

# The Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership: Your Questions Answered

## 1. Why was the Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership formed?

- SouthGrow completed the “Gateway to Alberta – Opportunity Identification Project” in February of 2006. It was identified in one of the business cases that this region held the critical mass of raw resources to warrant further exploration of the alternative energy opportunity. The focus would be on the potential to attract investment and assist in the creation of wealth for its members and stakeholders. Based on this information, SouthGrow included “Alternative Energy” as a key project in their 2007-2008 Operations Plan.
- The Alberta SouthWest Regional Alliance (encompassing Pincher Creek and area) and Economic Development Lethbridge, both identified renewable energy production and manufacturing as opportunities for further exploration in their operational plans.
- At the invitation of SouthGrow’s 10 member Management Board, Alberta SouthWest Regional Alliance and Economic Development Lethbridge were invited to collaborate on this initiative.
- In September 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the three Economic Development organizations, forming the Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership (SAAEP).
- In late February 2007, SAAEP was notified that its application to the Federal Government, under their Bio-Fuels Opportunities for Producers Initiative (BOPI) had been approved for \$300,000.

## 2. With this funding what studies were completed?

### a) Bio-fuel Feasibility Study

This study determined the realistic capacity in the region to provide the raw products for the bio-fuel industry. Other components of the study included;

### b) Opportunity Identification for the Bio-fuel Industry

This study identified the types of investment attraction opportunities to further build the value chain in this sector, taking this opportunity from the straight processing of bio-fuels, to exploring the potential for manufacturing of components, logistics and support industries required.

## c) Regional Municipal Waste to Energy Situational Analysis

This analysis determined the actual cost of waste management in every one of the 39 municipalities in the SAAEP region. Consultations were held with the CAO’s and all five Waste Management Authorities. Three different technologies of waste to energy options were examined to determine the feasibility of a regional waste to energy processing facility.

### d) Public Consultations

It captured vital information that is needed in regards to alternative energy, and what the stakeholders expect from the municipal, provincial and federal governments.

### e) Communication and Strategy Plan

This comprehensive study provides concise “next steps” that target key industry players to initiate national and international processing and manufacturing investment opportunities. Rationale as to why they should be targeted and why they should locate in the region further supports this study.

## 3. Why were two of the larger projects focused on building the bio-fuel industry?

All these projects were primarily funded by the federal government’s program “Bio-fuels Opportunities for Producers Initiative”, as well as producer and industry partners. The funding did not support projects focused on wind and solar. However, SAAEP may explore funding sources for further expansion of these opportunities, depending on the future direction of the organization.

## 4. What is the future direction of SAAEP?

Many of the SouthGrow members see the need to explore the investment opportunities for the region in regards to alternative energy production and manufacturing. After consulting with the members of SAAEP, their rate payers, all levels of government and industry, it has been identified that this opportunity is bigger than what the three sponsor organizations have the capacity to capture. A new model of this “partnership” will be explored.

## 5. What work needs to be done first?

With input from all the members of SouthGrow, Economic Development Lethbridge and Alberta SouthWest, the organization will determine the best model to meet the needs of individual organizations and SAAEP as a whole, including establishing the governance and membership of this specific Economic Development Initiative. The organization will address requirements of SouthGrow members to ensure inclusion and representation as required and appropriate and explore additional provincial, federal and industry funding.

## 6. Does exploring the future direction of SAAEP require additional costs to be incurred by the member municipalities?

No, the municipalities are not being asked to contribute any funding.



