

Operational Plan

2023- 2024



Prepared by Peter Casurella, Executive Director
March 2023 for the SouthGrow Management Board.

PART I: STRATEGIC LADDER

REGIONAL VISION

The Vision of the Region is a broad statement that encompasses what sort of economic environment our membership would like to see realized. It informs SouthGrow's mission and gives us a direction to lay our efforts towards. SouthGrow cannot achieve the vision alone, but we can play our part to realize it.

The SouthGrow region is home to collaborative, prosperous and vibrant communities which have diverse economies, anchored by a progressive agricultural industry.

THE ASSOCIATION'S MISSION

This is our mandate to realize the vision above. We feel that this is the mission we can pursue to help realize the Regional Vision.

In collaboration with its members and supporters, SouthGrow will proudly deliver economic development programs and initiatives that contribute to growth potential throughout the region.

CORE GOALS

These are the core goals that we will keep in focus as we look to achieve our mission:

- I) To foster a south-central Alberta shared vision for regional economic development.
- II) To create awareness and support for new economic development opportunities in the region
- III) To encourage and enhance collaborative approaches to regional economic development services delivery.
- IV) To provide south central Alberta with a unified voice on regional economic development priorities



OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

The Core Goals inform our Strategic Pillars. These pillars are the objectives that we will focus on, and through which we will filter our scope of work, limiting ourselves to an achievable level of work. If a project or deliverable falls outside these pillars, it is outside our association's mandate to pursue. If it is within these pillars, we have the option of pursuing it, provided we have the organizational capacity to do so.

Strategic Collaboration

Build regional economic development capacity by promoting a shared vision and fostering a unified sense of purpose through collaborations with member communities, industry and business, and government.

Marketing & Communications

Promote south-central Alberta's lifestyle and business advantages to internal and external audiences.

Economic Development & Innovation

Facilitate new and existing regional economic development opportunities through targeted programs that reach domestic and international audiences, and in partnership with member communities, regional businesses/industry, and government.



OPERATIONAL PLAN 2023 / 2024

These are actionable projects within each Strategic Pillar that we build one-year timelines for. Each tactic is fleshed out with a SMARTER goal, desired outcomes, measures of success, specific targets, and a three-year work-plan broken down by quarter to allow the organization to remain flexible yet on-pace.

These projects are proposed. Due to board approvals and other possible extenuating circumstances, we may not initiate all projects in the 2023-2024 year, however all Government of Alberta funding will be spent on programs and operations listed in this operational plan.



Pillar I: Strategic Collaboration

- I. **Member Engagement**
 - A. Annual Council Presentations
 - B. Councillor Training
 - C. Government Relations
 - D. IEDC Accreditation
 - E. Economic Development Summit
 - F. Community Ec Dev Matchmaking

- II. **Build and Sustain Collaborations**
 - A. Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership – Government Education
 - B. Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative
 - C. Canada's Premier Food Corridor and Canada's Western Gateway
 - D. Southern Alberta Tourism Collaboration
 - E. Highway 3 Twinning Development Association
 - F. REDA Collaboration

- III. **Sustain or Expand Membership**
 - A. Sustain Membership
 - B. Expand Associate Memberships

Pillar II: Marketing & Communications

- I. **Regional Promotion**
 - A. Website Improvements
 - B. Market the Region Globally

- II. **Internal Communications**
 - A. Newsletters
 - B. Regional Sponsorships

Pillar III: Economic Development & Innovation

- I. **Ag-Tech Market Development**
 - A. Agri-food Scholarship Program
 - B. Agri-food Conference Representation

- II. **Broadband Deployment**
 - A. Project Manage upgrade of remaining regional POP sites.

