

2010

North Central Sask. Business  
Retention and Expansion Program  
“Moving Forward” Report



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# North Central Saskatchewan Regional Business Retention and Expansion Program

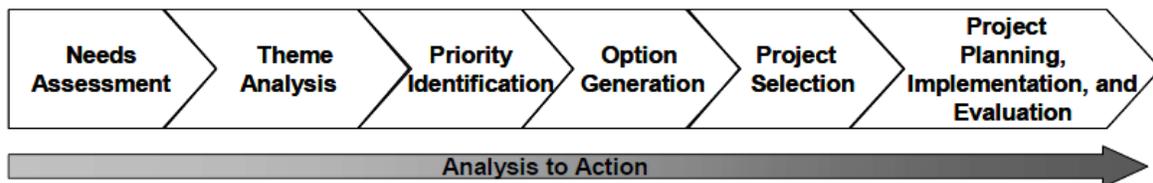
## **“Moving Forward” Report**

### **BACKGROUND**

In the fall of 2007, a number of economic development stakeholders within the Prince Albert Region came together to form a new working group called PREPARE (Pursuing Regional Economies through Prince Albert Region Engagement). Through a series of discussions, development of a Business Retention and Expansion Program for the Prince Albert Region was selected as a key strategic priority for the group. Business Retention and Expansion (BR and E) is an economic development approach that emphasizes the importance of existing businesses to the local economy.

Through the BR and E program, concerns and barriers to survival and growth facing local businesses are identified and key projects and initiatives are then implemented to support business retention and expansion. Between November 2008 and March 2009, the Prince Albert Regional Economic Development Authority (PAREDA), with the assistance of a number of regional partners, completed visitations with approximately 200 business owners and executives in the North Central Region and provided follow-up on “red flag” business concerns. In early 2009 a BR and E Task Force Retreat was held in Prince Albert to review the data gathered from the interviews and begin developing a strategy for addressing systemic issues identified through the visitation process.

The Task Force Retreat focused on analysis of key themes and identification of strategic priorities. Each of the strategic priorities provides a focus for future initiatives and projects. Regional Workforce Development was identified as Strategic Priority #1 by the BR and E Task Force to focus their efforts on in the upcoming years. At the Task Force retreat the BR and E Committee decided that further stakeholder consultations were necessary before completing the option generation, project selection and planning stages of the BR and E process.



### **Strategic Priorities Identified**

The purpose of the BR and E Program is to encourage the growth of local business by identifying the concerns and barriers facing business owners and working together to develop

strategies and solutions to address these concerns. With that in mind, the following Vision and Mission Statements for the North Central Region Business and Expansion Program were developed:



**Our Vision**  
Prepared for Growth

**Our Mission**  
To develop a collaborative, system-wide approach to economic development in the Region.

The Vision Statement represents an image of the desired future of a business community *prepared for growth*. In order to be successful, the preparation must occur on multiple levels and across multiple systems: individual, organizational, municipal, and regional. The solutions may span provincial, national, and international boundaries. The BR and E program can provide a forum for collaboration across these various levels and systems in order to advance economic development in the Region.

## **PRIORITY IDENTIFICATION**

Based on a theme analysis, the following needs were highlighted as priorities by the Task Force members:

- **Need to address growing workforce issues.**
- **Need to improve communication, collaboration, and engagement across businesses, agencies and sectors.**
- **Need to support local businesses and focus on the creation of a “Business-Friendly” Environment within the Region.**

It is clear from this list that these needs tend to be very broad in nature and solutions will be multidimensional. That is to be expected at this stage of the process as the focus is on systemic issues that are difficult to address by a single individual or organization independently. These needs have been identified as Strategic Priorities for Action for the North Central BR and Program depicted in the following diagram.



Each of the strategic priorities provides a focus for future initiatives and projects and a forum for system wide-collaboration. During the Task Force Retreat, participants divided into three groups to begin discussing each priority area and generating potential options for addressing the key needs targeted by the priority area.

## PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES:

### OVERVIEW FOR MOVING FORWARD

After a series of further consultations with the BR and E partners, the following projects and initiatives were designed to address issues related to each Strategic Priority:



## PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES: Explained

### I. Regional Workforce Development

1. **Collection and of Labour Market Information** – Collection, review and reporting of both relevant labour market information including:
  - an overview of all employment programs and services available in the region outlined in a report and in and public format for publication on NCER and partner websites
  - Statistic analysis of the number of current and predicted job vacancies in the region
2. **Development of a Regional Labour Market Strategy** – Using information collected in Activity 1 and knowledge gained by conducting a series of informational focus groups, develop a regional labour market strategy for the North Central Sask Region for the use of the NCER and its business/economic development partners.
3. **Development of a Regional Labour Market Workplan** - develop a work plan for NCER and interagency partners to undertake in the next three years including the development of new initiatives, project selection and prioritization.
4. **Implementation of the Regional Labour Market Workplan** – Activities to be determined upon completion of the Labour Market Workplan.

