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow sponsors important stakeholder or partner events to help them succeed.



MEASURE	Number of sponsorships given reported outcomes of those initiatives.
TARGET	SouthGrow spends its entire sponsorship budget on appropriate initiatives.
WORKPLAN	Inform stakeholders of existence of sponsorship budget. Bring requests before the Board as they arrive.
Budget	\$2000
Progress	\$1000 committed to Tabers Table event \$1000 given to Vulcan mental health supports program for agrifood
Outcomes	Targets Met

## PILLAR 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION

### 1. AG-TECH MARKET DEVELOPMENT

#### A. Ag-Tech Scholarship/Incentive Program

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow actively supports youth engagement in the Hi-Tech Ag sector by partnering with educational organizations in the region to deliver 3 scholarships to students attending Lethbridge College or the University of Lethbridge or Red Crow College who plan to build a career in agri-food in southern Alberta.
OUTCOME	Young people in the region have a growing awareness of hi-tech ag as a viable industry in which to pursue a profession.
MEASURE	Numbers of applications to the scholarship program measured against previous years. Amount of money provided to students. Stretch Goal: Number of scholarships, or number of scholarships increased by member or partner donations.
TARGET	3 scholarships worth \$2500 each are awarded in the fall of 2024.
WORKPLAN	Convene committee to clearly hammer out scholarship details and guidelines. Identify target sponsors to increase scholarship program by early spring of 2024. Draft sponsorship request letter and send to target sponsors with request for partnership.



	<p>Evaluate results of sponsorship drive in June 2024 and set targets for scholarship program.</p> <p>Send out call for applications by beginning of July 2024. Promote on Social media acknowledging sponsors.</p> <p>Evaluate scholarship applicants with sponsor(s) included.</p> <p>Award scholarships by September 2024.</p>
Budget	\$2500
Progress	<p>14 applicants</p> <p>Fundraising targets met</p> <p>\$7500 given out in scholarships to 3 students</p> <p>\$500 spent on marketing</p> <p>Stretch goals not met</p>
Outcomes	Targets Met

## B. Agri-food Conference Representation

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow represents southern Alberta at one global agri-food convention or trade show to build relationships and increase awareness of opportunities within the region. Furthermore, we collaborate with our partners to divide up conference attendance so that we have the maximum reach possible.
OUTCOME	There is increased awareness of opportunities in agri-food in southern Alberta by attendees at the conferences or trade shows we visit.
MEASURE	<p>Was an event attended.</p> <p>Number of attendees at convention.</p> <p>Number of conversations developed.</p>
TARGET	<p>One convention attended.</p> <p>5 conversations started that lead to local introductions.</p>
WORKPLAN	<p>Review conference list with partners.</p> <p>Review costs and scheduling</p> <p>Consult with partners to avoid overlap</p> <p>Attend conference</p> <p>Process introductions and leads</p> <p>Submit narrative report to Board on conference.</p>
Budget	\$5000
Progress	Peter attended Agrifood conference in Singapore and provided report



	Kim and Lyndsay attended trade mission to Australia and provided reports.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Targets Met</b>

### **3. LABOUR MARKET SOLUTIONS**

#### **Grad Retention Strategy Implementation**

EDRAP Alignment	Support for labour force and skills development
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow communicates relevant strategies arising out of the regional grad retention study to stakeholders in the region with specific recommendations for implementation by Q2 of 2024.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow leads on the implementation of strategies arising out of the regional grad retention study. SouthGrow evaluates recommendations and communicates action items out to stakeholders across the region, and provides follow up presentations on the study where possible.
MEASURE	How were recommendations issued? Who where they issued to? Was any follow up action taken? How many presentations were delivered?
TARGET	All recommendations in the study are assigned to stakeholders and letters are issued.
WORKPLAN	Evaluate recommendations Assign to stakeholders and strategize actions Draft recommendations Get reviewed by committee Finalize letters and send Respond to requests for follow up. Follow up with stakeholders in Q4 to inquire if any actions were taken.
Budget	Administrative Budget
Progress	Recommendations issued Issued to project partners No follow up action was taken due to lack of bandwidth and moving targets 2 Presentations were delivered. Evidence of implementation in various places such as the City of Lethbridge (Transit work for students) and places like Taber in current ec dev plan. This deliverable did not meet its full potential. Lack of bandwidth to implement likely the cause.