- III. **Labour Market Solutions**



- A. Regional Grad Retention Strategy
- B. Implementation of Regional Grad Retention Strategy

IV. **Community Supports**

- A. Regional Investment Initiative

V. **Special Projects**

- A. Zero Emissions Vehicle Infrastructure Project (2-year)
- B. EV Bus Project
- C. Demand Side Management Pilot Project (PENDING)
- D. Supply Chain Opportunity Identification Project
- E. Blackfoot Language Signage

VI. **Flagship Project**

- A. SouthGrow Power Project

VII. **Shelved Wish List Projects**

- A. Solar Rural Land Use Study
- B. Local Waste Solutions Study



PART II: TACTICAL PLAN

PILLAR I: STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

I. 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 once-per-year recorded update to all members that they can play for their councils, and will distribute the monthly Mayors and Reeves reports to the full board with
OUTCOME	40% of the SouthGrow members receive a report directly to council.
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.

Councillor Training

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow hosts an Economic Disaster Resilience & Recovery Course for Municipal Staff and Councils that is attended by at least 40 individuals from across the region. This session will take place in quarter 1 or quarter 3 of the fiscal year.
OUTCOME	Staff and councillors from across the region have an increased awareness of proactive work that is needed to prepare for, and recover from, and economic disaster.
MEASURE	Did training session (s) occur.



	How many people attended.
TARGET	One session held in Q 1 or 3 of 2022. 40 registrants.
WORKPLAN	Find appropriate date and venue, book trainer, advertise event and fill up attendance, secure catering and value-added elements, host training, report.
Budget	\$3000

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 beaurocrats 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? Which commitments were retained past the May election?
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	\$2000 (Specifically sourced from Membership dollars)
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IEDC Accreditation

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow secures a membership with the International Economic Development Council, applies for Accredited Economic Development Organization status, and completes the deliverables necessary for accreditation. This will be completed early in the fiscal year. The process will culminate in an SGRI representative attending the IEDC annual conference in Dallas TX in October to receive our accreditation (board or staff member as convenient)
OUTCOME	SouthGrow is an Accredited Economic Development Organization.
MEASURE	Did we join IEDC? Was the accreditation process successful? Did a representative attend the conference in Dallas?
TARGET	Accreditation through the IEDC.
WORKPLAN	Procure membership in April and launch accreditation process. Complete accreditation by end of June (target) Book 1 representative in to IEDC conference for October and send them. Contingency: If accreditation presentation not available till 2024, consider delaying conference trip unless alternative funding can be found.
Budget	\$10,000

Economic Development Summit

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow hosts a regional Economic Development Summit in 2023 that provides stakeholders with access to speakers and engagement on important economic development topics, trends, and issues that affect our region. Importantly, this year we attempt to expand the summit scope to include active partnerships with stakeholders in the Alberta SouthWest and Palliser regions with the intent of growing the event into a pan southern-Alberta partnership. Dates this year have been left vague to accommodate potential partnerships.



OUTCOME	The summit is held in a member community with local hosts and excellent attendance as measured against previous years. (2022 - est 80 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 70 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

Community Ec Dev Matchmaking

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow surveys its member municipalities by the end of Q2, 2023 to identify what community level Ec Dev projects are being pursued by our administrations, and then offers matchmaking introductions between communities who are pursuing similar projects for potential collaboration. SouthGrow also identifies resources and connections which might help each community to pursue their projects.
OUTCOME	All 29 rate-paying member communities and EDL are afforded the opportunity to share what they are working on, get introduced to communities pursuing the same goals, and are offered resources and connections who can assist with their projects.
MEASURE	Were the communities surveyed? How many responded? How many introductions were made? Were resources shared? Did any communities collaborate?