### II. Informed Well Connected Business Community

5. **Implement a Community First Impressions Program** – A Community First Impression Program is a structured process that reveals the first impression a community conveys to outsiders, including tourists, potential investors, newcomers and retirees. It offers a fresh perspective on the community’s appearance, services and infrastructure and helps communities learn about their strengths and shortcomings. Volunteer “visiting teams” from two (or more) exchange communities do unannounced, incognito visits, record their observations, and give constructive feedback to their exchange community. The Knowledge gained through a First Impression Exchange can be the basis for positive community action, focused revitalization, tourism development, investment attraction, quality of service improvements and broader community strategic planning efforts.<sup>1</sup> This initiative will be implemented as a pilot program in the 2010-2011 year and evaluated for future implementation across the region.
6. **Regional Place Branding for the North Central Sask Region** – Develop a strategy for place branding including launch campaign, marketing campaign with key positioning strategy marketing the region to a variety of audiences and promoting this image throughout Saskatchewan and all of Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> Community First Impressions Handbook, Enterprise Saskatchewan Handbook.

7. **Youth SYPE Chapter** – Assist in the development a Prince Albert Chapter of Young Professional and Entrepreneurs (SYPE). SYPE is a group of young and energetic people, working together to promote business and opportunity in Saskatchewan to retain our most valuable resource - our youth.
8. **Increased Communications to Business Stakeholders via NCER website** – promotion of regional events, business and training opportunities, economic and demographic data, etc on the NCER website.
9. **Breakfast Business Gathering** – In cooperation with the Prince Albert and District Chamber of Commerce - Business Owners and Community Leaders are invited to breakfast gathering monthly for a facilitator discussion. The purpose of the event is relationship/network building.
10. **Regional Business Database:** Develop a database for all regional businesses. This list can be used by business and economic development agencies to inform businesses about development programs as well as promote business services/products within and beyond the region.

### III. Business Friendly Region

11. **Plan and implement a “think local” purchasing campaign** - The purpose of this campaign is to motivate residents, businesses, and other groups to spend their dollars locally. The in turn will have the following results:

1. Reduced leakages from out of the North Central Saskatchewan economy.
2. Local employment stability and/or employment generation
3. Increased economic multiplier effect
4. Enhanced Community Spirit.

This program could include the creation of tools to assist in local purchasing. For example:<sup>2</sup>

1. Building a Directory of Local Businesses and Products
2. Buy Local Days and related advertising
4. Local Labels – to signify local ownership
5. Promotion of tips and strategies to localize spending.

12. **Regional Mayors/Reeves Round Table** - Host a regional (North Central Enterprise Region) Mayor’s and Reeves Round Table bi-annually. The intent of the meeting is to:
  1. Increase communications/collaboration amongst municipal leaders
  2. Act as a two-way communication forum for future NCER and partners economic development work. Discussions could include “business friendliness” topics.

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<sup>2</sup> Shuman, Micheal. [The Small- Mart Revolution](#) (2007) p. 117

13. **Participate in the development of “Business Incubator” or one-stop economic development facility development.** Business incubators are programs designed to accelerate the successful development of entrepreneurial companies through an array of business support resources and services. Incubators vary in the way they deliver their services, in their organizational structure, and in the types of clients they serve. Successful completion of a business incubation program increases the likelihood that a start-up company will stay in business for the long term: Historically, 87% of incubator graduates stay in business.<sup>3</sup> Entrepreneurs are an integral part in the growth of the North Central Saskatchewan Region’s economy. A number of inter-agency partners will evaluate the development of a business incubator in the region that will meet the following goals (related to BR and E):

- Increase the number of business start ups in the region
- Growing wealth in the Region (increasing sales)
- Increase the success rate of new business start ups in the region
- Growth in Employment in the region

14. **Expansion of Inter-agency (PREPARE) economic development working group -** Expansion to include additional regional partners, hosting of an annual forum and information events, etc.

#### **FUTURE VISITATION PROGRAM**

15. **Implement another round of regional business visitations in the next 2 years – possibly sector or area specific.**

Note: Each of the above initiatives/projects will require further planning prior to implementation.

#### **Listing of Partners agencies involved in the North Central BR and E Program:**

City of Prince Albert  
Enterprise Saskatchewan  
Ministry of Advance Education, Employment and Labour  
North Central Enterprise Region  
Prince Albert Tourism and Marketing Bureau  
Prince Albert Downtown Improvement District Association  
Prince Albert Grand Council  
Prince Albert and District Community Futures  
Prince Albert and District Chamber of Commerce  
RiverBank Development Corporation

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<sup>3</sup> University of Michigan, NBIA, Ohio University and Southern Technology Council, *Business Incubation Works*. Athens, Ohio: National Business Incubation Association, 1997.