



3 Year Strategic Plan 2012-2015 >>

3 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The Economic Development Alliance of Southeast Alberta (EDA) is a non-profit organization funded by the City of Medicine Hat, the Towns of Bow Island and Redcliff and the Counties of Cypress and Forty Mile.

The EDA provides relevant industry knowledge and support to companies in four priority sectors;

- **Agriculture and greenhouses,**
- **Advanced technology and manufacturing,**
- **Energy including renewables and**
- **Tourism.**

The organization is administered by a volunteer Board of Directors with equal representation from the nine founding members. It is further supported by industry through four voluntary Advisory Committees who provide guidance to the Board on opportunities and constraints affecting their industries and communities. This critical link results in timely industry-specific events, identification of growth companies and a detailed knowledge base with mentorship potential.

EDA Vision, Mission and Values >>

Vision: The region of southeast Alberta is the most prosperous "centre of choice" which retains and attracts investment by businesses and families, supporting a high quality of life.

Mission Statement: The Economic Development Alliance of Southeast Alberta is the hub for regional economic development through collaborative partnerships, stimulating growth and wealth for the region.

Core Values

- **Creating sustainable economic growth**
- **Maximizing the value of resources**
- **Working collaboratively**
- **Working with the region's businesses that are willing to grow**



Overarching **Strategic Directions**>>

1 Business Retention and Expansion

Promote and facilitate economic diversification and expansion through support of the operations and growth of local businesses and industry.

2 Investment Attraction

Increase the level of new entrants and business investments in the region.

3 Marketing and Communications

Through a comprehensive suite of marketing collateral and tools, provide up-to-date, pertinent and current information on regional activities as well as the opportunities, trends and advantages associated with business development in southeast Alberta.

1

Business Retention and Expansion

Promote and facilitate economic diversification and expansion through support of the operations and growth of local businesses and industry.

Business retention and expansion (BR&E) initiatives promote job growth and wealth generation by helping community leaders identify and address barriers to survival and growth facing local businesses as well as to identify and pursue new opportunities.

It is important to consider that business success is due in part to the ability to respond and adapt to a constantly evolving environment. Because of factors such as increased competition, transitions in advanced technologies and higher operating costs, entrepreneurs are taking a more hands-on and active role in managing their businesses and in developing their

products and services. This translates into an increased role for the EDA to educate and provide professional development tools to support the private sector. The EDA is committed to facilitating success in the current environment by helping businesses become self-sufficient.

In an economic environment with tight fiscal restraints business development can be challenging, particularly in concerns to costs associated with start-up and research and development; the EDA will advocate for new and existing programs that address the needs of business and industry in the region. The EDA will continue

to develop relationships and strategic alliances, and collaborate with both private and public sector representatives to identify opportunities and respond to barriers. In addition, the EDA will support the College of Medicine Hat in delivering a formal Business Retention and Expansion program in the region.

2 Investment Attraction

Increase the level of new entrants and business investments in the region.

Investment attraction is a strategy that focuses on bringing new business investment to a community or region. Successful investment attraction involves targeted, responsive, well-researched and planned approaches to companies about niche opportunities.

A company's decision to expand or relocate is based on the consideration of several alternatives. Decisions are based on meaningful information, accurate comparisons and detailed evaluations that result in locating an environment that gives them a competitive edge. For these reasons it is necessary to provide

up-to-date information on key criteria such as labour, real estate/land availability, infrastructure and planning, logistics, financing and services, and quality of life.

The EDA has already compiled substantial data to provide to potential investors. For example, its website is a wealth of readily-available information. Over the next three-year period the EDA will continue to build on, refine and communicate current region-specific information to investors with an interest in doing business in southeast Alberta. This positions the Business Development Team to be ready and responsive to opportunity.

The EDA will also implement the recommendations outlined in the Solar Energy Investment Attraction Strategy; investigate additional strategies for competing with other provinces and countries that provide incentives as part of their investment attraction approach as well as align EDA priorities with those of the provincial government and/or industry associations.

Sub-sectors such as bio-fuels will be investigated by the EDA in terms of opportunities.

3 Marketing and Communications

Through a comprehensive suite of marketing collateral and tools, provide up-to-date, pertinent and current information on regional activities as well as the opportunities, trends and advantages associated with business development in southeast Alberta.

