2013 Business Visitation Report Cardston

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5/31/2013

The following is a summary report based on information gathered during a business visitation project conducted in the Town of Cardston, Alberta over a three-month from February through April, 2013.

Introduction

From February through April 2013 Community Futures Alberta Southwest (CFABSW), in cooperation with the Town of Cardston Economic Development & Tourism Board and the Cardston & District Chamber of Commerce, conducted a Business Visitation Project (BVP). The project was designed to gather information that will allow Community Futures, the Town, the Chamber, and other community leaders to more fully understand the needs of local businesses in Cardston.

With the understanding that small and medium-sized enterprises are catalysts in our communities (between 50 and 80 percent of all new jobs are generated by these businesses), it is Important to identify their needs and support their retention and growth.

The objectives of the project were to be comprehensive by contacting as many Cardston businesses as possible in order to gain an accurate picture of what the community requires to grow and where the potential for growth lies; and to gauge the pulse of the business community and equip leaders with the information they need to make informed decisions about what affects the business community.

The three organizations participating in the project also wished to communicate to the business community their interest in understanding business concerns and assisting in their resolution where possible.

This project was the fifth of several similar projects designed to gather research through the communities in the Community Futures Alberta Southwest region. The results of these initiatives and the information that CFABSW gathered will be used internally, and shared with our stakeholders, to assist in community capacity building, entrepreneurial development and technical assistance.

Methodology

The Town of Cardston provided CFABSW with a list of businesses in the community based on their listing of licensed businesses. This list was refined through further research conducted by CFABSW staff. Some businesses were added and others, that were no longer in operation, were removed.

One hundred and eighty-two businesses were enumerated in the community of Cardston once the research had been completed. Twenty businesses were owned or operated by the same individual or group cutting back on 12 businesses to interview; five businesses were seasonal with no off-season way to contact them. This left the total potential number of business owner/operators to interview at 165.

Advance promotion of the program was conducted by introducing the program through an email letter sent out by the Town of Cardston Economic Development Office to all licensed businesses a week in advance of the project commencing. Posters were also distributed to many businesses in the high traffic areas of Cardston.

Businesses were contacted to participate in a brief sit down meeting, interview format, with Community Futures staff to provide their feedback on a number of issues related to their business. Owners and managers were asked to address issues that ranged from basic business activities to market conditions and the company's primary market base, from labour force requirements to the community's strengths and weaknesses as a place to do business.

Each visitation took approximately 20 minutes to complete; all information collected to be kept in strict confidence and data released only in summarized form. The design of the survey consisted of 45 questions (several with multiple parts) divided into six sections: Primary Business Data, About the Business, Market Conditions, Future Plans, Community Services, and Entrepreneur Support Services.

Initially businesses were contacted utilizing a cold call approach. This was an effective method in the downtown core, the industrial park area, and any location where businesses had a storefront presence. A high percentage of surveys were completed during these initial contacts and arrangements were also made for follow-up with businesses at times more convenient to their schedule.

After exhausting the process of cold calling businesses, phone call contact and follow-up was used as the primary tool to arrange meetings. Twelve percent of respondents also chose to complete the survey on their own time for convenience and forward the form back to the CFABSW office. A survey was left for these individuals or emailed to them.

Upon completion of the project **contact had been attempted with all one hundred and sixty-five businesses. This resulted in 104 interviews completed (63%)**. Seventeen owner/operators declined to participate for one reason or another. Nineteen owner/operators were unable to complete the survey or arrange a compatible time to meet with the project coordinator. This left twenty-five businesses for which no in-person or telephone contact could be made.

Of some interest, twenty-seven home-based businesses (16% of the total business community) were interviewed in Cardston. Though a precise count could not be extracted from the total, an additional number of un-interviewed businesses were also home-based.

The retail sector and the service sector were represented almost equally with 28.9% and 26.9% respectively of all businesses interviewed. Business and Professional Services, Construction, Food & Beverage, Finance/Insurance/Real Estate, and Manufacturing were represented by 11.5%, 8.7%, 6.7%, 6.7%, and 3.8% of all interviews respectively. The Non-Profit, Wholesale/distribution, Tourism/Recreation, and Agriculture sectors represent a total of 8 interviews (7.7%). No interviews were completed with businesses in the Transportation or Energy sectors.

The interviews completed and the business composition outlined paints a fair representation of the Town of Cardston business community. It should be pointed out that retail, service, food and beverage, professional services, real estate and financial services, trades and construction are very well represented in this community.

Note that while most the statistics, figures, and graphics in this report pertain to the total number of interviews conducted (104), certain statistics will refer only to the number of responses received for that particular question.

A blank copy of the survey has been included at the end of this report as **Appendix A**.

General Observations

- Seventy-three percent of owners/operators have over 16 years experience (average: 26 years);
- Fifty-six percent of owner/operators have over 16 years business experience in the specific sector they now work in (average: 20 years);
- Fifty-three percent of businesses were started before 1994; 34% started in the last 10 years;
- Seventy-seven percent of owners own a 100% stake of their business versus 15% of operators who own no share. Eight percent of owners possessed a partial stake in their business;
- Thirty-four percent of owners have started up or taken ownership of their present business in the last eight years versus 36% who took up ownership between the years 1995 and 2004, and 30% who started the business or took ownership in 1994 or before;
- Forty-seven percent of all businesses were started up by the present owner versus 37% of businesses which were purchased by the present owner. Sixteen percent manage the business for the owners while one percent inherited the business;
- 87% percent of respondents feel word-of-mouth is their most effective form of promotion;
- Only 26% of businesses feel the pressure of increased competition; 45% percent of business owners feel their market share in the region is increasing, while 45% feel it is staying the same;
- Interest was indicated by respondents in courses on social media (61%), customer service (54%), marketing/market research (44%), business transition planning (42%), and accounting (34%);
- Trends in the 15 questions on "future plans for the business" all seem positive with high percentages in the **likely** and **very likely** responses for all questions with the exception of researching new markets, expanding or relocating current facilities, redesigning current facilities, seeking additional financial capital, and adding unskilled labour;
- Though only 17% of businesses show job vacancies at the present time, 62% of businesses expect to add new positions over the next five years. However, Thirty-four percent of businesses expressed difficulty in obtaining employees for their needs; 74% of the staff required by businesses are those with skills and/or experience.

Report Findings

Section 1 – Primary Business Data

The only relevant observation to be made in section one is on the regular hours of business operation the respondents observe. All other data in this section identifies the business, its owners, and contact information – all of which is being kept confidential. Normal business operations for most respondents were based on a five day work week Monday through Friday:

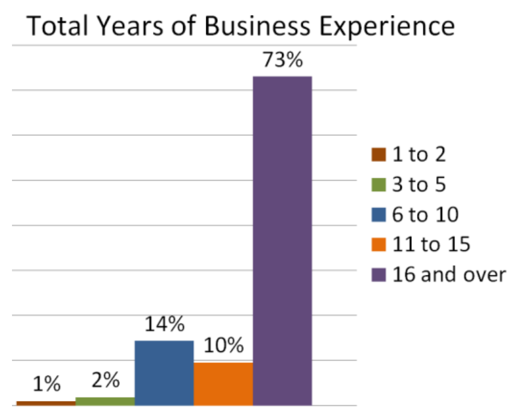
- Fifty-nine percent of businesses (61) open their doors between 7.00 and 9.00 AM and operate through the day until 5.00 PM or 6.00 PM. Sixteen percent of these operations open later, close earlier or have slightly expanded business hours;
- Of all businesses, 35% of businesses (36) kept evening and/or weekend hours;
- Eighteen percent of companies (19) kept business hours which vary;
- Six percent of businesses (6) operate at other times throughout the day and week;
- Six percent (6) are open seven days a week; four percent of businesses (4) have 24 hour service.