TARGET	All 29 rate paying municipalities and EDL are surveyed. Resources and connections are shared with those who respond.
WORKPLAN	Develop Survey, Send to CAO's/EDOs/leave open for two weeks/review responses/make connections/write resource reports to support respondents/share outcomes with all communities to encourage further participation/respond to any latecomers/follow up to see how things went.
Budget	Staff Work

II. BUILD OR SUSTAIN COLLABORATIONS

Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership - Government Education

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-Enabling Infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow will continue to advocate for a unified vision for Alberta's electrical grid and regulatory reform within the province with the intent of creating certainty in the market for investment and updating Alberta's regulatory codes to account for the modern energy mix and issues on the ground. We will do this by communicating the issues at stake to decision makers along with SAAEP's partners across the province.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow communicates the need for a unified grid vision for Alberta to relevant government entities. Progress is made on communicating opportunities and liabilities in the electricity market to key decision makers and relationships are advanced with key partners.
MEASURE	Did we present to decision makers? How many and who? Were any actions taken by decision makers in response to our efforts? How many partners joined us in the effort?
TARGET	The partnership is maintained or expanded (currently SAAEP and the Energy Futures Lab). Some targets include Alberta Municipalities, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta or other municipalities.
WORKPLAN	Talk internally with SAAEP partners about messaging goals. Re-affirm partnership with EFL. Send invitations to recruit AB Munis, RMA and others as identified. Proceed with coalition of the willing. Book meetings with



	decision makers in Edmonton, have meetings, send letters, consider paid advertising focused on decision makers and industry.
Budget	Administrative Budgets / Government relations / SAAEP budgets

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 as detailed in other plan sections.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow maintains the SAITI collaboration with meaningful work underway.
MEASURE	Partnership is active and has ongoing projects. Programs pursued under the partnership meet their goals.
TARGET	At least one project is advanced under the brand within 2023 as detailed elsewhere.
WORKPLAN	Participate In bi-monthly meetings of the collaboration. Drive forward projects as assigned to SouthGrow under other work plans.
Budget	Administrative work and project specific budgets.

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.

Southern Alberta Tourism Collaboration

EDRAP Alignment	Marketing and Promoting Rural Tourism
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow's will partner with Tourism Lethbridge and contribute funds to enable digital marketing of regional tour routes that are under development or have been developed through previous partnerships.
OUTCOME	A funded digital marketing project is launched by Tourism Lethbridge, enabled by our funding, that 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.
WORKPLAN	Participate in ad campaign planning Help secure leveraged dollars from partners Pay contribution Participate on steering committee Collect metrics.
Budget	\$10,000

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

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.
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 JEND 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.
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	\$1500 available for matching

III. 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.

Expand Associate Memberships to Industry and Institutions

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow retains at least 4 existing associate members and adds 2 more for a total end of year of no fewer than 6 associate members. (Current 10)
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 6 members for the current year. (current 10)
WORKPLAN	Consult with existing associate members to retain all who can be retained. Brainstorm target prospects in the spring of 2023 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.



PILLAR II: MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

I. 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	The SouthGrow website is kept fresh and current, with functioning links, more resources, and is a useful tool 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 2023 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.

Global Marketing Project

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow project manages a global digital marketing campaign to promote the agrifood opportunities in southern Alberta. This is based on content created in 2021 and run as a global campaign in 2022. Content is refreshed in early 2023, youtube ads are created and added to our stable of ads in early 2023. Global marketing is continued through 2023 with these ads. In addition, SouthGrow supports the attendance of a regional representative at the Site Selectors Guild conference in Texas in the spring of 2023 (grant dependent).



OUTCOME	The region continues its unified digital campaign and has increased global awareness as measured by digital metrics. The region continues to build partnerships with global site selectors.
MEASURE	Campaign spend vs. metrics Contacts developed.
TARGET	SouthGrow has the campaign running by February of 2023 with refreshed content and funded by ads. SouthGrow applies for \$10,000 in non-profit ad spend from Google and ads it to our advertising pot for running our youtube ads. Campaign runs for a full 12 months (February to February). Collect meaningful data on penetration and conversions from this pilot for base metric in future campaigns. A representative attends the Global site selectors guild conference in Texas.
WORKPLAN	Sign Canexport grant when it arrives. Apply for Google ad funding Refresh ad content Set up advertising campaign Run and administer campaign for 12 months. Sponsor SAITI representative to attend Site Selectors Guild Conference in Texas. Report to grant funder.
Budget	\$10,000 (\$41,850 total project value from partners and grants)