Outcomes	Target Partially Met
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### Immigrant Retention Study

EDRAP Alignment	Support for labour force and skills development
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow works to fund a regional immigrant retention study for implementation within the operational year that will study best practices for retention of newcomers in rural communities. The project may deliver a final report within the next operational year if timelines are too restrictive for delivery in 2024/25.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow leads on the funding and implementation of a study to retain immigrants in our rural communities.
MEASURE	Was a consultant identified? Was a proposal built and funding applied for? Was the funding successful? Was the project implemented? How many partners joined us in the work?
TARGET	A project is fully constructed, funded, and sourced out within the operational year.
WORKPLAN	Build project plan Recruit partners Apply for funding Secure contractor Initiate project.
Budget	\$5000
Progress	Labour grant changed its focus. Application was written and submitted, but not received due to ministerial pivot. Executive approved pivot to use \$5000 to support Renuwell project instead. \$5000 given to RenuWell to advance Regulatory Pathways project.
Outcome	<b>Target Not Met. Project funding pivoted to Renuwell Project.</b>  We contributed \$5000 to Renuwell regulatory pathways project and helped recruit additional funders to help them realize their goals. They reached their fundraising target and advanced the project to completion and are now implementing construction of 20 sites. <b>AWESOME PIVOT!</b>



#### 4. COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

##### **Housing Needs Assessment**

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow staff provide on-demand support to up to 6 member communities within the operational year to help them complete a housing needs assessment so that they can eligibly apply for grant funding programs.
OUTCOME	Members are supported with the completion of Housing Needs Assessments.
MEASURE	How many assessments were completed?
TARGET	6 Communities are supported and have housing needs assessments completed.
WORKPLAN	Share opportunity with members and profile the free template. Respond to requests, and assist or engage in work as needed to help members to completion.
Budget	Administrative Budget
Progress	6 Assessments were begun as projects 1 withdrew due to recent duplicate work having been completed by ORRSC 5 assessments completed and delivered.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Targets Met</b>

##### **Grant Advice Hot Line**

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow staff provide on-demand support to our member communities, businesses, and non-profits to advise them on where to find appropriate grants to help their needs, and how to properly leverage additional funding, stacking options, and more in order to reach goals.
OUTCOME	Members have experts they can call for free advice.
MEASURE	How many members or other organizations were helped?
TARGET	10 clients are assisted to find the right grant or strategy for pursuing funding.
WORKPLAN	Share opportunities with members. Put a CTA on the website. Advertise the service through our social media.



	Respond to requests and assist or engage in work as needed to help members or other organizations as needed.
Budget	Administrative Budget
Progress	19 Communities and Nonprofits were assisted to find grants for their projects.
Outcomes	Target Met

## **5. SPECIAL PROJECTS**

### **Zero Emissions Vehicle Infrastructure Project (2-year)**

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-enabling infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow manages the disbursement of ZEVIP funding from NRCAN to fund a wide array of charging infrastructure in the region. This project is completed in 2024 and involves an active partnership with the MCCAC allowing many of our member municipalities to get fully subsidized infrastructure, and institutions and businesses to get 46% matching funding for their projects. The full amount is successfully spent by project end in 2024.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow provides members and regional stakeholders with privileged access to significant amounts of money to deploy electric vehicle chargers throughout the region.
MEASURE	Operational plan is on-track for completion in 2024.
TARGET	Est 1.7 million dollars in spend on infrastructure in the region. 2024 Target. Funding is secured, Project Manager hired, operational plan is on-schedule for completion.
WORKPLAN	Work Plan finalized with the MCCAC in April 2022. Process core applications between SouthGrow and the MCCAC. Distribute Marketing and push applicants to the funnel. Submit claims and disburse funds as claims are received and processed. Provide oversight to efforts of MCCAC on our behalf. Proactively promote the program to businesses in our own region in the 3 month head start period.
Budget	\$22,950 (NRED Grant)
Progress	Project Completed. 206 charging stations built across Alberta. ~5 million in capital spend by 52 participants.
Outcomes	Target Met