The figures above indicate that a solid 73% of enterprises surveyed are engaged in business activity full-time during the week. The 35% of businesses open evenings and weekends indicates a recognition and flexibility by businesses trying to address consumer needs. When queried in a later question, 80% of owner/operators felt they were open the number of hours they needed to be. Only 14% felt they would extend their hours if they could find or afford the staff they required.

Section 2 – About the Business

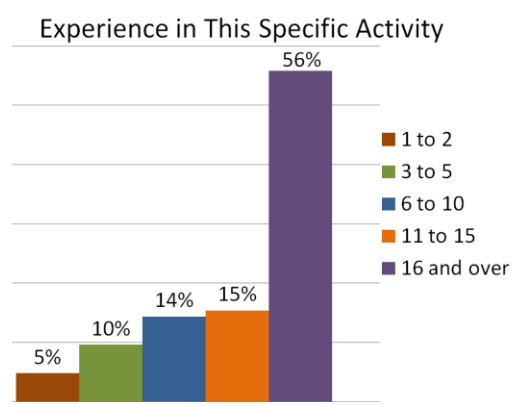
Sixteen questions relating to business operations are analyzed in this section. The purpose of these questions was to define such factors as business history, organization, and business sector information. It also evaluated owner/operator experience and the reasons for establishing the business in Cardston.

Eighty-three percent of all respondents have at least eleven or more years of business experience while 17% are business owners or operators that have 10 or less years of experience.



This reflects the existence of an established, experienced business-base in the community with a representative number of new, more recently established owner/operators entering the Cardston business community. The average number of years of business experience from all respondents was 26 years.

Of those same respondents, 71% indicated that they have experience with this specific business activity for at least 11 years. Twenty-nine percent of those surveyed indicated that they were undertaking the specific activity for 10 years or less. This again would seem to indicate well over a quarter of business activity being undertaken by new operators, a strong indicator of entrepreneurial activity.



Sixty-six percent of the businesses themselves, or 69 enterprises, have been in operation for eleven years or more, with 34%, or 35 businesses starting operations in Cardston over the last 10 years. The average age of all businesses was 44 years.

This data compares to another question which queried respondents on the number of years they have personally operated their business. Responses indicated over a third of owners have initiated their present business activity within the last eight years and a full 69% have started operating their business over the last 18 years. Note the unique anomaly between the 35 businesses that have started in the last ten years and the 35 owner/operators who have initiated their present activity over the last eight years. This is most likely coincidental as no definitive correlations can be identified. However, the 69% of owners that have started operations over the last 18 years does appear to indicate that there has been a certain amount of transition or turnover in ownership of existing businesses.

Years	Percentage	Number of respondents
2013 to 2005	33.7%	35
2004 to 1995	35.6%	37
1994 and before	30.8%	32

Seventy-seven percent of businesses (80) are 100% owned by the respondents surveyed. Eight respondents (8%) indicated they owned a portion of the business with other investors, while 15% (16) had no ownership stake in the business. These 16 respondents generally account for the managers, administrators and executive officers hired to operate the business.

The reasons given for establishing business operations in Cardston were strongly driven by two factors. Forty-three percent, 45 businesses were influenced by their "proximity to the market". Thirty-one percent (32) associated the action of "pursuing a business opportunity" as their motivating force. "Proximity to home" was a factor for 25% of owner/operators (26). Only one business cited another factor; the business itself could not be moved.

Forty-nine owners, 47%, started their businesses, while 38 owners, 37%, purchased existing businesses. Seventeen businesses (16%) were owned/operated through different circumstances. Several businesses utilized management or executive staff: seven were hired internally; nine were hired externally. One owner inherited their business.

Forty-three percent of businesses (45) were organized through incorporation, while thirty-seven percent (39) operated as sole proprietorships. Eleven businesses (11%) self-identified as partnerships and four (4%) as franchises. The remaining five businesses (5%) consisted of three non-profits and two cooperatives. Notably, forty-one businesses (39%) have investment from family members in addition to the owner.

Questions relating to the business premises solicited the following responses:

- Fifty-five percent of business premises (57) were owned;
- Nineteen percent of business space (20) was leased;
- Twenty-six percent of businesses (27) were home-based.

- Eighty-three owner/operators (80%) found their business facility size adequate;
- Sixteen owner/operators (15%) found their business location too small;
- Only five owner/operators (5%) found their business location too large.

- Eighty-five owner/operators (82%) found their business location accessible;
- Fourteen owner/operators (13%) found their business location adequate;
- Five owner/operators (5%) found their business location out-of-the-way.

Several observations may be made based on this information. In regard to ownership of the business premises, there are large percentages of premises owned and home-based. The high percentage of owned businesses premises may be a reflection of the number of established businesses in the community. The high percentage of home-based businesses reflects the number of tradespersons operating independently, a number of smaller construction/contracting businesses, and several home-based personal service providers.

The lower number of leased premises may indicate a confidence by business owners in the Cardston economy. It may also reflect an economic realization by business owners that it is just more practical for them to own than to lease their facility. It should be noted however, that several owner/operators indicated that the aging and deterioration of many business facilities, especially in the downtown core was an issue of concern. This included not only the buildings themselves, but municipal infrastructure entering and surrounding these facilities. There is an opportunity for the Town to address this concern, develop policy, and consult with property owners and developers to plan and resolve this issue.

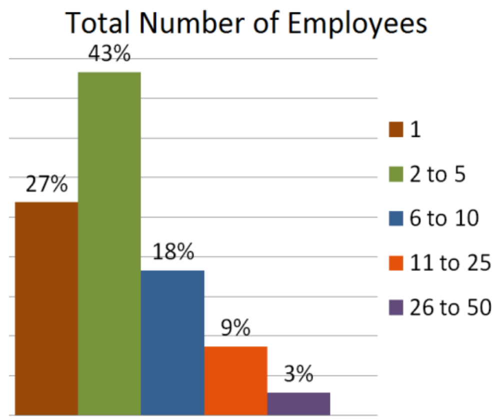
A visual assessment of the downtown area revealed there are not a lot of vacant store fronts, though there are vacancies in the Carriage Lane Mall. The 45% of businesses that are home-based or presently leasing space may also indicate a shortage of adequate properties to suit business needs in the community, an opportunity for new development. When you consider that 16 owner/operators find their facilities too small, it is possible that this too represents a development opportunity. An investigation into the availability of commercial and industrial space to lease and purchase and the costs associated with each would clarify this further. Posing this question directly to the business community and easing up on any new development restrictions may open doors in this area.

While it appears most businesses are satisfied with where they are situated in relation to the customers they service, 85 businesses (82%) find their present location accessible, some level of dissatisfaction is evident in the 19 businesses (18%) that find their location out of the way or only adequate.

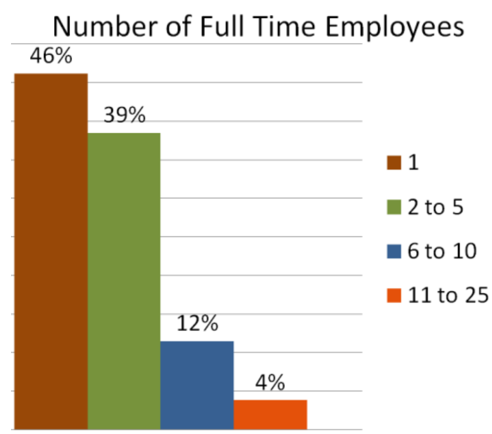
Taken together, these responses to facility ownership, facility size and facility location provide evidence for the consideration of strategic infrastructure capacity building.

Shifting to questions regarding the workplace, owner activities and employment, it is worth noting the high percentage of owner/operators who devote in excess of 40 hours to their business per week. This is typical with small and medium sized enterprises. Sixty-eight percent, over two-thirds of all respondents, indicated they spend over 40 hours a week with their business; 24% devote over 61 hours to their operations. All respondents collectively averaged approximately 51 hours per week.

