



Invest in Your Future

WHY INVEST?

As active citizens and community leaders, we can directly shape our local and regional economies. Here are a few benefits of taking a proactive stance to the future:

Increased Tax Base

Additional revenue to support, maintain, and improve local services such as roads, parks, libraries, and other community services.

Job Creation and Expansion

Local and regional employment opportunities.

Business Retention

Ensuring that local businesses prosper and stay in town.

Economic Diversification

Expanding the economy increases the opportunity for long term sustainability of the community.

Quality of Life

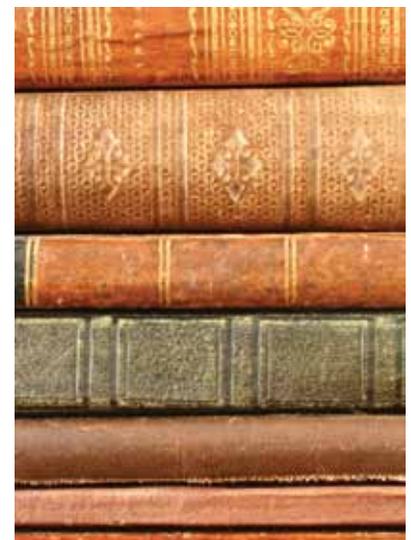
More local tax dollars and jobs results in greater economic stability for the community, which generally increases the overall standard of living of the residents.

Recognition of Local Products

Oftentimes, successful economic development will occur when locally produced goods are consumed to a greater degree in the local market.

Self-sufficiency and Sustainability

Public services would be less dependent on intergovernmental transfers.



“I believe investing in economic development is the heartbeat of any community.

As Mayor, I believe our town is so very fortunate in having an economic development officer, diligently working to encourage and accommodate the growth and prosperity that arrives at our door. Economic development investing? Absolutely essential! Yes, we only wait to hear of what may come tomorrow and know we have available the expertise of today to make it happen.”

- Sylvia Maljan, Mayor of Unity, Saskatchewan

BEFORE YOU START

There are four important questions that need to be answered before a municipality or region moves ahead with an economic development department or program.

Question

How do we define economic development?

Possible Answers

Downtown revitalization, industrial park development, recreational facilities, roads, tourism, event planning

What are our expected outcomes?

Employment growth, increase in tax revenue, business retention, increasing access to resources, tourism development

What time frames are we willing to commit to?

A one, three or ten year program, a permanent department, until a specific outcome (i.e.: a business park is developed) is achieved

How will your economic development program/department be governed?

Regionally, with a partner municipality, by an advisory board, municipal council, reporting directly to the Chief Administrative Officer or other person

Economic development is an essential part of establishing added tax revenue through business and industry development. It also enables municipalities to increase quality of life infrastructure through increased revenues. Yet **many municipalities do not have an economic development function.** They are quick to eliminate this department when economic times are in a downturn. Coincidentally, many municipalities that are prospering in good economic times do not bother with an economic development department. They believe they do not need one.



This thinking is comparable to not bothering with an emergency services department because the community hasn't had a fire in a couple years. Economic development, like emergency services, is a planning process. The planning will differ based on the group's goals and priorities. It is necessary to develop a plan of action for any event that may arise. Having the necessary infrastructure and personnel to be able to act in a proactive manner will help to solve problems head on.

Before you begin the hiring process, it is essential for municipal leaders to come to an agreement on the above questions. The Saskatchewan Economic Development Association (SEDA) offers a series of educational modules and workshops providing foundational concepts in economic development. They help municipalities and other organizations wade through the variety of topics ranging from basic economic development to more specialized topics such as business retention and expansion and project management. The programs are usually offered to groups for a fee and some are available as online learning.

SEDA's online learning platform Grow Our Region (www.ecdevonline.ca) is another source for FREE self paced learning modules on basic concepts in economic development. It also provides an extensive online inventory of best practices, tools and templates in seven knowledge areas related to community economic development.



BUILDING AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM

A good committee structure is one that allows the group to organize and manage its activities with a minimum of wasted time and effort, while maximizing efficiency and effectiveness.

Some important structural attributes of a good organization are:

- Functional, in that it promotes efficient and effective work.
- Flexible, so that it can adapt quickly to changing circumstances (eg. by establishing sub-committees).
- Open, so that it allows for as much distribution of responsibility as possible and encourages participation in decision-making.
- Understandable, so people feel comfortable with its operation.