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# SouthGrow

Regional Initiative

**Creating Opportunities...**

## **We Are...**

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

## **SouthGrow's Annual Celebrating Opportunities Awards**

SouthGrow Regional Initiative is kicking off its second annual "Celebration of Creating Opportunities ..." Awards with a call for nominations. In an effort to recognize success and reward the efforts made towards developing the local and regional economies, SouthGrow Regional Initiative will be honouring organizations/agencies/municipalities/businesses through the second annual "Celebration of Creating Opportunities ..." Awards. This year a new category is introduced: **Excellence in Innovation**. The new category celebrates improvement in the quality of life, business or operations as a result of innovative products, processes or programs. Winners will be announced at the second annual "Celebration of Creating Opportunities ..." Awards Ceremony to take place

in January 2009. Nominations are sought in the following categories:

- **Excellence in Investment/Business Attraction**
- **Excellence in Business Retention/Growth/Expansion**
- **Excellence in Collaboration/Partnership**
- **Excellence in Innovation**

Between October 1st and December 15th, 2008, residents of and organizations in member municipalities are encouraged to nominate best examples of organizations/agencies/municipalities/businesses in the SouthGrow Regional Initiative area. Self-nominations are encouraged.

More information is available at [www.southgrow.com](http://www.southgrow.com).

## **Longtime southern Alberta resident at helm of SouthGrow ...**

At SouthGrow Regional Initiative's Management Board meeting on September 24th, Jon Stevens, citing his current health challenges, submitted his resignation as Chair. SouthGrow's Management Board fully endorsed long-time southern Alberta resident, Sandra Nelson, as the new Chair of the organization. Nelson, raised on a farm in the County of Warner, joined the Board in 2007 and is well recognized for her two terms served on council in the Village of Warner and as one of the sparkplugs that moved the concept of the Warner Hockey School from dream to reality.



"I have a great deal of respect for Jon. Under his leadership, SouthGrow embarked on several innovative projects. I am committed to the continued progress of these projects as we collaboratively

showcase the strengths of all 27 of our member municipalities. It is the strength of the membership that will build our success. The organization of SouthGrow is also about getting to know the people of the membership. The more we share our challenges and solutions, I realize, no matter the size of the municipality, there are many commonalities that support opportunities to build on one another's strengths. Opportunities certainly surround us. It is our job to identify them and capitalize on them for the economic development benefit of all. I embrace the challenge and look forward to coordinating with the member municipalities," comments Nelson.

## **SouthGrow Website Showcases Successes**

SouthGrow is proud of its people, products and pride. To learn about of the diverse successes, go to [www.southgrow.com/site/successes.asp](http://www.southgrow.com/site/successes.asp)



## Regional Water Assessment

SouthGrow Regional Initiative is having a unique study conducted by the University of Lethbridge, Department of Economics. Understanding and ensuring the capacities of the sustainable water supply is key to the economic well being of our region's agriculture and processing sector. Specifically, researchers will:

- Detail the existing water situation, both societal and economic.
- Explain the availability of water in the region for societal and economic purposes.
- Identify the existing legislation pertaining to water.
- Explain the situation surrounding water licenses in the region.
- Discuss the impact of existing water licenses as well as other legislation.



- Suggest the changes that are required in order to ensure an optimal balance between societal and economic use of water.

It is expected that once an initial assessment of the region has been conducted, the researchers will outline some "next steps" for SouthGrow Regional Initiative that will enable it to better make communities aware of water's impact on economic development and investment attraction, now and in the future.

## SouthGrow In Touch With Members

During the month of July, SouthGrow Regional Initiative conducted a needs assessment whereby Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) and Economic Development Officers (EDOs) of all 27 member municipalities were surveyed. The objectives of this "Visitation and Validation" were to:

- Gather information from member communities about their readiness to respond to and attract investment opportunities;
- Understand community needs and community perception of SouthGrow among member economic development practitioners; and
- Receive feedback from members that can be used by SouthGrow's Strategic Collaboration Committee to develop its training plans for the next year; by the Marketing and Communications Committee to increase awareness; and by the Economic Development & Innovation Committee to identify projects that may assist communities with opportunities and challenges.

Results were presented to members of all three SouthGrow committees as well as the Management Board on September 16th, 2008. The discussion resulted in the development of an action plan geared to closing gaps identified through the needs assessment. Below are some of the items included in the action plan:

- SouthGrow Regional Initiative's capacity building and training efforts will focus on topics such as the basics of economic development, site selection process, business retention and expansion, identifying opportunities, and importance of a chamber of commerce.

