



Steps to Success

A checklist for new community and economic development staff.



Economic development is a collaborative process between all levels of government, non-government organizations and local citizens that builds up the economic and social capacity of an area to preserve its' quality of life and ensure a sustainable future .

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS FOR AND BY THE PEOPLE

Your role as a development professional is to facilitate this multi-dimensional process which will be unique to each community or region. Laying a strong foundation and being prepared is your key to success.

SEDA is available to coach you through the early throes of community building and provide support as you move ahead with implementation of strategies and action plans.



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THE BASICS

Economic development is always linked to people and place. It will look different in each community.

However, your first steps as an economic development professional should be focused on ensuring accurate information exists by which you can work with local leaders to develop effective strategies and action plans.

1

RELATIONSHIPS & WORKPLAN

The day to day business can easily get out of hand in community and economic development. It is extremely important for staff and employers – or employers and contracted consultants – to follow a work plan which set out expectations and timelines – and clear reporting measures. By incorporating and engaging the expectations, interest and support of local leadership into a comprehensive process, the practitioner and employer become partners in the development process.

Trading Area is the geographic area from which a community generates the majority of its customers. This includes services such as health and education as well as consumer or business transactions.

BUILD A RESOURCE INVENTORY

2

Build (or update if there is existing information) an inventory of your local and regional resources or assets. The region will include your trading area. Assets will include buildings, people, events, institutions and businesses. This is a key step that supports action planning and development initiatives based on the premise that “knowing what we already have is required in order to determine what we need”.

REFER TO SEDA’S COMMUNITY RESOURCE MAPPING GUIDE

3

VISIT LOCAL BUSINESSES

Your local business sector is essential for the economic vibrancy of your community. Find out what’s on their minds – their concerns and aspirations. Formalize it, at least into a spreadsheet. Reach out to the SEDA office for help in building a set of standard questions that you can work from as you conduct business outreach, which should be an ongoing component of your role in the community.

4

DEVELOP A COMMUNITY PROFILE

A strong understanding of your local and regional socio-economic profile will help you create a realistic vision and strategies for economic development. Your local and regional strengths and weaknesses, such as quality-of-life amenities, infrastructure and workforce skills, determine the potential of your market economy to maintain and support economic growth.

Key areas for both quantitative and qualitative data collection are found in: SEDA’S PLANNING ESSENTIALS GUIDEBOOK.

5

DO A COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

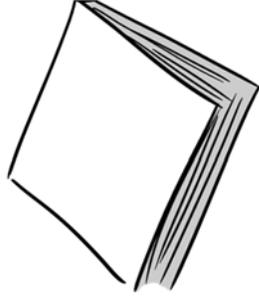
By this point, you should have most of the information required to conduct a basis competitive analysis based on identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Competitive analysis typically compares a community’s key indicators (taxes, workforce, infrastructure, quality of life etc.) to 1) other specific communities or 2) to the region or province as a whole.

REFER TO SEDA’S PLANNING ESSENTIALS GUIDEBOOK

*Next Steps....
develop strategies and
action plans.*

NEXT STEPS



You Require an Implementation Plan

Depending on the existing level of mobilization in your community or region, you may have a current economic plan to work with¹. If so, updating the plan to reflect changes in the local, regional and global environment may be necessary. If there is no existing economic development plan, it is essential to either 1) engage your leadership group in a planning session (preferred option) or 2) build a plan yourself to present for review and approval.

Establishing a future focused VISION is required. What does our economic future look like? An overall community vision may have been identified as a component of the Official Community Plan. We suggest that a specific vision related to economic development be established based on identification of local and regional strengths and opportunities. This may be discussed as part of a formal planning process or based on review of a draft economic development plan.

Identifying broad COMMUNITY GOALS and the SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES required to meet those goals is the next step. Goals represent the strategic pathway to fulfill the economic development vision. They can typically be achieved within a medium time-frame. Objectives are the stepping stones required to construct that pathway and can be achieved within a short time frame. They lead to specific action plans to reach each goal.

The STRATEGY and ACTION PLAN are complimentary to each other and both are integral for achieving a goal. Strategies are timeless and can be viewed as the blueprint whereas the action plan is the step by step process of how to go about that blueprint.

Note 1: An Official Community Plan is not an implementation plan.

Refer to SEDA's PLANNING ESSENTIALS GUIDEBOOK.

Economic Developers are visionaries, strategists and catalysts who ask:

- ⇒ Where are we now?
- ⇒ Where do we want to be?
- ⇒ Why aren't we there now?
- ⇒ What has to happen to get us to where we want to be?
- ⇒ Who will do it?
- ⇒ How?
- ⇒ And when?

Have you assessed the needs of your local residents?



Identifying local needs in order to develop strategies and action plans is standard practice. One effective method for identifying problems, challenges and needs is conducting a Community Needs Assessment Survey. This process engages residents and local officials in identifying issues, collecting information and interpreting the results of the survey.

Consider surveying your community or host a focus group to hear about perceived gaps or concerns. This could be done prior to the planning session as part of your foundational information gathering process.

Use SEDA's COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT GUIDEBOOK to support your efforts.

REMEMBER.... Economic Development is a Team Effort. Build relationships and engage residents and organizations in the future of your community. Reach out to:

- chambers of commerce
- not-for-profit community groups
- real estate agents
- private enterprise
- consultants
- national and provincial governments



Consider our Peer to Peer Mentorship Program

SEDA is proud to offer the P2P MENTORSHIP PROGRAM in partnership with the British Columbia Economic Development Association (BCEDA). Together, we aim to connect experienced economic developers with new professionals.

Much of economic development is learned on-the-job. Many economic development offices are small, sometimes a one-person shop, so learning from co-workers may not be an option. A mentor can provide support while you learn on-the-job and guidance to get through challenging situations. The P2P Program also provides an option for experienced economic developers to use the program to help identify new methods, overcome specific challenges or simply exchange ideas for new initiatives.

The mentor-mentee relationship can be casual on demand - or more formal with specific goals. The mentor and mentee decide the scope of the relationship. Mentoring can be done through online coaching, virtual meeting technology, teleconference, and in person.

Matchmaking is done based on an [online questionnaire](#) filled out by mentors and mentees.



Reach Out, Learn, Network

Start building a local and regional network. Ask what's going on, how you can get involved, and what resources they either have for you or can get you in touch with. SEDA can help you connect and identify resources and potential partners.

Get out to conferences, and talk to your peers. SEDA has cost effective online learning modules that are linked to Provincial Certification. We also host workshops and an annual conference that brings together professionals, community leaders and other disciplines to share and collaborate.

On your way to and from these events visit with other communities' economic development directors. Ask them what strategies they are pursuing and why.

We are here to help.

Give us a call at 306-384-5817 or email us at seda@seda.sk.ca

Find out more about our resources and programs at www.seda.sk.ca and www.ecdevonline.ca