II. 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

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



PILLAR III: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION

I. 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 up to 4 scholarships to students attending Lethbridge College or the University of Lethbridge 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	Up to 4 scholarships worth \$2500 each are awarded in the fall of 2022. Applicants are within 10% of 2022 numbers. (22)
WORKPLAN	Convene committee to clearly hammer out scholarship details and guidelines. Identify target sponsors to increase scholarship program by early spring of 2023. Draft sponsorship request letter and send to target sponsors with request for partnership. Evaluate results of sponsorship drive in June 2023 and set targets for scholarship program. Send out call for applications by beginning of July 2023. Promote on Social media acknowledging sponsors. Evaluate scholarship applicants with sponsor(s) included. Award scholarships by September 2023.
Budget	Up to \$2500



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	Was an event attended. Number of attendees at convention. Number of conversations developed.
TARGET	One convention attended. 5 conversations started that lead to local introductions.
WORKPLAN	Review conference list provided by contractor in 2022 Review costs and scheduling Consult with partners to avoid overlap Attend conference Process introductions and leads Submit narrative report to Board on conference.
Budget	\$5000

II. BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT

POP Site Upgrade Program

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-enabling infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow identifies remaining regional supernet POP sites that require upgrading to 10G, and works with regional ISPs, municipalities, Service Alberta, and Axia-Bell to secure the funding to upgrade as many sites as possible or which make sense. The projects will be identified and funded within the year.
OUTCOME	POP sites in the SouthGrow Region have funded upgrades underway to bring them up to 10 Gigs.
MEASURE	How many sites were identified for upgrades?



	<p>How many sites had a rationale for upgrading?</p> <p>How many municipalities partnered?</p> <p>How many ISP's partnered?</p> <p>Did Service Alberta support the project?</p> <p>How much money was leveraged?</p>
TARGET	POP sites where upgrading is possible have funding in place to do so.
WORKPLAN	Work with Axia-Bell to identify upgrades. Identify ISP's that use those sites. Get quoted costs from Axia-Bell, divide up sites into 'projects', approach partners to secure funding, get further discounts from Axia-Bell if possible, initiate work.
Budget	\$5,000

III. LABOUR MARKET SOLUTIONS

Grad Retention Strategy Project

EDRAP Alignment	Support for labour force and skills development
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow serves as the funding partner for the ongoing regional grad retention strategy project and successfully administers it to completion in May of 2023.
OUTCOME	The regional grad retention strategy is presented to the members and partnering organizations and informs implementation work.
MEASURE	<p>Was the strategy completed?</p> <p>Were grants reported on successfully?</p>
TARGET	<p>Project is completed and wrapped up by May of 2023</p> <p>Afterwork is evaluated in the implementation project.</p>
WORKPLAN	<p>Maintain representation on project steering committee.</p> <p>Pay invoices as received.</p> <p>Complete project reporting to funders and stakeholders</p> <p>Lead planning for strategy implementation.</p>
Budget	\$16,598.33



Grad Retention Strategy Implementation

EDRAP Alignment	Support for labour force and skills development
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow leads on the implementation of strategies arising out of the regional grad retention study by serving as the lead funding applicant and convener of partners.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow leads on the implementation of strategies arising out of the regional grad retention study. SouthGrow gathers a partnership, applies for funding, and helps to create the conditions upon which afterwork can be built.
MEASURE	How many partnerships were leveraged? How much money was leveraged? Were new projects identified? Was funding secured? What projects were initiated?
TARGET	1 Grant and partner funded project is initiated within the year.
WORKPLAN	Evaluate strategy Select relevant project Assemble partners Identify funding Apply for funding Initiate project.
Budget	Administrative Budget or yet-to-be identified funds.