## EV Bus Pilot Project

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-enabling infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow completes multi-year application process to get EV bus for highway 4 corridor funded, with funding landed within 2022 and bus purchased and operational in-region by end of 2024
OUTCOME	Highway 4 EV bus pilot is funded by the FCM and moves forward to implementation.
MEASURE	Was the bus purchased and delivered? Was the pilot initiated? Is the pilot underway with metrics being tracked?
TARGET	Bus is purchased and delivered by fall of 2024.
WORKPLAN	Apply to NRCAN for additional funding to complete project. Find conversion facility for McNab to complete commission through. Facilitate delivery of vehicle and payment of invoices. Lay out project expectations and tracking for Society and launch program.
Budget	Administrative Work and pass through grant funding.
Progress	Project delays moved finalization of this project forward yet again. 2025/26 completion will be final year to achieve our goal. Delivery agency has moved to Claresholm. Goal is two EV vans purchased and delivered in 2025.
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Targets Delayed till next year</b>

## Supply Chain Opportunity Identification Project (Import Replacement Project)

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	Together with Economic Development Lethbridge, SouthGrow launches a 2-year Supply Chain Identification project that profiles regional inputs and outputs from our 200 largest industrials, investment opportunities, red flags, and more, and captures that information in a database to begin matchmaking and the sharing of opportunities. This project is underway by summer of 2022 with a contractor hired and implementing the deliverables. Project moves into phase 2 by summer of 2023 for completion in 2024.
OUTCOME	Supply Chain Identification project is underway with contractor in place. Database is set up and in use. Over 100 stakeholders have been fully profiled,



	introductions have begun, and investments and red flags have been discussed by project committee.
MEASURE	Number of stakeholders contacted. Number of stakeholders that have shared metrics. Number of connections made. Number of investment opportunities identified. Number of red flags identified.
TARGET	200 stakeholders contacted. 100 share their information 10 introductions made 10 red flags identified 10 business opportunities or investments identified.
WORKPLAN	Sign funding agreements. Develop and issue RFP or job listing. Hire for position, plan program, initialize Monitor consultant/employee progress. Provide support. Manage finances. Report on outcomes.
Budget	\$10,000 (out of \$20,000 two-year contribution for a total project cost of \$162,000)
Progress	200 businesses identified 125 businesses surveyed and interviewed Introductions made Red flags identified Opportunities identified Next steps profiled
Outcomes	Target Met

### Blackfoot Language Signage Deployment Year 2

EDRAP Alignment	Marketing and promoting rural tourism
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow, Community Futures Lethbridge Region, and Tourism Lethbridge lead a partnership that includes the Blood Tribe with the intent of leveraging partner contributions against grant funding to assemble a pool of money used to fund the deployment of Blackfoot language place signage across south-western Alberta. This project will pursue the assemblage of a significant funding package for Q2 of 2024 for a continuation of the successful program. Funding will be given in the form of micro-grants to



	applicants with the Blood Tribe informing the language on the sign. The partners will utilize the already developed common brand for the program.
OUTCOME	Blackfoot language signage is deployed for locations across southern Alberta such as municipalities, institutions or tourism locations. Reconciliation is advanced by the inclusion of visual Blackfoot language markers on the landscape. Tourism is advanced by the enrichment of the landscape with signs of its heritage.
MEASURE	How much money was contributed by the partners? How much money was leveraged? Was the program funded in time to implement? If so, how many applications were received? What is the potential for continuation into future years?
TARGET	\$70,000 assembled by Q2 of 2024 and project resumes under the admin of one of the partners in Q3 of 2024
WORKPLAN	Identify lead partner for continuation of project (likely Community Futures) Secure partner contributions Secure matching grant funding Re-open intake, and serve on steering committee. Work with partners to market and profile the opportunity to fully subscribe program.
Budget	\$5000
Progress	\$70,000 assembled for program from partners and grants Program was funded in time to implement All funding used up as of June 2025! Program has more funding incoming for continuation and expansion.
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Target Met</b>

