

Performance Results for 2020-21 Community Futures Lakeland

Community Futures (CF) is a program that supports community economic development and builds the capacity of communities to realize their full sustainable potential. The purpose of the CF Program is to help communities develop and implement *local solutions to local problems*.

Community Futures Performance Results	2020-21
<i>Strong rural community strategic planning and implementation</i>	
1. Total number of community-based projects (new & on-going)	35
2. Total number of local and regionally-based community strategic plans developed and/or updated	7
<i>Rural access to business development services</i>	
3. Total number of business training session participants	814
4. Total number of business advisory services	244
<i>Rural access to capital and leveraged capital</i>	
5. Dollar value of loans	\$2,063,000
6. Total number of loans	81
7. Number of jobs created/maintained/expanded through lending ¹	175
Provide additional information (e.g. Success stories, Links to priorities, leveraging work, communication events, etc...)	
<p>The 2020-2021 fiscal year has definitely been the most challenging year for our local businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic brought our entire economy to a screeching halt. Many businesses were stretched to their limits and were forced to pivot or close. Through this trying time, Community Futures Lakeland (CFL) was present to provide support both financially and technically to aide in the resilience and continuation of our region's business community. We were grateful to receive RRRF operating dollars to provide direct, on the ground support to our local businesses as well as fund some much needed operational improvements in our office.</p> <p>As soon as the pandemic hit, I reached out to key Lakeland stakeholders such as; local Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce and Provincial partners, to form our Business Resilience Committee. This committee met every week from April to September to share information, ideas and resources. We planned and collaborated on many projects to provide immediate financial and service support to our local businesses. We pooled dollars and leveraged our resources to provide the Regional Voucher Program that provided financial aide for PPE and local service providers. The goal was to stimulate funds flowing full circle where small businesses received the help they needed by buying PPE or getting services from other local community businesses. This Voucher program evolved as the pandemic persisted and we all went on to partner again. Each Lakeland Municipality and Chamber of Commerce partnered individually with CFL on joint initiatives to provide even greater financial and service assistance. Everyone really stepped up and went above and beyond to support the region's small businesses.</p>	

¹ Estimated at the time of lending

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Some of the notable projects that we worked on this year were; the Procurement Series, Alberta iMarket, Project Gazelle and NAFMA.

The Procurement series consisted of 7 separate training webinars. Procurement can seem overwhelming and so we broke it down into small sessions of information. We had webinars on; The basics of Federal and Provincial procurement, Registering your company on BuyandSell.gc.ca (the federal procurement website), Finding opportunities and Bidding on opportunities, Security clearance requirements, and DND IDEaS (selling your innovative ideas to the government). We had great success in training local businesses to get government contracts.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, selling products online became vital for small businesses. CF Lakeland partnered with 3 other Northeast Community Futures offices and the Conseil de developpement economique de l'Alberta (CDEA) to create an online platform, for local businesses to sell their products and services. The Alberta iMarket (AiM) www.albertaimarket.com was formed and has been overwhelmingly embraced. The NE Community Futures offices are happy to collaborate on projects to assist our local businesses.

CFL has partnered with our women's entrepreneur program, Project Gazelle. We have created a coworking space in our Bonnyville office that supports women entrepreneurs with laptops, wifi, child friendly spaces, business coaching and access to training. We also, supported the development of a Café Inc. Gazelle space in one of our local coffee shops, to support women entrepreneurs there.

Another project that we worked on was the North East Food Marketers Association. We collaborated with the NE Community Futures offices again to create an online shopping site to link local food producers to consumers. This online site became the Alberta Food Marketplace www.albertafoodmarketplace.com . This site links farm to fork and farm to local restaurants/consumers.

In January we opened a 2nd office in Cold Lake to better serve the businesses in this area. We were immediately embraced by the community who were happy to have us available to offer support.

Overall, this was a very busy year for us. We implemented many community projects and worked on establishing many partnerships to serve our region's small businesses and diversify our local economy. We will continue to support our businesses with the Regional Relief & Recovery Funds to assist in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic; and provide services and coaching to help businesses pivot through this crisis.