- The Marketing and Communications Committee will implement a marketing campaign to encourage businesses to self-register in the regional business directory ([www.southgrow.com/side/rbd.asp](http://www.southgrow.com/side/rbd.asp))
- Up-to-date Community Economic Development Profiles for all member communities will be developed.
- The feasibility of a business succession marketing tool to enable business retention in smaller communities will be assessed.
- Communication regarding SouthGrow's project progress with member economic development practitioners, CAOs and Councils will be improved by consistent and timely updates.
- The newsletter and the website will be enhanced to better address the needs of members and both regional and external businesses and industries.
- A forum for member economic development practitioners to network will be investigated.
- An Ambassador Program to market SouthGrow will be launched.
- A Mentorship Program to encourage members to be more engaged will be developed.

**We would like to hear from you. Is there anything else that SouthGrow Regional Initiative should be doing to meet stakeholder needs. Send your comments to [info@southgrow.com](mailto:info@southgrow.com)**

# PROJECT PROGRESS

## Innovating for the Future

SouthGrow is well established with businesses in traditional sectors as well as emerging sectors and given the strength of these, the existence of two post-secondary institutions, and the location of several government research oriented agencies in the region, SouthGrow views the assessment of commercialization and innovation assets, systems and supports in the region a priority.

SouthGrow's assessment consists of a "big picture" view of innovation in the region, with innovation defined as the transformation of knowledge into new products, processes or services that are or will be utilized by consumers or industry stakeholders. The assessment acknowledges that innovation is related to productivity, which ultimately leads to economic growth. In the "big picture" view, SouthGrow's study will identify the supports and agencies that are available at the federal and provincial level, show examples of innovation throughout the region covering a cross section of industries (both traditional and emerging) and recommend next steps for the region.

SouthGrow recognizes that often innovation is thought of in terms of the "high-tech" developments only. High technology is only one component of the larger innovation picture. Two

projects involving communities that are being initiated in the focused area of technology include:

- Economic Development Lethbridge has partnered with the City of Lethbridge, lunctus Geomatics Corp and the Government of Alberta to create a business case proposal for a Technology Transition Centre. This proposed centre would help stimulate new company development in specific high-tech fields related to programs at the University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge College and other research facilities.
- Vulcan Business Development Society's Innovation Project will allow the society to fully develop a number of advanced technology projects as well as the skills needed to sustain these innovative projects.

Other examples of innovation that will be detailed in the study will clearly show that innovation can take place in any and every industry and that innovation can improve productivity, quality of life, or quality of operations leading to positive change and growth. **If you know of any innovations in the SouthGrow region that should be included in the study, please feel free to e-mail the researchers at [westwindsmanagement@shaw.ca](mailto:westwindsmanagement@shaw.ca)**

## Productivity

SouthGrow Regional Initiative was one of four Regional Economic Development Alliances (REDAs) to receive a special grant of \$50,000 to implement a project related to productivity in the region. The project involves identifying the players in the manufacturing cluster in the SouthGrow region, consulting with companies on productivity and innovation challenges and opportunities faced, conducting focus groups to learn what the region requires in order to improve productivity and providing support to implement various pro-

ductivity improvement tactics at the industry level. Productivity improvement tactics, including training, tours, network sessions and service supports will be developed in direct response to industry feedback and will be tailored to the challenges and opportunities faced in the SouthGrow region. The project kicks off in November 2008 and will be completed by April 2009. **If you are interested in participating in this project in any capacity, contact us at [info@southgrow.com](mailto:info@southgrow.com) or call 403-381-0615.**

## Community Economic Development Profiles

SouthGrow Regional Initiative is in the process of revising Community Economic Development profiles for its members. These profiles summarize key features, assets and strengths of member communities and are an excellent tool providing

a glimpse of the community to tourists, residents, investors and site selectors. The new profiles will be available for download at [www.southgrow.com/about/communities.asp](http://www.southgrow.com/about/communities.asp) or through member municipal offices in November.



## Creating Opportunities...