## 6. FLAGSHIP PROJECT

### **SouthGrow Power Project**

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow continues to work on the implementation of a < 5MW solar installation that will be owned and operated by SouthGrow the intent of funding the organization. Within the operational year, we will reevaluate the business case under the new regulations to determine if there is still a viable path forward. If there is, we will re-engage NRCAN and attempt to secure up to \$1 million in capital investment from the GOC. If this is successful, the



	project will be ready to go. We will also re-engage Lethbridge County to inform them of our position and secure their commitment to allowing us to proceed if we are successful.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow re-evaluates the business case and is in a position to continue with the project, or recommend cancellation as determined.
MEASURE	Is there still a business case? Was any seed funding identified? Can the project still achieve what it set out to do? Was the Board able to make a go-no-go decision?
TARGET	All the information is available for the Board to make a fully informed go-no-go decision.
WORKPLAN	Evaluate new regulatory and price environment. Update modelling. Determine feasibility Apply for NRCAN funding. Take final decisions to the Board.
Budget	\$51,250 set aside for permitting.
Progress	Business case has been re-established and is promising Seed funding identified from FCM and Prairies Canada Board has been able to make decisions on progressing the project. Prairies Can has invited us forward to full application. No Transmission study required. Project going in the right direction.
Outcomes	Target Met

## **7. TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY**

### **Local / Regional Waste Solutions Study**

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	If SAEWA is unable to deliver on their goals of creating a thermal waste solution as envisioned, SouthGrow will convene a coalition of the interested in Southern Alberta to discuss alternative approaches to implementing a waste solution in our region. SouthGrow continues to solicit feedback from SAEWA on their progress with Hitachi, and brings forward the topic to each quarterly board meeting throughout the year for review and discussion.



OUTCOME	SouthGrow closely follows the development of thermal solutions in southern Alberta and is prepared to participate in the conversation if existing solutions fall through.
MEASURE	Was SAEWA successful in securing a advantageous deal with Hitachi? Do they have an alternative plan? What direction does the board want to go?
TARGET	Continuous evaluation and action when directed.
WORKPLAN	Monthly check-ins with SAEWA Quarterly conversations on the issue with the board
Budget	Target of Opportunity
Progress	SAEWA has a new path forward. They presented to the full board and information has gone back to councils with board members for their consideration. There is a path here towards implementation of several smaller incinerators.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Target Met</b>

### Farm and Crop Conference

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow continues to explore the possibility of hosting a Farm and Crop conference in the region in collaboration with other stakeholders. This event would be directly focused on providing thought and industry content to producers. By the end of the operational year, SouthGrow should know if there is an opportunity to pursue event creation here or not.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow is positioned to pursue the hosting of a Farm and Crop Conference in Lethbridge in collaboration with partners if the right situations align.
MEASURE	Is there a demand? Would a conference be a duplication of services? Are other organizations interested? Is there a partner we can support to host one instead?
TARGET	Determine need and/or demand within the operational year and pursue if opportunity allows.
WORKPLAN	Discuss project with interested stakeholders. Support or partner if possible.
Budget	Target of Opportunity



Progress	No path forward yet identified. Conversations held with several private entities who might be interested in leading on this. Worth keeping tabs on.
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### Labour Attraction Marketing

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow will explore funding opportunities which could enable a Labour Market Attraction Marketing Campaign, focused on profiling opportunities for relocation to Southern Alberta in target markets, which will include economically depressed regions of Canada. If a funding avenue is identified, we will pursue it.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow identifies a funding stream to leverage to do Labour Market Attraction Marketing.
MEASURE	Was funding identified? Was it applied for? Were any partners recruited? Is there a viable project here?
TARGET	Completion by Q4 of 2024
WORKPLAN	Watch funding streams and discuss project with potential funders. Look for inclusion in 2025 NRED intake.
Budget	Target of Opportunity
Progress	No path was identified to secure funding for this kind of marketing within the calendar year.