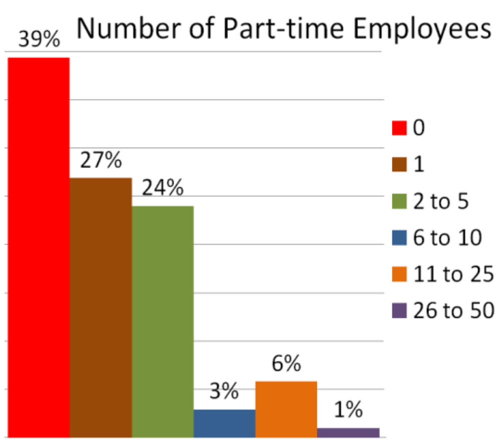
Hours Devoted to Business	Percentage	Responses
1 to 20	7.7%	8
21 to 40	24.0%	25
41 to 60	44.2%	46
61 and over	24.0%	25



The size of operations and economic impact a business has on its community can often be reflected in the number of staff employed by a business. Of the businesses interviewed, including single operator businesses, 89% (92 enterprises) operate with ten or less staff. The largest segment, 43% of these businesses (45) employ between two and five employees. All organizations collectively averaged 5.4 employees per business.



Of those businesses employing ten or less staff, 95% employ the majority of their staff full time. The largest percentage of businesses were those with only one full time staff member (representing a large number of single operator enterprises) at 46% (48 businesses) followed by businesses with two to five full time staff at 39% (40). Twelve businesses (12%) hired between 6 and 10 staff. Four businesses (4%) hired between 11 and 25 staff fulltime. No business employed between 26 and 50 staff fulltime, nor did any employ over 51 staff fulltime. All organizations collectively averaged three full time employees per business.



Compared to fulltime positions, businesses hired a smaller percentage of their workforce as part-time staff. Thirty-nine percent, 41 businesses, hired no part-time staff at all. Twenty-seven percent, 28 businesses, employ only one part-time staff, while 24%, or 25 businesses, hire between two to five part-time staff. Three businesses (3%) hire between six to ten part-time staff. Only one company hired between 26 and fifty part-time employees, and no business hired in excess of 50 part-time staff. This indicates 97 businesses interviewed (93%) employ ten or less part-time staff in their operation. The number of part-time employees averaged just above 1.65 staff per business employing part-time staff.

The ratio of full time employment to part time employment is important. The strength of full time employment is very good for Cardston. Full time employment indicates a degree of economic health and stability in the business community, and business confidence in its workers. It reflects well on the businesses themselves, and also provides an attractive employment incentive to workers and job seekers, and those considering relocating to the community.

Section 3 – Market Conditions

The market conditions section looks at a series of questions relating to the environment business owners and operators work within.

In one question, owners and operators defined their primary market area the following way:

- Fifty-seven businesses (55%) defined their market as local;
- Forty businesses (39%) saw their market as regional, occasionally including areas reaching into the cities within the province and inter-provincial markets (BC and Saskatchewan);
- Two owner/operators (2%) viewed their market as national in scope;
- Five owner/operators (5%) viewed their market as international in scope.

The thirty-nine percent of businesses define their primary market as regional indicates the degree of economic activity taking place at this level, the interest in, and potential to grow regional markets.

Seven percent of organizations identify their business with national and international markets; a question later on in the survey elicited nine requests for information on developing import/export strategies. Presently, only seven businesses already do, or are planning in the future to, export products they produce. These are small percentages. However, consideration of business growth strategies which foster development of these markets could be investigated further.

Another question, queried owners on where they felt their greatest market competition came from. Fifty-three percent, or 55 businesses, felt they were competing regionally for business. Forty-one percent, or 43 businesses, responded that they competed primarily in the local market. Two businesses (2%) defined their competition as national, two businesses (2%) defined their competition as the international marketplace, and two businesses (2%) felt they had no competition in their market at all; these were businesses which tend to provide a unique service or product to the market.

Asked what they felt their business's greatest competitive advantages were, and allowed to provide more than one response, owners and operators responded accordingly:

What Are Your Businesses Greatest Competitive Advantages	Percent	Responses
Customer Service	80.8%	84
Product/Service	72.1%	75
Loyalty to the business	65.4%	68
Location	49.0%	51
Other (please specify)	7.7%	8

Customer Service emerged as the main advantage business owner/operators feel they are providing their patrons. Product/service and loyalty to the business were also considered important components, both above 65%. Location also appeared as a competitive advantage mentioned by almost 50% of businesses. Other advantages included word-of mouth referrals, pricing and discounts, experience, and quality of work at 8%.

Questioned as to which target markets were essential to the success of their business, owners and operators identified their markets in a number of ways. Some specified a target audience, others associated with a particular sector, others identified a particular age or gender demographic, and finally many saw their market as local, regional, or open to all clientele. The following table illustrates the responses given:

Target Markets	Percentage	Responses
Specific (Unique) Target Audience	17.5%	24
Specific Age or Gender Demographic	14.6%	20
Local and Regional Markets	12.4%	17
First Nations	11.7%	16
Homeowners	10.9%	15
All Markets	9.5%	13
Tourists	7.3%	10
Business-to-Business	6.6%	9
Construction and Contracting	5.1%	7
Agricultural Sector	4.4%	6
Total:	**100.0%**	**137**

One hundred and thirty-seven markets were listed by the 104 businesses. The extent that businesses can readily define their target market speaks to the strength of owner/operator understanding of their clientele. With the exception of broad categories such local, regional and all markets, seventy-eight percent of markets were identified and targeted by the business owner/operator.

Markets with specific/unique audiences were identified by 24 businesses. Specific age or gender groups were targeted by 20 businesses. Local and regional companies were the market for 17 businesses. The importance of the First Nations community to Cardston businesses was apparent in the 12% or 16 businesses which identified this as a primary market. Homeowners were the market for 15 businesses. The category of all markets was captured by 13 businesses. Tourism, business-to-business, construction, and the agricultural sector each accounted for ten, nine, seven and six businesses respectively.

A note should be made that viewed in a larger context the agriculture, tourism, construction, and business-to business markets all represent one larger business-oriented target market. Therefore the figures for these segments combined would represent a market of 32 businesses (23%).

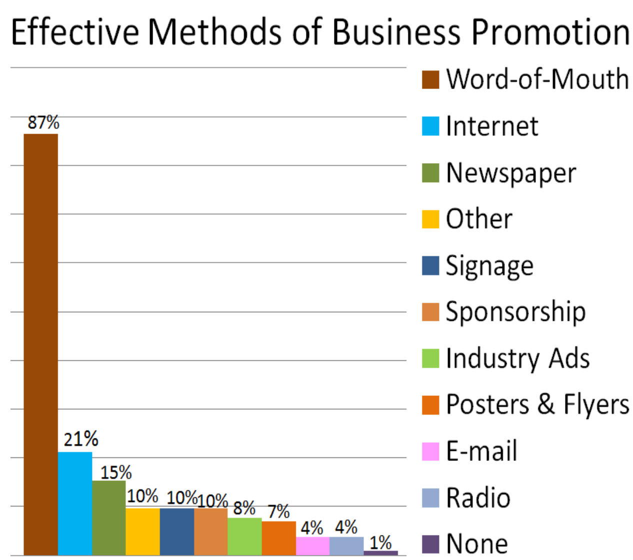
A follow-up question for owner/operators asked what aspect of their business offered the greatest potential for growth. The question solicited a wide range of responses given the variety of opportunities available to the businesses surveyed. Several themes did emerge as illustrated in the “Opportunities For Business Growth” table below.

Consideration of these perspectives should be taken by the municipality and other economic development stakeholders as areas to focus on when seeking to assist the business community, as they give insight into what businesses in the community are thinking.

