

**Attracting Investment to Your Community**

On February 9th at SouthGrow's General Meeting, Allan Matthews, a site selector expert informed member communities how major investors make decisions and what communities can do to make their community the location of choice. The workshop session focused on how community decisions can prepare communities for investment. The following are key points on the role of your community and how it can be proactive:

- o Identify what your community wants – what is acceptable?
- o Be realistic and identify the businesses located in the next larger town for clues as to what can be realistically attracted to the community.
- o Stay informed and understand retailing trends.
- o Discuss and agree on a vision for the area. Once there is agreement amongst council and the wider community, a plan needs to be developed that allows that vision to be realized.
- o Once you agree on a vision, market your community using well-researched marketing and promotional materials.
- o Ensure proper information such as land-use maps, zoning information, town maps and development permit information are up-to-date and ensure they are available in print and electronic format (preferably free of charge).
- o Train front-line and municipality staff so that they make a positive first impression on behalf of the municipality and provide a welcoming attitude to visitors and site selectors.

SouthGrow Regional Initiative will be developing and hosting a workshop whereby member communities get information on how to be site selector friendly through an informative and easy-to navigate website.

**Training Opportunity for SouthGrow Members**

Aboriginal Awareness – This workshop focuses on gaining a better understanding, awareness, and knowledge of the Aboriginal communities (Blood, Piikani, and the non-land based Metis) in order to foster relationship building. The workshop will deal with topics such as historical and cultural information about Alberta's diverse Aboriginal population, business reasons for developing relationships with Aboriginal communities, major barriers and opportunities concerning Aboriginal economic development, organizational strategies for enhancing relationships and an introduction to aboriginal protocols.

The one-day session will take place in Lethbridge, with participants able to select either the session on May 25th or May 26th, 2006. To register or for more information, call Mary Swanek (381-5414)

**SouthGrow A Proud Sponsor of Chinook Entrepreneur Challenge**

The Chinook Entrepreneur Challenge was officially launched on April 7th. The Challenge is the first business planning competition of its kind in Canada to be held in a non-metropolitan setting. Designed and targeted towards individuals, new and existing businesses (agriculture and non-agriculture), and post-secondary students who have a sustainable business idea, the Challenge brings together mentors, investors, partners and participants. While there are cash and in-kind business related prizes, the real reward is the resulting business plan that has been refined through education, competition and networks of people involved in the competition and that allows participants to act on their dreams.



The competition will include participants and businesses in the City of Lethbridge, the City of Medicine Hat, and the Counties and Municipal Districts of Newell, Vulcan, Cypress, Willow Creek, Pincher Creek, Ranchland, Lethbridge, Cardston, Warner, Taber, Forty Mile, Crowsnest Pass, Waterton and Acadia. Special Areas 2, 3 and 4 are also include in the region.

The competition is divided into two categories:

- (a) an agricultural-based business category from primary production to value added ventures; and
- (b) a general business category, which includes all other business related categories, including energy, hi-tech, manufacturing, tourism, services, etc.

Registration Deadline: May 19, 2006  
 Seminar Sessions Begin: May 25, 2006  
 Business Plan Submission Deadline: August 9, 2006  
 Semi-Finals: September 30, 2006  
 Final Awards: October 14, 2006

For more information, visit [www.chinookchallenge.com](http://www.chinookchallenge.com)

Or, contact:

Email: [info@chinookchallenge.com](mailto:info@chinookchallenge.com)  
 Lethbridge area: 320-6044  
 Taber area: 223-3984  
 Medicine Hat area: 528-2824  
 Pincher Creek area: 627-3020



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**SOUTHGROW'S ANNUAL OPERATIONS PLAN COMPLETED**

SouthGrow Regional Initiative's Operations Plan for Fiscal Year 2006/2007 was approved at a regular Management Board meeting on March 2, 2006.

SouthGrow's vision of sustaining, growing and uniting our region will continue to be achieved through its three core businesses:

- Strategic Collaboration
- Marketing and Communications
- Economic Development and Innovation

Each of the core businesses consists of a number of initiatives and activities that SouthGrow will undertake over the operational year. Core sources of revenue to fund the initiatives are derived from a per capita annual membership fee and from a conditional grant from Alberta Economic Development leveraged through membership fees. The financial commitments made by the partners ensure the completion of the projects and providing the funding to allow hiring one part-time employee to be the SouthGrow Coordinator. Additional funding from other sources and federal and provincial agencies will also be accessed.