IV. COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Community Opportunity Profiling

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	Through our SAITI partnership SouthGrow will work with Invest Alberta to create a network of connected communities who share information and act as ground-level support for the provincial investment attraction ecosystem. SouthGrow will utilize a template provided by Invest Alberta, hire an appropriate contractor in collaboration with Alberta SouthWest, and get the opportunity identification template filled out for all of our communities. We will then submit these templates to Invest Alberta and utilize the information in our own marketing efforts with SAITI. The project is complete within the operational year.



OUTCOME	Opportunity Profiles have been completed for all 30 SouthGrow communities and shared with Invest Alberta.
MEASURE	How many profiles were completed and shared? Was the information used in investment conversations?
TARGET	30 profiles are completed and shared.
WORKPLAN	Apply for CanExport grant with SAITI Partners. Liaison with Invest Alberta. Identify and hire appropriate subcontractor. Oversee work. Take delivery and pay amounts owing. Share profiles with IA. Route appropriate information into our own marketing efforts, websites, and campaigns.
Budget	\$5000 (out of \$17,600 allocated within CanExport Grant as part of SAITI project. Profiled above, its \$41,850 in total)

V. 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 by 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 by the end of 2022 for completion in 2024.
TARGET	Est 1.7 million dollars in spend on infrastructure in the region. 2022 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	\$150,000 (This is all reimbursement for admin costs and will include an additional flow through of \$1.7 million in reimbursements that pass through out books.)

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 Fall of 2022.
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 2022.
WORKPLAN	Secure final buy-in from Handi-bus committee. Edit agreement to adjust for new equipment. Get agreement signed. Order vehicle. Facilitate delivery of vehicle and payment of invoices. Lay out project expectations and tracking for Society and launch program.
Budget	Administrative Work (Large grant funding amounts from FCM and MCCAC that is pass-through. \$417,900)

Demand Side Management Project

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-enabling infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow partners with Fortis to deliver a Demand Side management program funded by NRCAN's Toward Net Zero Homes program, applied for in Q4 of 2022. This partnership would see SouthGrow serve as money handler for a \$600,000 project to install and monitor demand side management technology in homes and businesses in SouthGrow Communities so that Fortis can measure the impact on demand management



	from these pilots to be able to project to the regulator the impact on grid function that can be achieved from mass implementation. This project specifically focuses on the installation of heat pumps to measure their efficacy year-round and demand side impact on energy use. The program study would be conducted by Dr. Myers from the University of Calgary.
OUTCOME	1) Deploy heat pumps in 40 residential homes that have natural gas-fired furnaces and air conditioning units; 2) Track, monitor and analyze the change in energy consumption, utilization and reductions in GHG emissions for one full calendar year and seasons; 3) Share outcomes with provincial stakeholders to promote the use of heat pumps as a key component of reaching net-zero goals; and 4) At a high level, encourage a cultural acceptance of a changing energy environment in the high carbon environment and a growing awareness of the financial benefits of energy efficiency projects.
MEASURE	Was the grant application successful? Did the project move ahead? Were timelines for implementation met? How many Heat Pumps were installed? Was a research paper produced by the U of C? Was the information shared with stakeholders, regulator, and the GOA?
TARGET	Money is secured in Q1 of 2023. Project is implemented for April of 2023. Internal project metrics as defined elsewhere are met by Fortis and U of C.
WORKPLAN	*SouthGrow only: Sign funding agreement, take care of admin paperwork, help advertise program in SouthGrow Communities, publicise the program, provide steering committee with a representative, support Fortis and U of C towards success, compile reports and grant reporting, work with partners to celebrate and share outcomes of program, use outcomes to inform government and stakeholder education work.
Budget	\$29,500 *This is only admin portion at 5% of a \$628,670 partnership project applied for with Fortis. Grant is Pending. \$560,500.00 in pass-through money.