Economic development is indeed a team activity. Volunteer leaders should be selected so that:

- Key segments of the community are represented. For example, the group should have representatives from council(s), and from business (such as representatives from the local Chamber of Commerce).
- All members of the committee are confident and able to share the work and responsibilities. The organization should not deteriorate to the point where only a few members actively participate and become overloaded.
- You want people who are dedicated to the organization, rather than those who think of it as, “just another committee”.
- Members of the economic development committee should be prepared to spend at least three to five years on the job as it’s often not possible to learn enough about economic development in one year, or even two.

Build a solid foundation for leadership with these following guidelines:

- Ensure that everyone has the same definition of “economic development”.
- The organization must act as one body and speak as one body. Although differing points of view are vital, the organization will have a positive impact only if it is seen as a cohesive unit working toward a common, consistent goal.
- The momentum for economic development must come from within the community. It is very difficult to solve a “problem” in a community if the community does not see it as a problem. Likewise, the activities of the organization must be seen to be of benefit to and representing the majority of people in the community, not just a particular interest group.
- The organization must be able to interact successfully with provincial and federal ministers, senior company executives, labour union leaders, financial institutions, the media, and school/community associations. Getting all of these different groups on your side means you must be able to understand their concerns, gain their confidence and “speak their language.”

- The organization must have the authority to make decisions and take action.
- The organization must have a clear plan of action, including means for regularly reviewing its activities and evaluating the effectiveness of its initiatives. Remember that the purpose of the organization is, in essence, to solve problems. Those problems should be clearly identified along with the steps that will be taken to solve them. In this way, the participants are much more likely to remain focussed and enthusiastic.
- Encompass all economic development efforts within the community. No town can afford more than one economic development organization.
- The organization must be adequately funded. Too many organizations spend more time raising money that they do performing their missions.
- Continuity of membership within the organization is important but remember to engage new leadership periodically. Establishing terms (along with a maximum length of time for consecutive terms) for those serving on boards of directors or committees is recommended.
- Establish and adhere to regular meetings to maintain momentum.
- Maintenance of confidentiality as board or committee members (and staff) is essential to the long term success of the organization and its objectives. Confidentiality Agreements are now a commonly accepted practice for Volunteers and Staff and are encouraged as a foundational measure when establishing an economic development organization.

Rome wasn't built in a day.

Economic development is a process; there are no instant solutions to most economic development challenges. The organization should not be perceived as the "quick fix" for a community, and generally the organization should concentrate on being proactive: on pursuing carefully structured, realistic long-term plans.

HIRING STAFF

While volunteers are vital to an organization, economic development requires a focussed commitment. When a community decides to invest economic development program, it requires qualified staff to fill the role.

First your municipality needs to clearly define what the duties and responsibilities of the Economic Development Officer will be. Is the municipality looking for a dedicated EDO or will the position partner with other departments, like planning or tourism? If this is a multifunctional position, the qualifications you look for will certainly need to be more diverse.

Smaller communities may be able to afford only a part-time professional or may partner with neighbouring communities to share staff and collaborate on resources needed to support economic development activities.

Commitments to economic development staff can take various forms. Here are a few examples:

Full Time Staff Economic development officer and/or support staff

Part Time Economic development officer and/or support staff

Municipal Collaboration Sharing an economic team between neighboring communities or within a region.

Consultant Another option available to communities is to hire a consultant to work on specific projects in your region. The consultant could be supported by local administrative or coordination support in the community – providing a local presence.



QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Unlike many other municipal positions (such as community planners and financial officers) economic development is less credentialed it is, therefore, it is more difficult to define qualifications. In addition to the recommended skills which are listed below, you need to incorporate any formal education and experience which you may be seeking. Economic developers often have a variety of background experience and training. In addition to economic development experience, common previous experience or education often falls in the fields of journalism, research, business and entrepreneurship. **All of these backgrounds share many of these highlighted skills:**

Communication:

- Have good verbal communication skills
- Be able to develop a media release
- Write a grant application
- Produce promotional materials
- Develop strategic planning documents
- Have research skills

Public Relations:

- Able to work with diverse people
- Comfortable in a rural setting as well as in corporate headquarters
- Comfortable speaking to crowds
- Able to address meetings and council settings

Flexibility:

- Willing and able to work weekends and evenings
- Willing to travel as required for meetings or related events
- Able to attend evening meetings – lots of evening meetings