With the evolving economic climate of the last two years, the priority sectors have been re-defined into four areas; these changes have created a need to re-evaluate and redefine our marketing plan. The EDA will ensure a high Return on Investment for our funding partners and is attuned to regional and industry trends effectively reaching the target audience.

A comprehensive suite of marketing collateral will be created to effectively promote the services offered by the EDA's Business Development Team. This will give regional businesses up-to-date tools and

pertinent information to effectively grow and expand, while also ensuring that they are prepared for investment opportunities. The marketing plan will integrate both traditional tools, such as print materials and news releases, with online marketing: email campaigns, social media and website development. The growth of the web and both the cost-effective and resourcefulness of social media has created a need for a strategy to be developed that takes into consideration marketing trends and the proper use of these tools.

In addition to the marketing and

communications tools mentioned above, the EDA is committed to taking a lead role in the development of strategic plans for each of the five Municipalities it serves; this will allow the EDA to align common priorities across the region so that it is better equipped to work more strategically toward common goals and objectives.

Strategic Sectors



Agriculture and Greenhouses

With considerable amounts of access to sunlight, space, and ready access to energy, greenhouses have significant long-term economic development potential. Over the next three-year period the EDA will focus its efforts on realizing this potential for greenhouses and all of the agricultural sector through activities aimed at developing a "buy-local" awareness campaign; facilitating increased business acumen and professional capacity among agricultural producers; exploring collaboration opportunities for agri-tourism; and advocating for government policies and programs that reflect the needs of the industry.



Advanced Technology and Manufacturing

Advanced technology and manufacturing are significant to region, offering a variety of products such as: playground equipment; tires; processing catalysts and carbon black (for use in the manufacturing as well as the oil and gas sectors); kitchen cabinets; fertilizer; modular structures (for home and commercial use); and water



diversion systems. Recognizing the growth potential in this sector, the EDA will continue to support and participate in partnering projects with the objective to increase the competitiveness of companies and provide support and assistance through the services of our Business Development Team.

With a focus on business retention and expansion, the EDA will support the sector through one-on-one mentoring, brokering industry information, facilitating access to financial and other government resources, and offering educational events to increase the business development and technical capacities of our clients.



Energy

The energy sector in southeast Alberta has two key components: conventional oil and gas operations and renewable/alternative energy, both seen as focus areas for the EDA.

The renewable / alternative energy sector presents a significant growth opportunity particularly in wind energy. From information gleaned through the 2011 Business Retention and Expansion for Wind Development research project, the EDA will continue in a role that supports the plans to develop three major wind farms and transmission upgrades. Through efforts to disseminate information and deliver capacity building activities, the EDA will promote primary, secondary and tertiary opportunities for regional companies.

Since publicly announcing a focus on solar energy development and plans to develop an Investment Attraction strategy, there has been an increase in interest from local companies as well as companies in other provinces and countries. The development of this strategy will assist the EDA in determining the likelihood of successfully attracting investment to the region and in identifying both a strategic approach and actions for pursuing associated opportunities such as manufacturing. These objectives will be achieved by opening up dialog with municipalities to determine what they have to offer to interested parties while at the same time exploring the expectations of prospective investors.

The EDA will also investigate opportunities in sub-sectors such as bio-energy.



Tourism

The regional tourism sector has incredible untapped potential and is in the process of building leadership capacity to implement a holistic strategy for regional development. There exists the potential for packaging tourism products, building regional capacity, and accessing government funding to drive sector initiatives. In addition, heritage, cultural and agricultural assets that have the potential to translate into experiential tourism products could provide a basis to generate new lines of business and new markets. This would as well, have the potential to generate jobs and wealth that result from increased visitation of resident and non-resident visitors.

The EDA will continue to be part of the Advisory Committee tasked with overseeing the development of a tourism brand for Medicine Hat. Through collaboration and partnerships they will determine where their expertise fits within the overall strategy and work to achieve the identified objectives.

Analysis >>

The EDA will continue to actively monitor its progress and ensure its strategic directions remain relevant. As conditions change, its dynamic structure and flexible strategic objectives will be well-positioned to realign existing plans and/or add new actions.

It will formally review its progress on an annual basis and make any necessary adjustments. From this 3-year strategic plan, more detailed tactics are planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated; keeping the strategic plan a living, dynamic tool and creating long-term value for the EDA and its constituents.