Opportunities For Business Growth	Percentage	Responses
Expansion or Growth of Existing Services or Products	40.4%	42
The Addition of New Products and Services	20.2%	21
Growth of Market Area & Growth in Regional Population	18.3%	19
Presently No Opportunities for Business Growth	14.4%	15
Through Improved Customer Service	3.8%	4
Other specific initiatives	2.9%	3

A significant number of businesses have considered future growth. Businesses expanding or growing with existing products and services, those adding new products or services, and those seeking growth in market area or growth in the regional population, account for 79% of all operations surveyed. Only 14% of businesses have identified no opportunity for future growth. While this number is small, it does make up a significant component of the total. These are generally well-established businesses that see no need, have no desire, or have not identified an opportunity which fits their market.

When asked what methods of business promotion are most effective for their enterprise, business owners, given the opportunity to select more than one answer, responded accordingly:



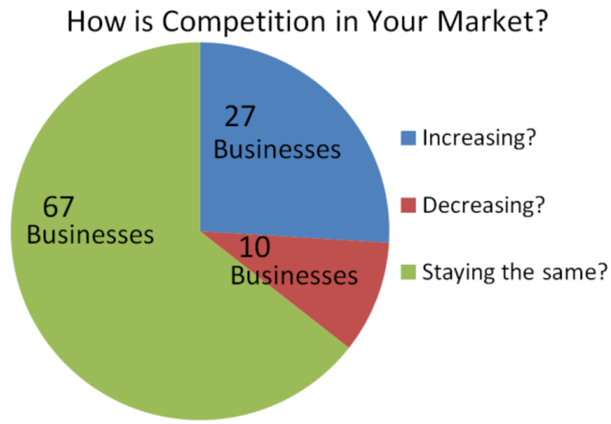
Word-of-Mouth was easily the most frequent response given with over 90 owner/operators indicating this as the most effective, often the only, method of promotion used. This is understandable in a rural environment where word travels fast and effectively around the community and region, and where businesses often have a small or non-existent budget for promotion. Word of mouth and a good reputation go hand-in-hand.

Other methods of advertising and promotion are also worth noting. More businesses, 26 of those surveyed, are utilizing the Internet, social media, and email as an effective, inexpensive method of reaching existing and new audiences. Sixteen businesses utilize newspaper, eight businesses use industry advertising, and four businesses use radio placements, all more traditional forms of promotion. Signage and sponsorship was felt to be an effective method of promotion for 10 businesses each, while posters and flyers were mentioned by seven companies. One business stated they used no form of business promotion.

Ten businesses found various other methods of promoting their products and services useful. These methods included: effective networking and referrals, brochures, coupons, and window displays.

Asked whether competition in their market was increasing, decreasing or staying the same an overwhelming number of businesses (90%) felt competition was either increasing or staying the same. Common reasons given for competition increase were:

- New businesses, often larger, creating price competition, entering the market (33%);
- Regional competition, fueled by the diversity of selection and the entry of big-box stores (23%);
- The introduction of the Internet and its services from on-line sales to information gathering which together are eroding the local markets (20%).

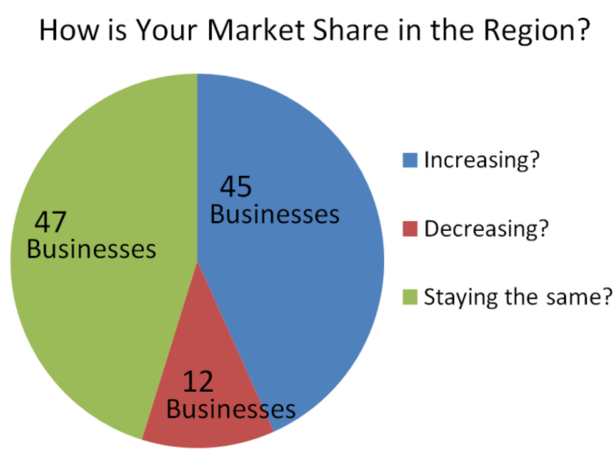


While the numbers above indicate consistent or increasing competition for businesses in the region, the second chart illustrates the confidence that business owner/operators have in their market share.

Eighty-nine percent of all businesses felt that their market share is increasing or staying the same. Forty-three percent of that number, or 45 respondents, indicated their market share was increasing.

Common reasons given for market share increase were:

- Constant or superior customer service with a strong reputation, and good word of mouth referrals (41%);
- Expansion of market and increased demand for products and services (19%);
- Aggressive approaches to marketing and going after business locally and in the region (10%);
- Strong community involvement (7%).



The following question was posed by the Municipality of Cardston to gauge the business community's perspective on a particular issue.

Does the Liquor Prohibition Status of Cardston and Cardston County Have a Positive, Negative, or No Effect on Your Business?		
Positive	4.8%	5
Negative	38.5%	40
No Effect	56.7%	59

Respondents generally reacted to this question one of three ways. Owner/operators who felt the present status had no effect on their business viewed this question in a purely objective way. For example, it has no direct effect on an individual providing professional services or a business with an established local clientele. Those business operators who expressed that it had a positive effect, felt that it helped the town and the region retain a unique quality that was beneficial to their lifestyle and their business attracting clientele and visitors.

However, those businesses that expressed that the prohibition status had a negative effect were businesses directly affected by perceived limited revenue streams, businesses in the tourism, hospitality and retail sector, or businesses that feel that the prohibition status impedes economic growth in the community and therefore has an indirect economic effect on their business operation.

Two questions were asked to assess business training needs in the community. The first question queried business owners as to whether they or their staff had taken courses on any of eight different business topics. Fifty-nine respondents had taken courses, while 45 businesses had not:

Have you or your staff taken any courses/programs on?	Percentage	Responses
Accounting	64.4%	38
Customer Service	62.7%	37
Business Planning and Plan Updating	55.9%	33
Marketing and Market Research	54.2%	32
Financing	45.8%	27
Business Transition Planning	22.0%	13
Social Media	18.6%	11
Bidding on Government Contracts	8.5%	5

Accounting was covered by 64% of businesses, 63% of owner/operators and their staff had training in customer service. Competency in business planning and plan updating, marketing and market research, and financing was claimed by approximately 50% of businesses. Training in business transition planning, social media, bidding on government contracts was less prevalent in the businesses surveyed.

Ninety-five percent (55 respondents) indicated that training, post-secondary and subsequent training, was taken externally (not part of an internal training program), while 5% (four respondents) indicated that their training was conducted as part of their organization’s in-house program.

Asked whether they or their staff would be interested in taking any of the above listed courses if they were offered locally or regionally 41 respondents replied the following way:

Would you or your staff attend one of the following courses?	Percentage	Responses
Social Media	61.0%	25
Customer Service	53.7%	22
Marketing and Market Research	43.9%	18
Business Transition Planning	41.5%	17
Business Planning and Plan Updating	39.0%	16
Accounting	34.1%	14
Bidding on Government Contracts	31.7%	13
Financing	26.8%	11

There is significant demand for training in social media, customer service, marketing, business transition planning, and business planning. To a lesser extent there was also an identified demand for training in accounting, bidding on government contracts, and financing. Options for delivery of training to address this demand should be considered by the appropriate partners.

Business owner/operators were next asked to express their thoughts on business operating hours. Their responses are found in the following table:

What are your thoughts on business hours?	Percentage	Responses
I am already open the number of hours I need to be	79.8%	83
I would like to be open more hours, but I can't afford the staff	8.7%	9
I would be open more hours, but I can't find good staff	5.8%	6
I would be open more hours if everyone else were	2.9%	3
I can't be open more hours for personal reasons	2.9%	3

An overwhelming number of businesses, 80% (83), felt they were presently open the number of hours their business requires. Fifteen businesses, 15%, acknowledge staff issues as restricting the number of hours they operate.

