

Performance Results for 2021-22 CF Big Country

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	2021-22
<i>Strong rural community strategic planning and implementation</i>	
1. Total number of community-based projects (new & on-going)	9
2. Total number of local and regionally-based community strategic plans developed and/or updated	1
<i>Rural access to business development services</i>	
3. Total number of business training session participants	317
4. Total number of business advisory services	260
<i>Rural access to capital and leveraged capital</i>	
5. Dollar value of loans	\$302,500
6. Total number of loans	7
7. Number of jobs created/maintained/expanded through lending ¹	17
Provide additional information (e.g. Success stories, Links to priorities, leveraging work, communication events, etc...)	
<p>We were able to develop and move forward with important community economic development (CED) projects, including collaboration with local organizations.</p> <p>Drum Discovery – The project partners first began meeting in January 2021 to plan to fill a need for customer service training for customer facing employees of local businesses and help equip “Ambassadors of the Valley”. Project partners include Travel Drumheller, Drumheller & District Chamber of Commerce, Town of Drumheller and MH Enterprises. CFBC contributed funds and staff time to the project. The project aims are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equip our local employees to help guests make the most of their time in Drumheller - Coach cross-industry staff to share a passion for the Drumheller Valley and area - Increase the confidence and sense of belonging of local citizens - Raise loyalty to local businesses and services for visitors and citizens <p>The training takes place over two days, including a one-day FAM (familiarization) tour of local attractions, followed by a part-day customer service training and community information session (provided by staff from Royal Tyrrell Museum and Town of Drumheller). Successful participants receive a certificate and take part in a “toquing” ceremony.</p>	

¹ Estimated at the time of lending

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Because of COVID restrictions in summer 2021, we were not able to provide the FAM tour. In June 2021, 28 participants successfully completed the customer service training portion, which was presented online. In May 2022, 20 participants successfully completed the FAM Tour and customer service training, and received certificates during the “toquing” ceremony.

Business Survey – this project came directly from our Strategic Plan (November 2020). Project partners include Travel Drumheller, Drumheller & District Chamber of Commerce, Town of Drumheller (Economic Development). CFBC contributed funds and staff time to the project. Consultant services were provided by McSweeney & Associates to gather data, analyze survey results and prepare a final report.

The purpose of the survey was to gather information and relevant data to identify the entrepreneur and business needs in the region. Survey questions also included awareness of the partner organizations. CFBC previously conducted a business survey in 2017, which helped identify issues with employee recruitment, retention and training. This survey followed up this issue and also asked questions directly related to the importance of tourism in the region.

From January to March, 2022, the project partners interviewed 113 businesses in the region by phone or by providing direct access to an online survey. The survey information was gathered for analysis by McSweeney & Associates. Key findings from the final report include:

- Local businesses are generally optimistic about the future;
- Non-tourism businesses are strongly supportive of the tourism industry. While employers are, overall, happy with their current staff, they view the broader labour pool as a weakness;
- Many businesses in the community are seasonal in nature, relying on strong summer months to sustain their operations through lesser winter seasons;
- Benefits to doing business in the area include the “people” and its small-town appeal;
- Drawbacks to operating a business in the Drumheller region include the lack of population growth and high operating costs;
- The strong tourism sector and geographic location were seen as both strengths and drawbacks to running a local business.

Building Enhancement Grant – this project is a partnership with CFBC, the Drumheller & District Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Drumheller. CFBC contributed funds and staff time to the project. The grant replaces the Storefront Improvement Grant and the Interior Building Improvement Grant previously offered by the Town of Drumheller. This grant will encourage local businesses to enhance their buildings by modernizing and improving appearance and help business owners reduce the financial burden associated with making improvements to the exterior or interior of their building.

The grant will fund up to 50% of the renovation costs to maximum grant of \$5,000 for any one business for either an exterior or interior enhancement. The grant also stipulates that labour and materials must be sourced locally from companies holding a valid Drumheller business license. This criteria will benefit local suppliers, contractors and tradespeople. Some exceptions will apply for materials that are unavailable in Drumheller.

A total of \$35,000 supported ten projects, with an estimated value of \$92,000, providing a significant boost to the local economy.