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)

Blackfoot Language Signage Deployment

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 Q4 of 2023 (grant timelines) and a project implementation date in Q1 of 2024. 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 utilized a common brand for the deployment.
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	\$50,000 assembled by Q4 of 2023 and project initiative under the admin of one of the partners in Q1 of 2024
WORKPLAN	Recruit additional partners to achieve \$25,000 in partner money. Locate grant opportunity. Divide responsibilities. Wait on funding. Develop admin apparatus for program. Sign funding. Implement and put out call for applications.
Budget	\$5000 (towards a \$25,000 pot of partnership money to secure \$50k -100k. Being led by Community Futures Lethbridge.)

VI. FLAGSHIP PROJECT

SouthGrow Power Project

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow advances 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 attempt to Identify eligible land, purchasers for the power, and a viable grid connection while completing a feasibility study. By the end of the operational year, we will reach the point where the Board will need to decide on a go-no-go for the project.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow has the information it needs to decide on whether or not to move the project forward to the funding stage and grid connection application.
MEASURE	Can appropriate land be identified? Is there capacity in the grid at the connection point?



	<p>Can a customer be secured?</p> <p>Has a feasibility study been conducted?</p> <p>Does the board have the information it needs to make an Informed decision?</p>
TARGET	All the information is available for the Board to make a fully informed go-no-go decision.
WORKPLAN	<p>Identify high quality land for the project.</p> <p>Identify a connection point with capacity.</p> <p>Identify possible customers.</p> <p>Identify consultants to build the feasibility study.</p> <p>Find funding for feasibility study</p> <p>Write grants (if needed).</p> <p>Confirm legal structure required for operation.</p> <p>Confirm partnership interest from Lethbridge College for OM.</p> <p>Put information in front of Board for Decision</p>
Budget	\$42,500

VII. SHELVED WISH LIST PROJECTS

Local / Regional Waste Solutions Feasibility Study

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow delivers an investigative report into new regional /municipal waste solutions with the intent of informing the local conversation in a rapidly developing market segment. The study is commissioned and delivered within the operational year.
OUTCOME	A report is delivered to our stakeholders which evaluates the current state of the waste industry, profiles various solutions (with user cases where possible) and makes case-study recommendations for potential implementations in southern Alberta.
MEASURE	Was the study commissioned? Was the study complete? Was the study shared with stakeholders?
TARGET	Completion by Q4 of 2023
WORKPLAN	Define the research question, pursue conversations with qualified researchers, set price point, solicit quotes, select contractor and tender, oversee project, evaluate deliverables, finalize, release to stakeholders.



Budget	\$? (Likely would cost \$15 - \$20k to implement)
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Solar Rural Land Use Study

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	Within the operational year, SouthGrow will commission a study from an appropriate expert on the impact of solar developments on farmland supply with a specific focus on evaluating the amount of marginal land available in Southern Alberta for solar development, the impact of solar development on farmland fertility beyond after reclamation, and recommendations for municipal and provincial policies related to land-use bylaws. The study will be complete within the operational year.
OUTCOME	The impacts on rural land use from the continued development of utility scale solar arrays are better understood and inform government policy decisions related to land use bylaws and/or legislation.
MEASURE	Was the study complete? Was it shared with stakeholders?
TARGET	Completion by Q4 of 2023
WORKPLAN	Research possible contractors. Discuss price-points. Assemble partnership / funding package, commission work, review and evaluate, finalize, report, share.
Budget	\$? (Likely would cost \$15 - \$20k to implement)