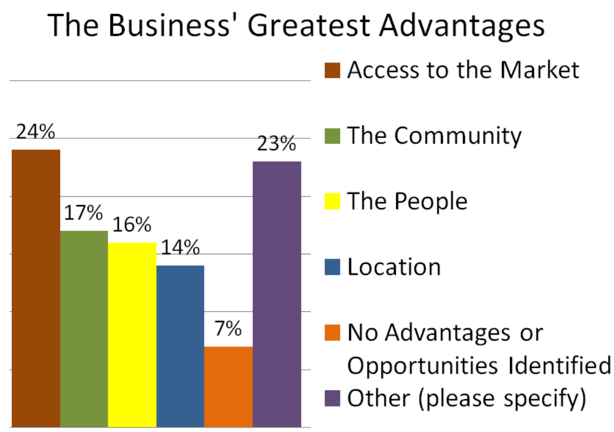
In an effort to define the existence of business clusters and the opportunity for development of clusters activities, two questions were asked. The first queried businesses as to whether owner/operators saw their business as part of a local or regional business cluster. Forty-eight percent (50) responded yes, while 52% (54) responded no.

The second question asked owner/operators which business clusters would have the greatest benefit to their business. They were requested to rank the clusters in order from the most beneficial to the least beneficial for their organization – ranking one as having the most benefit.

Rank from 1 to 6 (1 being of most value) which business clusters would have the greatest benefit to your business.							
Clusters	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**Ranking**
Oil and Gas	**54**	24	13	7	5	1	1
Value-added Agriculture	13	**46**	29	14	1	1	2
Tourism	26	10	**22**	8	31	7	3
Equine	4	10	20	**41**	27	2	4
Healthcare	6	12	15	30	**39**	2	5
Other	1	2	5	4	1	**91**	6

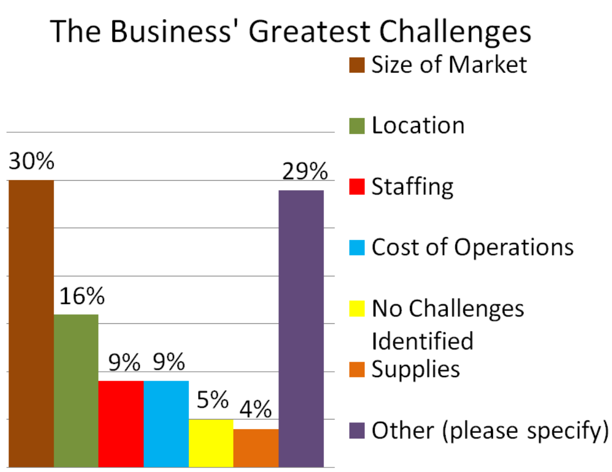
An easier way to view this data is in the bar chart to the left. Reading from top to bottom it clearly indicates a high sentiment that the most beneficial cluster would be oil & gas followed by value-added agriculture, tourism the equine cluster, healthcare, and other clusters. The four clusters identified in the other category included: manufacturing, business services, culture and the arts, and construction.

Finally business respondents were asked what their greatest challenges and greatest advantages or opportunities were with regards to operating their enterprises in Cardston. A range of responses were given:



Advantages/Opportunities – Two hundred and four advantages and opportunities were provided by the businesses surveyed:

- Forty-eight owner/operators feel their main advantage to being established in Cardston is their access to the local and regional markets;
- Thirty-five owner/operators saw the community itself, the amenities, and sense of place as a significant advantage;
- Thirty-two businesses indicated the people, their clients, customers, business associates, and the relationships they have established with these individuals were their primary asset;
- Twenty-eight businesses felt the central location they have to the customers they serve, their suppliers, and raw materials is their advantage;
- Forty-six businesses identified other advantages as key to their business success. Nine businesses recognized the lack of immediate competition in the area as a major factor in their business' success, while another nine indicated the quality of life was a major advantage. Eight businesses acknowledged the direct support of the Fist Nations community and another eight suggested the quality customer service they provide was a contributing factor. Six businesses pointed out their established, recognized reputation. Three businesses credited good, reliable staff; two indicated the low cost of doing business; and one business felt there was more opportunity to innovate in a rural setting;
- Fifteen respondents could identify no immediate advantages or opportunities.



Challenges – One hundred and sixty-five challenges were noted by businesses in Cardston:

- Fifty-two owner/operators found the small/limited or shrinking size of their defined market as the major challenge for their business;
- Twenty-seven owner/operators saw their location either in town or within the region as their main challenge;
- Fifteen businesses indicated staffing challenges were a major issue, while the cost of operations was also mentioned by another fifteen owner/operators;
- Six businesses identified access to supplies and products as a challenge;

- Fifty businesses offered other challenges. A significant number, 25, indicated frustration over the lack of community support for businesses in Cardston. “People prefer to shop in larger centres with better selection, ignoring the importance of supporting the local businesses” was a common sentiment. Seven businesses identified increasing local and intruding regional competition as a challenge, while seven indicated difficulty working with the Town and/or the EDC on permits, licensing, and land development issues. The Town’s lack of interest in supporting the business community and developing the local economy was cited as the primary challenge. The seasonal nature of business operations was discussed by three businesses. Three posed the “attitude” held by the community as restricting all business development. Individual, identifiable and very specific challenges were acknowledged by five businesses;
- Eight respondents could identify no immediate challenges.

Section 4 – Future Plans for the Business

The future plans section asked respondents the simple question “How likely is your business to do each of the following in the next two years?”

The question was broken up into several sub-components designed to evaluate whether the business was in a growth, mature, or declining stage in its life cycle. Respondents were asked to rate 19 questions using a scale of one to five. Specifically, they were asked to consider how likely or unlikely they were to undertake certain activities over the next two years where one was very unlikely, two was unlikely, three was an idea not considered, four was likely, and five was very likely.

How likely is it that your business will do each of the following over the next two years?

Answer Options	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Haven't Considered	Likely	Very Likely
Add a new product or service	14	13	6	32	**39**
Sell to a new market	17	26	13	**30**	17
Research new markets	14	21	**27**	25	17
Expand distribution channels	15	19	23	**26**	21
Expand advertising and promotion	15	24	8	**40**	17
Invest in new equipment	12	24	8	22	**38**
Replace current equipment	8	11	7	32	**46**
Expand or relocate current facilities	**60**	15	7	10	12
Redesign current facilities	**42**	20	10	15	17
Seek additional financial capital	**55**	23	8	10	7
Computerize current operations	16	4	4	15	**65**
Upgrade computer systems	22	14	8	**31**	30
Redesign operating activities	20	14	13	**45**	11
Expand the scope of operating activities	21	20	8	**32**	23
Seek professional or technical advice	14	15	11	27	**37**
Add unskilled labour	**29**	25	3	**35**	12
Add skilled labour	18	22	6	**39**	19
Invest in onsite training for employees	14	12	5	**38**	35
Invest in off-site training for employees	20	21	11	24	**28**

The table above reflects responses to most questions in the **likely** and **very likely** categories. Though percentages are not overwhelmingly high, results would appear to indicate a stable business community. This speaks to a business community which has established sound fundamentals, but is probably in a mature or declining overall lifecycle. However, when this data is considered with information gathered in section one regarding the existing longevity and experience within the business community, and the growth in new business over the last decade, there emerges a pattern of strengths and motivations that the Town and its partners should try to engage and foster.

Of concern should be the number of businesses not considering facility expansion or redesign, and those not considering an injection of financial capital as these indicate degrees of uncertainty and stagnation. This is again where the Town should take a leadership role in identifying barriers and reluctance to undertaking these activities and motivate the business community with incentives and opportunities for economic growth founded on a solid development plan.