### Energy Innovation Pilot Projects

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow will watch for opportunities and funding with which to continue partnering with FortisAlberta on pilot projects in our member municipalities.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow and FortisAlberta keep alive their ongoing pilot project partnership initiatives with a relevant project.
MEASURE	Was a project identified? Is there funding available? Was funding secured? Is there a viable project here?



TARGET	Completion by Q4 of 2024
WORKPLAN	Research possible projects with partners Discuss funding implementation Apply for funding and recruit partners Initiate a project if possible.
Budget	Target of Opportunity
Progress	Was asked for a project for potential funding by Prairies Canada. Nothing ever came of this unfortunately. We delivered a prospectus on a Floating Solar Feasibility study for \$25,000. We supported the three applications for federal funding with FortisAlberta for Demand Side Management Pilots which we would work to facilitate in our communities. Waiting on decisions!



## SPECIAL THANKS

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To the **Government of Alberta**, Ministry of Jobs, Economy, and Innovation for their partnership this year. We hope you reverse course and continue to partner with Rural Alberta.

To **Economic Development Lethbridge** for their continued partnership and belief in growing the economic strength of the region.

To **Alberta SouthWest Regional Alliance** for being the best neighbours a REDA could hope for.

To the **Palliser Economic Partnership** for forging new relationships with us and working together for all Southern Albertans.

To the folks at **Prairies Canada Economic Development** who have supported our work.

To the hardworking people of **Alberta Innovates** and the **NRC**, for supporting local innovators.

To **Invest Alberta** for genuinely partnering and working with us to bring in new opportunities.

To **Tourism Lethbridge** for believing in regional collaboration and working to advance regional wins for all southern Albertans.

To **FortisAlberta** for their ongoing support of our initiatives and sponsorships of our projects.

To the **Regional Innovation Network of Southern Alberta** for running so many programs that support entrepreneurs and innovators across the south.

To **Community Futures Lethbridge Region** for your partnership in the past year on core projects.

To **Alberta Municipalities** for partnering with us on our EV infrastructure programs and for being such a support and help on community energy issues.

To the **Rural Municipalities of Alberta** for supporting the work of REDAs and for advocating in lock step with us on rural energy and land use issues.

To the people of **D-Com Electrical Solutions Ltd.** for always being one phone call away to answer technical questions we don't understand.

To **MNP Taber, D-Com Electrical Solutions Ltd., and Community Futures Lethbridge Region** for sponsoring our annual scholarship!

To **Blood Tribe Economic Development, Community Futures, Economic Development Lethbridge, Alberta SouthWest, and Tourism Lethbridge** for partnering to host an Economic Summit together.

To the **Milk River Cable Club** for ALSO being experts on call for all things telecom related.

To the **Economic Developers Alberta** for their professional support and resources that help us succeed.



To the people of the **Highway 3 Twinning Development Association** who work hard to have our central agri-food highway twinned.

To the **Energy Futures Lab** for including SouthGrow and the SAAEP partners in their critical work to reshape our energy system and for prioritizing what matters to rural communities.

To the members of the **Executive Committee** who go above and beyond as volunteers to further the work of our alliance.

Very specifically to **Councillor Jim Willett of the Village of Coutts** for his long tenure as Chair of our organization. Few people know how much of his time and treasure he has freely given to represent the region. His efforts have shaped our success and has ensured our membership has been well represented.

To our staff, **Peter Casurella, Kim Welby, Jessie Stilson, Emma Dering, Makayla Gross, Annie Ebenmelu, Morgan Elemans and Mark Serebryansky** for giving of your time and talents to advance our mandate.

*THANK YOU ALL!*