BUDGET

INCOME

Income	Amount	
Membership Fees	92,136.00	Per-Capita
Associate Member fees	1,000.00	Fixed Rate
JEI Operational Grant	125,000.00	Grant
Registrations, Sponsorships, Other Fees	20,000.00	Miscellaneous
Highway 3 Admin Support	2,275.00	For services
Interest	0	Bank
CanExport Grant	21,850.00	Secured
CanExport Partner Contributions	10,000	Contribution
GST Recovered	14,000.00	Estimate
ZEVIP Admin	150,000.00	Admin/Contractor
ZEVIP Passthrough for Program	1,500,000.00	Reimbursements
Grad Retention Project - liability	16,598.33	Carried Forward
Supply Chain liability carried forward	30,000.00	Carried Forward
EDL - Supply Chain	5,000.00	Contribution
Prairies Can - Supply Chain	51,000.00	Recoverable
NRED Budget Matching Carry-forward	15,000.00	Confirmed
NRED Grant (Unconfirmed)	21,250.00	Confirmed
FCM Rural EV Handibus Grant	417,900.00	Confirmed
Toward Net Zero Homes	590,000.00	*Unconfirmed
Projected Income		
3,082,009.00		



EXPENSES

Strategic Collaboration	Amount	Description
Develop and Build Partnerships	2,500.00	Relationship building
Board Development	4,000.00	Executive Committee training
Econ Development Summit	5,000.00	Annual Event
Regional Tourism Collaboration	10,000.00	Regional Tourism Marketing
H3TDA Support	3,000.00	Matching fund Transportation
REDA Collaboration	1,500.00	REDA Collaboration
Councillor Training Event	3,000.00	Annual Training
Sponsorships	2,000.00	Annual Sponsorship fund
Government Relations	2,000.00	Relationship Building and Education

Total	33,000.00
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Marketing and Communication	Amount	Description
Advertising/Subscriptions	1,500.00	Admin Expense
Travel - Regional	3,000.00	Driving around region
Newsletters	2,400.00	Bi-weekly newsletters
Websites	600.00	Admin Expense
AGM / Other Events & Meetings	5,000.00	Hosting AGM and other
SAETI Marketing Project and Regional Work	41,850.00	Global Marketing Project
Local Intel Subscription	4,000.00	Investment Tools Websites
Agri-food Conference Attendance	5,000.00	To Attend Conference(s)

Total	63,350.00
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Economic Development	Amount	Description
Scholarships	2,500.00	Scholarship Program seed money
Broadband	5,000.00	POP Site ID and Upgrade
Supply Chain Identification	96,000.00	Owed to contractors
ZEVIP Program Admin	150,000.00	NRCAN Project
ZEVIP Reimbursement Pass-through	1,500,000.00	Passthrough to recipients
Blackfoot Language Signage	5,000.00	Contribution to project
SouthGrow Power Project	99,540.00	For feasibility, permitting
Grad Retention Project	16,598.33	Carry forward owing
FCM Rural EV Handibus Grant	417,900.00	*Pass-through to partners
Towards Net Zero Homes	560,500.00	*pass-through budget line

Total	2,863,038.00
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Administration

Staffing Costs (2x FTEs)	110,000.00	Retained contractors
Annual Operational Reserve	3,000.00	For targets of Opportunity
Administration Support	2,000.00	Manger support work
Executive Honorarium/Mileage	2,000.00	Executive or other Board members as claimed
Bookkeeping	1,500.00	QuickBooks and Bookkeeping advice
Professional Fees	4,800.00	Annual Audit
Insurance	2,600.00	RMA Insurance Annual
Telephone and Internet	1,800.00	Rogers, Google
Office Supplies	1,000.00	Misc. supplies
Postage Courier Freight	800.00	Post office box, mailings
Meetings and Hosting	2,000.00	Executive meetings, Misc. meetings
Miscellaneous	0	
GST	15,000.00	GST spend - recoverable.

Total	146,500.00
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Total Budget	3,150,888.00
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*Income vs Expense	-23,879
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[About SouthGrow Regional Initiative](#)

SouthGrow is an economic development alliance of twenty-eight south central Alberta communities committed to working together to achieve prosperity for the region. Representing over 180,000 people, SouthGrow is committed to assisting communities, organizations, businesses, and people in the region to further their economic development goals and to maintain the high quality of life.