To break down the figures in the table above, over the next two years:

- Sixty-eight percent of respondents (71) indicate that it is **likely** or **very likely** they will add a new product or service to their business, 39 businesses consider this **very likely**;
- Forty-five percent of businesses (47) feel it is **likely** or **very likely** they will sell to a new market, only 17 businesses consider this **very likely.** Thirty businesses considered it **likely**;
- Forty percent of businesses (42) consider it **likely** or **very likely** they will research new markets. Twenty-five businesses stated this as a **likely** activity. However, 27 hadn't considered it;
- Forty-five percent of owner/operators (47) indicated they were **likely** or **very likely** to expand their distribution channels; 26 businesses feel this as **likely**;
- Fifty-five percent of businesses (57) consider it **likely** or **very likely** they will expand advertising and promotional activities, 40 businesses consider this **likely**;
- Fifty-eight percent of businesses (60) will **likely** or **very likely** invest in new equipment, 38 businesses said this was **very likely**;
- Seventy-five percent of businesses (78) will **likely** or **very likely** replace existing equipment, 46 businesses consider this **very likely**;
- Seventy-seven percent of operations (80) are already computerized or it is **likely** or **very likely** they will computerize, 65 businesses consider this **very likely**;
- Fifty-nine percent of owner/operators (62) are **likely** or **very likely** to upgrade their computer systems; 32 businesses are **likely** to do so;
- Fifty-four percent of owner/operators (56) are **likely** or **very likely** to redesign their current operating activities, 45 businesses considered this a **likely** activity;
- Fifty-three percent of owner/operators (55) are **likely** or **very likely** to expand the scope of their business activities, 32 businesses consider this **likely**;
- Sixty-two percent of businesses (64) are **likely** or **very likely** to seek professional or technical advice, 37 businesses are **very likely** to do so;
- Fifty-six percent of owner/operators (58) are **likely** or **very likely** to add skilled labour, 39 businesses see this as **likely**. The challenge here is availability to locate and attract staff;

- Seventy percent of owner/operators (73) will **likely** or **very likely** invest in onsite training for employees, 38 businesses indicated this was already happening or was **likely** to occur;
- Fifty percent of owner/operators (52) will **likely** or **very likely** invest in off-site training for employees, 28 businesses said this was already happening or was **very likely** to occur.

There were only four questions which elicited negative-toned responses with **unlikely** or very **unlikely** responses. However, certain information can also be deduced from these results:

- Seventy-two percent of owner/operators (75) are **unlikely** or **very unlikely** to expand or relocate their current facilities, 15 businesses considered this **very unlikely**, while 60 businesses felt this was **unlikely;**
- Sixty percent of businesses (62) are **unlikely** or **very unlikely** to redesign their current facilities, 42 businesses considered this **very unlikely;**
- Seventy-five percent of businesses (78) are **unlikely** or **very unlikely** to seek additional financial capital for their business, 23 businesses considered this **very unlikely**, while 55 businesses considered this **unlikely**;
- While 35 businesses (34%) indicated they were **likely** to hire unskilled staff, a combined 53% (54 owner/operators) saw this as **unlikely** or **very unlikely**. This probably reflects the preference and requirements owners have for skilled labour.

Inferences that can be drawn from the information above include the following:

- The percentage of the businesses **unlikely** or **very unlikely** to expand their current facilities may include businesses that are satisfied with their current situation. Alternatively, some businesses may not be able to find appropriate facilities in Cardston. This could be an opportunity for developers and contractors. Alternatively, it might indicate caution, given economic uncertainty and the present appearance of stagnant economic growth in the community;
- It may also indicate that businesses are restricted from expanding due to development barriers, bylaws etc. which impede, and delay or inhibit expansion. Several comments were made concerning restrictive policies on expansion and development, lack of support from the Town for the business community, and lack of a strategic plan or direction for economic growth;
- Similar conclusions may be drawn for the percentage of owners that state it is **unlikely** or **very unlikely** they will redesign their current facilities. Redesigning facilities that are leased or where the business is uncertain about its future and that of the local business community, impedes decision. This is a situation where improved communication between the Town and the business community and a constructive, cooperative approach to development can address an issue;
- Finally, business owner/operators are more interested in hiring, and often require skilled staff for their organizations. Presently, as the numbers illustrate, there is a preference for skilled labour. However, many businesses are compelled to hire unskilled staff to fill vacant positions due to shortage of skilled labour. Developing a community with a desirable quality of life is important to attracting this labour, especially skilled labour. A proactive approach by the Town, its citizenry and the business community in defining the aspects which are desirable to provide Cardston with the amenities and quality of life that will attract the labour force they need is essential. A key component of this should be an inventory and analysis of the community's existing social capital and how it can be utilized and developed further.

Businesses were asked several specific questions regarding their staff requirements:

1. **Describe the positions required or for which you regularly seek staff.**
   Seventy-eight businesses (75%) identified 115 different positions they would hire. The majority of these positions required post-secondary training or certification. These included:
   - 32 positions in construction and the trades;
   - 21 positions in administration;
   - 15 positions requiring a unique training or skills set;
   - 11 positions in management;
   - Ten certified technicians in different occupations;
   - Nine customer service representatives;
   - Eight qualified food service workers including cooks and bakers;
   - Seven truck drivers and heavy equipment operators; and
   - Two professional/semi professional staff.

   Forty-eight businesses (46%) indicated they utilized unskilled, untrained, or less experienced labour, which normally did not require a post-secondary background, to fill 56 positions. Many of these positions were temporary, seasonal, or casual in nature. They included:
   - 19 positions in retail from sales staff and cashiers to shipping and stocking staff;
   - 18 positions defined by the respondents as general labour;
   - Ten positions in maintenance and housekeeping; and
   - Nine positions in the food services industry.

   A full list of all these positions is provided in Appendix B

2. **How many positions are presently vacant?**
   - Eighty-four percent of all businesses interviewed (86), indicated they had no vacancies;
   - Fifteen percent (16 businesses) presently have between one and five positions to fill;
   - Only one businesses had over five vacancies to fill at the time of the survey;
   - Of the seventeen businesses looking for staff, the average number of vacancies was two positions per business.
3. **What is the number of new positions you expect to add over the next five years?**
   - Sixty-two percent, 64 businesses, plan on adding new staff to their operations over the next five years. The challenge in many instances is, as was noted above, locating and retaining the staff with the qualifications they require;
   - Thirty-eight percent, or 40 businesses, expect to add no new positions over the next five years. While this does not include employees they will replace through loss, retirement, etc., it still represents over one third of the business community and may signify that these employers either have little intention to grow or expand, or the local/regional economic outlook is causing them uncertainty and hesitancy;
   - Of the 64 businesses planning to add new staff, the average number of positions to be added is over two and a half positions per business.

4. **Are you currently able to attract the required workers for your business?**

   Sixty-nine owner/operators (66%) answered yes to this question, while only 35 respondents (34%) answered no. This indicates that employers are reasonably successful in meeting their staffing needs, whether through qualified or untrained staff. Still approximately one third of all employers are having some difficulty. The challenge of filling these vacancies and preparing for future economic growth requires an affirmative commitment be made to employee attraction and retention both by the business community and community development stakeholders.

5. **If you have unfilled positions, what are the types of skills you are currently unable to obtain?**

   Thirty-five businesses responded with details on 54 positions they were seeking to fill. Twenty-six businesses required 35 skilled labour positions, while 14 businesses were looking for 19 unskilled labour positions. "Unskilled" should be qualified as positions not necessarily requiring experience or training. Many staff receive training once they are in their position.

Skills/Position Required	Number
Sector Specific Skills	19
Administration and Management	8
Skilled Trades staff – experienced and certified	8
General Labour – unskilled and/or unseasoned	6
Hotel/Motel	6
Retail	4
Food Services	3
Total	54

6. **How many current employees do you anticipate will retire or leave over the next five years?**

   Forty-three businesses (41%) expected no staff turnover. Fifty-six businesses (54%) anticipated losses of one to five employees. Only two businesses (2%) forecast losses of six to ten employees and two of eleven to twenty staff, while one business (1%) forecast losses of over 20 staff over the next five years. The fact that over fifty percent of these businesses expect staff losses over this period should again indicate the importance of addressing this issue.

