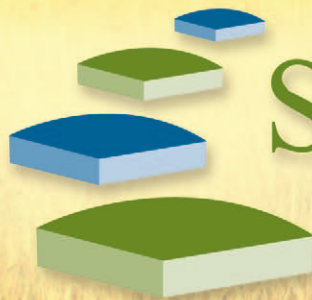




SouthGrow

2011-2012 ANNUAL REPORT



SouthGrow

Regional Initiative



Message from Chair

A bend in the road is not the end of the road... unless you fail to make the turn. ~Author Unknown

This last year, SouthGrow faced its most challenging year since inception in 2003. Never has our tag line *Creating Opportunities...* been such a driver for the member representatives that served on the Board and the various committees. But, we navigated the turns and we created opportunities and SouthGrow is stronger than ever.

Our challenges began with changes to Regional Economic Development Alliance (REDA) funding being announced by the provincial government in February 2011. As a result of these changes, several municipalities chose to take the stance that unless the province shows greater support for REDAs they were discontinuing membership in SouthGrow. Respecting the changes in funding and structure imposed by the Province and the frustration of many of our municipalities over funding to REDAs, the Board and Committees rose to the challenge of positioning SouthGrow to meet the new strategic goals.

In this Annual Report, we show how SouthGrow worked hard to create opportunities for our member municipalities and our region. We show how we collaborated with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Alberta Irrigation Projects Association, Alberta Southwest, Community Futures-Lethbridge Region, Economic Development Lethbridge, Industrial Research Assistance Program of the National Research Council, Lethbridge College and University of Lethbridge to make a difference in key areas such as innovation, commercialization and technology, renewable energy and water for economic development. We provided value to our members by providing information on the Secrets of High Performing Organizations and the Opportunities and Challenges related to the Oil and Gas Sector. We worked with our member municipalities to provide plans and tools to improve their sustainability. And, we continued to communicate the value of REDAs, the importance of strong rural/urban relationships, and the need for adequate and stable funding for REDAs to our MLAs and members of Treasury Board and Enterprise.

Our strength comes from the dedicated individuals that work and volunteer for SouthGrow. Since its inception in 2004, SouthGrow has been guided by individuals committed to creating opportunities for regional economic development. One of these dedicated board members was Jon Stevens, an inaugural SouthGrow board member representing the Town of Picture Butte. Jon passed on March 14, 2012. His legacy is as a builder and promoter in this SouthGrow region. He served as a board member and Chair of SouthGrow for 8 years, Mayor of Picture Butte for two terms, and other associations, such as Prairie Tractor Club, Community Futures, Lions Club, and the Picture Butte Chamber of Commerce were recipients of his service, expertise and grounded knowledge. It is in fondest that we pay tribute to Jon.

Our ten-member board and our five project committees' members worked hard and provided strong leadership and firm guidance to our staff, advisors and consultants to ensure success. I believe our hard work and dedication has reaped many rewards. As I look ahead, I am proud to say that SouthGrow is stronger than ever; will continue key projects on behalf of its membership in the areas of innovation, commercialization and technology, renewable energy and water for economic development; and continue to operate without increasing its burden on member municipalities. It is true... there is no education like adversity.

Yours truly,

Sandra Nelson

Chair

SouthGrow Regional Initiative

Ensuring Member and Regional Sustainability

By developing community economic development profiles and working with key stakeholders in member communities, SouthGrow worked to ensure member community sustainability. Consultants worked with each member municipality's key decision makers and influencers to develop a strategic economic development plan for each community. Community information was reviewed, planning sessions with council members, administration and other key decision makers/community leaders were facilitated and vision, goals, strengths, and challenges were discussed. Each plan detailed the research and discussions, resulting in action plan items for each community that will help meet the vision for a sustainable future.

SouthGrow also developed Community Economic Development Profiles for each member municipality, which are housed on www.albertacommunityprofiles.com. These profiles enhance member community visibility to potential investors, workers, businesses and others who may be seeking more information about the community.

Improving Productivity

SouthGrow Regional Initiative participated in a Productivity Improvement Pilot for rural communities. Productivity Alberta piloted an awareness campaign during October and November 2011 aimed at rural Alberta using SouthGrow communities to test the improving productivity messaging. The campaign consisted of print advertising in the Town of Cardston, Town of Coaldale, Town of Raymond, Town of Taber, Town of Vauxhall, and Town of Vulcan. In addition, radio spots on B93 and Country 95 featured SouthGrow's productivity message. Finally, there were billboards near the Town of Taber and the Town of Vulcan.

Secrets of High Performing Organizations

On March 7, 2012, SouthGrow Regional Initiative hosted "Secrets of High Performing Organizations" in the Town of Taber featuring key note speakers Jim Bottomley and David Irvine. Three interactive and informative sessions were presented to the audience of 85: Clusters and Collaboration: Innovation for Municipalities & Government; The Age of Innovation: Improving the Organization; and The High Performance Organization: The Power of Alignment. Speakers discussed the better value proposition for stakeholders and the importance of powerful, dynamic values driving performance.