Strategic Thinking:

- One of the primary functions of the economic development office is facilitation
- Needs to be involved and familiar with the community and the people who contribute to it
- Needs to listen carefully and assess which community members are best suited to bring identified opportunities to fruition

Strategic Planning:

- Able to facilitate meetings, gather input and data, and from the information extrapolate a strategic plan
- Needs to be able to receive constructive input from community leaders and incorporate their input into the plan

Leadership:

- Needs to be a leader
- Needs to be able to give advice to the municipal council, economic development council and the CAO
- Must be able to analyze and condense information in a logical way to be able to provide clear and concise guidance

WHERE TO LOOK

The internet is an excellent tool to assist in recruiting professionals. The most common resource is the Saskatchewan Economic Development Association (SEDA) at www.seda.sk.ca. It provides an excellent vehicle to post your position, as well as an excellent resource to review who else is looking, and what they are offering. SEDA will also send out employment opportunities via its electronic newsletter to its network which includes national and international readers. Membership in SEDA also offers your municipality access to a variety of relevant resources, including annual salary and organizational research – and a vast online inventory of tools and best practices.

Free online employment sites such as www.saskjobs.ca are also a very effective advertising option.

Saskatchewan's neighboring provinces and territories also provide an excellent recruitment resource. Economic development officers, by the nature of their work, are often looking for work in communities that will offer them an opportunity to succeed.

Post secondary graduates often lack experience. They are usually up for the adventure to move to rural regions, and are enthusiastic and willing to learn. On the other hand they are often looking for experience and may not be interested in a long term commitment.

Don't overlook your own community and region. You may not have to look far for the best candidate for the position.

SALARIES

Salaries for the economic development practitioner will vary according to experience and training. Location will also have an impact: the more rural, remote or northern your municipality or organization, the more likely you will need to increase the financial attraction.

Determining a salary for the EDO position is dependent on a number of factors including:

- How the proposed salary fits within the organizational salary structure.
- How the proposed salary fits within community standards.
- What benefits are being offered?
- Is there a pension plan?
- Cost of living.
- Salaries in comparable communities or markets in the province.
- Municipal or organizational budget.

The economic development budget will impact the salary and consequently the level of skill and experience you will attract.

Economic Developer salaries vary depending on the scope of the position. Larger urban centers tend to have larger departments and often have three or more employees, each with a specific focus. Contact the SEDA office for their annual current salary and budget research.

SETTING A BUDGET

Communities must be prepared to provide the necessary financial resources for economic development. Those resources would typically be used for things such as:

- Proper office facilities, equipment and staffing
- Outside professional services (Legal, Accounting and other Consulting services)
- Marketing
- Training
- Research and Special Projects
- Travel and conference fees

The Economic Development Plan which outlines strategies and action plans – should accurately assess what costs are necessary to reach established objectives and goals.

For community economic development, there are four basic funding sources:

- municipal government
- provincial government
- federal government
- private sector

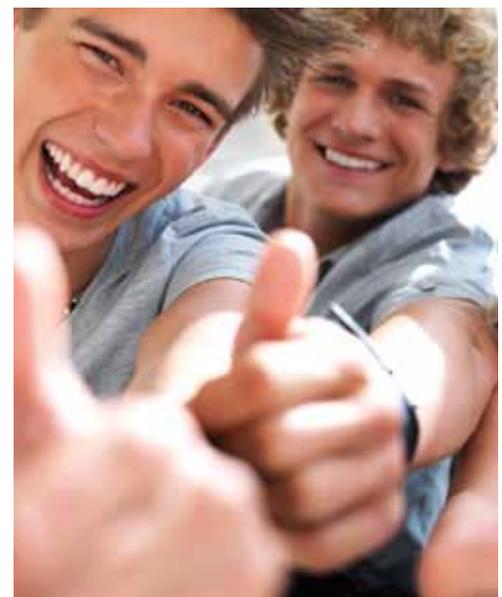
There are often funding sources available for specific project initiatives.

“With all of the development coming to Saskatchewan and in particular to this area,

we need to ensure that we are ready to embrace the growth in population,

in infrastructure demands and legislatively. An investment in economic development now will only lead to prosperity into the future.”

- Bruce Elke, Reeve, RM of Prairie Rose #309 and Chairperson, Mid Sask Municipal Alliance





www.seda.sk.ca

www.saskchangemakers.com