   Of the one hundred and one-businesses anticipating staff turnover, the average number of positions lost is calculated to be approximately three employees per business. When seasonal employment is averaged in, this number is estimated at about two employees per business, still a significant figure.

   Another item of significance, if you consider the number of businesses with only one employee (effectively the owner) at twenty-eight businesses and cross-reference that with the number of businesses that anticipate one employee to retire from or leave the business, eleven of the businesses interviewed in Cardston have plans to close their doors in the next five years unless some plan for transition is in place.

Owners and operators were asked four questions regarding importing and exporting:

1. **Do you export or plan to export to markets outside the region?**
   Ninety-seven businesses (93%) responded that they did not export nor did they have plans to export. Only seven businesses (7%) interviewed confirmed they do export or plan to export.
2. **Do you import or plan to import to markets outside the region?**
   Seventy-two businesses (69%) responded that they did not import nor did they have plans to import. Thirty-two businesses (31%) interviewed confirmed they do import or plan to import.
3. **Do you require further assistance or information on import/export strategies?**

   Ninety-five businesses (91%) responded that they did not need assistance or information on import/export strategies. Nine businesses (9%) interviewed indicated they would appreciate information on these strategies. These businesses will be assisted directly by CFABSW.

   The potential opportunity to provide training, a course or seminar in the region, not only to the businesses requesting the information, but to a potential broader audience may exist.
4. **What obstacles do you face in attempting to export?**
   Only eight obstacles were identified. All eight dealt with legal issues: permits, duties, legalities, time delays, restrictions and the paperwork required to get items imported from or exported to international markets.

An analysis of questions one and two indicates that there is presently very little export activity taking place or being planned by businesses in Cardston, while at the same time close to one third of businesses import product or supplies for their business. This suggests that there is minimal economic and financial capacity in the existing business community to focus on developing export markets. The importing activity suggests there may be some voids or gaps that could be filled by businesses expanding to provide additional business-to-business products and services locally. This is discussed further in the final question of the survey.

Section 5 – Community Services

The objective of the community services section was to query owners and operators on their perception and satisfaction with 19 community services located within Cardston. Several of these services are provided by the municipality, others by the province and still others by organizations. This section, in addition to evaluating the satisfaction level that business owner/operators have with these services, is designed to gauge these services in terms of the quality of life provided in the region.

Respondents were asked to provide a rating from one to five for each service:

- One – Does Not Apply
- Two – Very Unsatisfied
- Three – Slightly Satisfied
- Four - Satisfied
- Five – Very Satisfied

Please Rate Your Satisfaction With the Following Community Services					
Answer Options	**Does not apply**	**Very Unsatisfied**	**Slightly Satisfied**	**Satisfied**	**Very Satisfied**
Police Services	1	1	7	**53**	42
Ambulance Services	7	1	4	**49**	43
Health care	2	5	14	**54**	29
Electric Services	0	11	10	**55**	28
Natural Gas Services	0	3	4	**62**	35
Sewer	1	9	7	**61**	26
Water	1	3	11	**64**	25
Local Roads	0	24	32	**36**	12
Traffic signs and lights	0	6	12	**66**	20
Business and municipal signage	4	14	18	**56**	12
Highways	0	0	4	**68**	32
Adequate/Appropriate Housing	6	14	13	**53**	18
Local transportation	**58**	15	8	18	7
Education (K to 12)	4	2	8	**53**	37
Education (Post-Secondary)	31	12	15	**38**	8
Industry Training	**45**	15	10	32	2
Locally Supplied Services and products	10	27	28	**36**	3
Business Support Services	19	**28**	24	**28**	5
Local Recreation & Leisure Facilities	2	18	23	**44**	16
Other quality of Life Factors	2	3	18	**59**	22

- Eighteen of the 20 services listed **satisfied** or **very satisfied** responses first. Two areas ranked **did not apply** as first; these were local transportation and industry training. Business support services ranked first in both the **satisfied** and **very unsatisfied** categories;
- All 18 services which rank **satisfied** or **very satisfied** first in their category, ranked **satisfied** higher than the **very satisfied** option, possibly indicating there is always room for improvement;
- Clustering the responses into groupings of **satisfied/very satisfied** and **slightly satisfied/very unsatisfied**, the services were ranked according to the largest number of responses as follows:
  - In the **satisfied/very satisfied** cluster, highways, natural gas services, police services, ambulance services, education (K to 12), water and sewer services, traffic signs and lights, healthcare, and electrical services were close to or above a rating 80% satisfaction; other quality of life factors, adequate/appropriate housing, business and municipal signage, local recreation and leisure facilities and access to post-secondary training were rated between the mid 70% and the mid 40% range;
  - In the **slightly satisfied/very unsatisfied** cluster, local roads, locally supplied services and products, and business support services all rated between 50% to the mid 50% range;
  - Fifty-six percent of businesses and 43% of businesses respectively felt that local transportation and industry training are not applicable (or do not exist) in Cardston.
- The nine services which rank highest in the **satisfied/very satisfied** category and are also under municipal or provincial jurisdiction, indicates that businesses feel the community has a strong basic infrastructure with its institutions (both bricks and mortar, and organizations), amenities and services. This should be viewed as a positive attribute for the community;

- Of the three services which rank highest in the **slightly satisfied/very unsatisfied** category two (local roads and business support services) can be directly affected by municipal intervention while one (locally supplied services and products) would require further research and strategic planning to evaluate whether it can be successfully addressed;
- The two categories which ranked first with the **does not apply** response (industry training and local transportation) may be difficult to address unless there is a demonstrated demand or need for these services.

In addition to the rating chart, 154 comments were captured from 46 businesses:

- Twenty-five businesses commented on the **supply of local products and services**. Twenty-two indicated that their business could not purchase the required goods, products, and services locally. Two businesses suggested that local businesses are not competitive on prices. One business recommended that businesses need to be more vocal about their needs and what they would purchase locally to create a demand and possibly a supply if it is practical;
- Nineteen comments addressed the absence of **local transportation**. Seven businesses stated that nothing was available, while another seven indicated there was a need for either a taxi or a regular intra-community transportation option. Three businesses noted that only handi-bus services existed. One business indicated that freight services were marginal, while another suggested that there was not sufficient demand to support local transportation;
- Fifteen owner/operators commented on the condition of **local roads**; 12 of these discussed the poor condition of roads and the problem with potholes, two voiced concern over inadequate plowing in the winter, and one mentioned the poor condition of alleyways;
- Fourteen owner/operators discussed their dissatisfaction with **business support services**. Twelve of the businesses indicated they received little or no support from the Town or the Chamber of Commerce; four of these businesses commented that there was a definite need for improvement. One respondent suggested that the Town needs to reconsider its incentive packages to encourage business growth and attraction, while another acknowledged they do not use any of the community's business services;
- Thirteen comments were voiced regarding **local recreation and leisure facilities**. Twelve of the 13 focused on the lack, and the inadequacy, of existing facilities and recreational activities. Five of these comments specifically addressed the pool issue. Another of these comments alluded to the necessity of having "certain facilities, essential for attracting people – a quality of life issue". One respondent complemented the community on the quality of its golf course;
- Twelve comments were made concerning **business and municipal signage**. Six businesses felt that present bylaws on business signage are too restrictive. Three businesses suggested that more visible signage, supported and sponsored by the Town and the Chamber is required, while another three indicated that the present cost of signage, both within town and in the MD is too high;
- Eight comments were captured regarding **adequate and appropriate housing**. Four comments addressed the shortage of rental units, housing and apartments, while four discussed the lack of low and moderate income housing. One business owner/operator felt that the housing market was presently over-priced;