Water for Economic Development

The Water for Economic Development project involved assessing the water needs of the SouthGrow members and identifying solutions to ensure the communities have access to water to ensure adequate growth for the future. Funding partners for the initiative included County of Lethbridge, Alberta Irrigation Projects Association (AIPA), and Alberta Agriculture - Irrigation Secretariat. This project culminated in a meeting of members of SouthGrow communities as well as of Irrigation Districts on March 1st to discuss collaboration on potential water needs for economic development until the year 2050.

Alternative Energy Assessments

The Alternative Energy for Economic Development Initiative was aimed at assessing the alternative energy readiness for economic development of each of the 22 member communities. Lethbridge College's International Wind Energy Academy personnel presented the awareness/education sessions in each community and conducted the assessments. The project resulted in each member community receiving an action plan that addresses the needs of the communities based on the assessment, allowing each community to position itself appropriately in the renewable energy sector.

Alternative Energy Advantage

SouthGrow Regional Initiative continues to collaborate with Alberta SouthWest and Economic Development Lethbridge to create a critical mass of interested parties who will encourage and support the creation of the right environment for the renewable energy industry to thrive as part of the Alberta Energy portfolio. The abundance of natural resources in southern Alberta associated with solar, wind, and bio-mass make this region a natural compliment and compelling addition to the story of Alberta's energy portfolio. SouthGrow and its partners are working to ensure progress can be made in southern Alberta in the renewable energy sector.

RINSA

SouthGrow Regional Initiative continues to work with key innovation stakeholders Community Futures – Lethbridge Region, Economic Development Lethbridge, Industrial Research Assistance Program of the National Research Council, Lethbridge College and University of Lethbridge in the Regional Innovation Network of Southern Alberta (RINSA). The network, funded by Advanced Education & Technology and Alberta Innovates – Technology Futures and led by Technology Development Advisor Bill Halley, focuses on helping businesses bring new products and processes to market leveraging the innovation systems in Alberta to maximize efficiency and province-wide collaboration.

2012 Economic Development Summit

Ron Lagemaat and Shilpa Stocker represented SouthGrow Regional Initiative at Minister Doug Horner's 2012 Economic Development Summit in Edmonton on January 30, 2012. Representatives from 62 different economic development and related agencies from across the province attended the Summit. Minister Horner's keynote speech focused on Harnessing Our Potential - Achieving a Strong Economic Future through Collaboration. Information was shared by speakers on Economic Development in the 21st Century and Alberta's Economic Landscape in A Global Context. Roundtable discussions focused on understanding economic development opportunities and challenges and tools and actions for collaboration.

SouthGrow was asked to submit pre-conference discussion points pertaining to economic development challenges that the province is facing. SouthGrow took this opportunity to suggest the need for more strategic thinking in economic development and the need for increased support to economic development agencies that help diversify economies, integrate rural and urban interests and attract investment.

SouthGrow is a region that is unified, prosperous and sustainable.

OUR MISSION:

Creating Opportunities... to accelerate and enhance the quality of life, development and sustainability of the SouthGrow region of Alberta.

SouthGrow Communities:

- Blood Tribe
- Cardston County
- MD of Taber
- Vulcan County
- County of Warner
- Town of Cardston
- Town of Coaldale
- Town of Coalhurst
- Town of Milk River
- Town of Picture Butte
- Town of Raymond
- Town of Taber
- Town of Vauxhall
- Town of Vulcan
- Village of Carmangay
- Village of Champion
- Village of Coutts
- Village of Lomond
- Village of Milo
- Village of Nobleford
- Village of Stirling
- Village of Warner



SouthGrow Management Board

- Chair, Sandra Nelson,
Village of Stirling, Community Representative
- Vice-Chair, Mayor Ray Bryant,
Town of Taber
- Vice-Chair, Councillor Ron Lagemaat,
Town of Coalhurst
- Treasurer, Jon Stevens,
Town of Picture Butte, Community Representative
- Director, Councillor Sheldon Day Chief,
Blood Tribe
- Director, Councillor Roger Houghton,
Cardston County
- Director, Councillor Dannie Lien,
Village of Warner
- Director, Mayor Kym Nichols,
Village of Carmangay
- Director, Councillor Greg Robinson,
Town of Raymond
- Director, Councillor Maggie Kronen,
Town of Cardston

Project Committees:

Alternative Energy

- Maggie Kronen, Town of Cardston
Katie Walker, Village of Milo
Murray Rochelle, Town of Taber
Gord Brown, Town of Vauxhall
Leslie Warren, Vulcan Business
Development Society

Productivity Improvement

- Jon Stevens, Town of Picture Butte
Dannie Lien, Village of Warner

Ensuring Rural Sustainability

- Ron Lagemaat, Town of Coalhurst
Carol Zelenka, MD Taber
Judy Sanderson, Town of Vulcan

Water for Economic Development

- Maggie Kronen, Town of Cardston
Glenn Logan, Village of Lomond
Jeff Shaw, Town of Cardston
Don Wentz, Town of Coaldale

MLA Roundtable

- Sandra Nelson, Village of Stirling
Ray Bryant, Town of Taber
Kym Nichols, Village of Carmangay



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