The Operations Plan will be presented to the general membership at the Annual General Meeting 6:00 pm June 21, 2006, Lethbridge Lodge. If you would like to preview the Operations Plan, please contact the SouthGrow office.

**TOURISM INVESTMENT SYMPOSIUM 2006**

Alberta Economic Development's Tourism Development Branch is planning a Tourism Investment Symposium in Edmonton on October 31, 2006. The Symposium consists of community presentations, networking and meeting facilitation. SouthGrow member communities are encouraged to participate in the Tourism Investment Symposium and promote their tourism development/investment opportunities, benefiting from exposure to a large number of high net worth domestic and foreign investors. The deadline for submission of community information is July 14, 2006.

For more information, communities can contact:

Jennifer Cairns, Tourism Investment Coordinator  
 Tourism Development & Services, Alberta Economic Development  
 6th Floor, Commerce Place, 10155 – 102 Street  
 Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L6  
[Jennifer.cairns@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Jennifer.cairns@gov.ab.ca)

**SouthGrow Marketing & Communications - Are You Up To The Challenge?**

At the General Meeting of the SouthGrow Communities Membership in February, the Marketing & Communications Committee issued a challenge to all individual members to make one presentation to a service or business club/association/group in their community about SouthGrow. The goal of this challenge is to raise SouthGrow's awareness within member communities. Representatives are encouraged to contact the SouthGrow office (381-5414) with information on the progress they are making with this challenge.

*Creating Opportunities...*

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 Milo  
 Village of Vauxhall  
 Village of Stirling

Village of Warner  
 County of Lethbridge  
 MD of Taber  
 Vulcan County  
 County of Warner  
 Blood Tribe



## PRODUCTS...

*examples of SouthGrow's resources and diversity.*

### Six Opportunities Identified for the SouthGrow Region

SouthGrow Regional Initiative is pleased to announce that six business opportunities have been identified under the guidance of SouthGrow Regional Initiative's Economic Development and Innovation Committee, targeted at investment attraction in the region.

Three of the business cases focus on opportunities for production and manufacturing in the:

- Solar Energy Industry
- Wind Energy Industry
- Biogas Energy Industry

Three of the business cases explore potential development in the following industries:

- Intermodal Transportation Systems
- Confectionary Manufacturing
- Ready Meals Processing

The SouthGrow Region provides a key connection along the extensive CanaMex Highway Trade Corridor that extends from Alaska to Mexico. The exploration of opportunities encompassed two phases. The first phase generated an assessment report of trade goods moving along the corridor and identified existing transportation practices, patterns and tonnage as well as commodity and transportation modes. The second phase of the project built on this information and further examined opportunities for targeted foreign companies and industries to expand or grow in the area by taking advantage of the unique trade corridor.

SouthGrow Regional Initiative invites interested investors and business people to contact the SouthGrow office for more information on these business cases.

### SouthGrow Compiling Regional Business Directory

SouthGrow Regional initiative is compiling a regional business directory. The project entails contacting businesses in SouthGrow member communities and gathering contact information as well as details pertaining to sector, number or employees, foreign ownership, export/import activity, and product/service provision. This business directory will ideally be available to member communities for their economic development purposes, as well as through an electronic database on SouthGrow's website for use by site (location) selectors and other web site visitors. The project starts on May 1st with anticipated completion for the initial phase at the end of October. Please assist when your community or business is contacted for the required information.

For information, contact the SouthGrow office 381-5414.

## PEOPLE...

*are the focus of economic development in the SouthGrow region.*

### The Roles of the Economic Development Players in the Region

There are many partners in the SouthGrow region involved in economic development. Players representing local, regional and provincial perspectives continuously work together to provide opportunities for the residents in the region. Here is a brief look at the different players:

#### Alberta Economic Development (AED)

Alberta Economic Development is one of 23 government ministries within the Alberta Government structure and Honourable Clint Dunford leads this marketing arm of the Alberta Government. AED works in partnership with business, industry associations, other provincial ministries and governments to promote the "Alberta Advantage", creating a positive economic planning framework.



The Regional Office in Lethbridge, is led by Regional Economic Development Director, Linda Erickson (381-5414).

#### Regional Economic Development Alliances (REDAs)

Regional Economic Development Alliances consist of communities and their supporting partners within a region that enable the region to compete more effectively in a global marketplace and improve investment attraction, resulting in greater prosperity locally, regionally, and provincially. AED supports REDAs through its 11 regional offices. SouthGrow Regional Initiative as a REDA was registered and incorporated on April 28, 2004 as a non-profit corporation and consists of 24 communities in south central Alberta, operating out of the AED office in Lethbridge.

#### Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs)

Community Futures Development Corporations are non-profit organizations guided by a volunteer board of directors and staffed with business professionals, who together are actively engaged in helping to develop and implement community-based economic development strategies. CFDCs:

- provide one-on-one business counseling and training to assist individuals who are interested in self-employment or in expanding their businesses;
- work with individual communities to assist them with the development and implementation of their own Strategic Plans;
- provide loans to individuals who are interested in starting or expanding their own businesses; and
- strengthen community entrepreneurs and community's economy as a whole.

In the SouthGrow Region, there are three CFDCs:

- Lethbridge & District Business Development Centre, Lethbridge – 320-6044
- Chinook Community Futures Development Corporation, Taber – 223-2984
- Highwood Business Development Centre, High River – 652-3700

#### Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs)

Chief Administrative Officers provide leadership to the administrative staff of a municipality in order to oversee municipal operations and ensure Council's priorities and strategic direction are achieved. Each municipality in the SouthGrow Region has a Chief Administrative Officer, and some communities' CAOs are also charged with the responsibility of Economic Development.

#### Economic Development Officers (EDOs)

Economic Development Officers in communities are those involved in the practice of Economic Development. The Economic Developers Association of Alberta (EDAA) defines Economic Development as "the **process** of developing and maintaining **suitable economic, social and political environments**, in which **balanced growth** may be realized, increasing the **wealth** of the community." As mentioned before, some municipalities do not have an EDO per se, but have charged the CAO with the economic development responsibility.

It is clear that there are many players who focus on economic development and each brings a different and a unique perspective to developing the economy in the area. More importantly, it is noteworthy that all of these players work together to ensure that opportunities are created and communities are sustainable.

## PROGRESS...

*through a commitment to sustainability.*

### Vulcan Heats Up

The Town of Vulcan hopes to be the first community in North America to be entirely heated by solar energy by using solar panels to heat about 800 buildings. The \$35 million project would consist of solar panels covering an area about the size of a football field a couple of kilometers outside of town. Underground piping would be required which would collect heat in an underground heat sink and result in cutting the cost of heating a home on average by 30 percent. In the off season, straw, wood chips or grain would be burned as part of a biomass furnace and provide heat. The implications of this initiative would be great for industry since surplus heat would support all types of industry including greenhouse or food industries.



## PARTNERSHIP...

*collaborating for strength*

### SouthGrow Completes Opportunity Attraction Needs Assessment

SouthGrow Regional Initiative completed an Opportunity Attraction Needs Assessment of its member communities in February. Under the guidance of SouthGrow Regional Initiative's Strategic Collaboration Committee, the Needs Assessment was conducted by Westwinds Management Solutions Inc., and identified gaps in communities' economic development "tool kit". The identified gaps will be addressed as part of community economic development plans, with the goal being that communities can be ready to attract investment and opportunities by responding to enquiries in an appropriate and timely fashion. The information gathered from the Needs Assessment is also being used by the Strategic Collaboration Committee to plan learning opportunities for member communities in the next year.

As a result of the Opportunity Attraction Needs Assessment, SouthGrow Regional Initiative plans on spearheading a number of projects and learning opportunities for its members, including the development of a Regional Business Database, an Investment Readiness Preparation Guide, a Strategic Planning Workbook, and Economic Community Profile for each municipality.

### SouthGrow An Active Sponsor of Trade Demo Day

Spearheaded by the Lethbridge Construction Association, employers in the Lethbridge area took a proactive role by promoting the trades through a day-long public information event – Demo Day: Rediscover Careers in Trades on April 1st. This first-time event, sponsored in part by SouthGrow Regional Initiative, was planned with the hopes of attracting between 500 and 1,000 people. By the time the trades fair ended, more than 3,000 people took part in the event. SouthGrow Regional Initiative was represented on the More People in Trades Committee and supports the idea of the event becoming an annual event. The positive turnout for the event was enhanced by the fact that not only trades people and would be apprentices attended the event, but also parents, sibling and friends of young people who already had an interest in one or more trades participated in the fair. Promising was also the fact that half the students that came to the fair and showed interest were female. The tremendous success of the fair was highlighted by the overwhelming attendance, the excitement in trades shown by the young people and the impressive number of prospective employees generated throughout the day for southern Alberta employers, many of them who were hard pressed to fill spots in many trades.