- Seven comments were received concerning the **municipal sewer system**. Four identified an old infrastructure in need of upgrading especially in the downtown core. Two comments were made over concerns with sewer backup resulting from blockages in the town's mains. One respondent felt the Town over-charged for sewer services;
- Six respondents commented on the quality of **healthcare services**. Three comments suggested the quality of care was poor. Two respondents reported issues with long wait times and another indicated that communication between healthcare professionals and patients/family members was a concern;
- Six comments concerned **education (post-secondary & industry training).** Three stated that it was not adequate for the needs of the community, while three others suggested that improved access to distance learning options for skills training and college courses would be an asset;
- Two categories received five responses each. Commenting on **electrical services**, four owner/operators indicated power surges and poor service reliability was an issue that affected their business operations, especially as it pertained to their equipment. One respondent suggested that additional players were required in the market to boost competition, reduce cost, and improve reliability of the service. The five comments made about **traffic signs and lights** included two suggesting more signs in strategic areas such as playgrounds and school zones, two recommended more lights for traffic control at major intersections, and one noted that the placement of some signs is often confusing;
- Two categories received three responses each. Two comments on **education (K to 12)** indicated concern over the lack of programming and services, especially for special needs students. One comment pointed to the increase in bussing as being a problem for both students and parents. Discussing **other quality of life factors**, two businesses noted that it was difficult for newcomers and new business owners to integrate into the community, while another stated it was difficult to start a business in an old and aging community;
- One comment each was made regarding **highways**, **police services**, **ambulance services**, and **water services**. One respondent suggested that the highway south of Fort Macleod (hwy 2) was an issue; one respondent felt that police practices in the community were unfair and unbalanced; one respondent indicated they didn't like the government's changes to ambulance services, while another thought the Town was over-charging for water services.

Section 6 – Entrepreneur Support Services

This section of the survey was included to gauge the respondents' awareness of and satisfaction with business and entrepreneurial support services provided to the community by various organizations. It included nine questions:

1. **Are you aware of Community Futures Alberta Southwest (CFABSW) and the services they provide?**

   Fifty-six respondents (54%) confirmed they were aware of Community Futures and the services provided.

   Slightly above average, this compares very well to results received from other jurisdictions in this program. It indicates an awareness of the organization and the services we provide which will hopefully translate into strong continued relationships supporting local business development.

2. **Have you utilized the services of Community Futures Alberta South West?**

   Only fourteen respondents (14%) of the 104 interviewed had utilized the services of CFABSW or its predecessor Southwest Alberta Business Development Institute (SWABDI) in Cardston. This suggests that the awareness noted above needs to be translated into engaging the Cardston business community - How can we provide our services and assistance to local businesses and entrepreneurs?

   We will endeavor to identify those businesses and entrepreneurs which are in a position to utilize these services. This was a goal when this project was undertaken.

   CFABSW continues its work to increase the visibility of our organization, its goals and programs for rural entrepreneurs. Information is available by contacting the CFABSW office at 1-800-565-4418 or checking out our website at www.southwest.albertacf.com.

3. **Do you presently require any additional information on CFABSW services?**

   Twelve respondents (12%) indicated they would like further information about Community Futures Alberta Southwest programs. Information packages will be forwarded to these businesses.

4. **Are you a member of the Cardston & District Chamber of Commerce?**

   Forty-seven respondents (45%) indicated they were Chamber members, while 57 respondents (55%) indicated they were not members of the Chamber.

5. **If not a member, Why?**

   Of the fifty-seven respondents that indicated they held no Chamber membership, 25 indicated they saw no particular benefit to their business from being a member, nine respondents indicated there was no particular reason they hadn't joined. Seven owner/operators felt the Chamber provided no support to businesses in Cardston. Five businesses had never considered membership. Three businesses had never been approached, while three did not even know what the Chamber did. Another three owner/operators were too busy running their own business to get involved with the Chamber and two respondents indicated that the organization was too focused on retail and the downtown core.

6. **Are you receiving value from your Chamber membership?**

   Of the 57 owner/operators that indicated they were Chamber members, 34 (72%) felt they were receiving value, while thirteen (28%) indicated they were not presently receiving value from their membership.

   This reflects a reasonable satisfaction level for the Chamber among its members. However, there is also a level of dissatisfaction expressed by a percentage of members that suggests some improvements need to be made.

   Many of the responses found in questions five above and seven below may hint to why a certain segment of businesses do not have a Chamber membership, or do not feel they are receiving value for the membership they have.

7. **What specific initiatives would you like the Chamber to undertake?**

   For fifty-six of the 104 owner/operators surveyed (54%) no ideas immediately came to mind although they were encouraged to contact the Chamber in the future should they have thoughts to share. Forty-eight owner/operators (46%) shared 61 ideas or initiatives they thought the Chamber should consider.

   Twelve businesses suggested the Chamber improve opportunities to advertise and promote businesses in the community, 11 businesses expressed the need for the Chamber to more effectively engage the business community through regular contact, business visits, and active recruiting of new members. Nine businesses spoke of the need to support the business community and advocate on issues of importance while being relevant to all businesses not just those on main street or in the retail sector.

   Six businesses felt the Chamber should focus on business growth and economic development, business retention and expansion. Six businesses thought the Chamber needed to improve its communications with its membership, perhaps through a regular newsletter. Five owner/operators felt the Chamber should offer more business training opportunities, while another five indicated that the Chamber and the Town need to work more closely on economic development initiatives supporting both existing and new business.

   Seven individual initiatives were proposed for the Chamber to consider. They are as follows:

   - An Internet service provider cooperative;
   - Any activity which can involve the whole business community;
   - Hosting of a business trade show;
   - Provide and promote a thorough business listing to the region with adequate opportunities to advertise;
   - Research how to attract new business;
   - Review the timing of the events they hold (Midnight Madness for example);
   - The Chamber could be doing more to support local business through a public awareness campaign – A "shop local" campaign promoting what local businesses have to offer.

8. **List any additional comments you have or information you would like to receive from the Community Futures Alberta Southwest, the Cardston & District Chamber of Commerce, and the Town of Cardston.**

   CFABSW – Eighty-six respondents (83%) indicated they did not have any additional comments or require any further information at this time from CFABSW. Eight owner/operators (8%) requested a basic information package. Five businesses requested information on loan products, while another five had specific information requests. Of these requests, three concerned business grants and financing, one concerned information on "buy local" strategies, one was a request for a hard copy of the summary report, and one was a request for information researched by staff.

   Two comments were made; both concerned having CFABSW engage in business training with partners in the community.

   Cardston & District Chamber of Commerce – Eighty-nine respondents (86%) indicated they did not have any additional comments or require any further information from the Chamber at this time. One business did request membership information, while another business requested information from the Chamber on local and regional accommodations so that they could inform their customers what was available.

   Thirteen businesses directed 18 comments to the Chamber. Eleven comments indicated that the Chamber needs to move its focus towards business growth and economic development. They should work on this cooperatively with the business community and the Town. Five businesses advocated for additional business training, workshops and seminars. Two businesses suggested the Chamber must do a better job promoting who it is and what it does for the business community in Cardston.

   Town of Cardston– Sixty-two businesses (60%) indicated they did not have any additional comments or require any further information at this time from the Town. One respondent suggested that it would be nice to have information on Town incentives for business development/business attraction and promotion of local business.

   Forty-one businesses (39%) shared 43 comments with the Town. Twenty-four owner/operators stated that the Town must develop a business-focused attitude. They must become proactive in supporting business and evaluating opportunities for business and industry retention, expansion and attraction. Working with their community partners, they must develop incentives and ease barriers to business development. Many business owners feel this, and other activities, are necessary to generate business growth, create new jobs and grow the community. Ten businesses felt that the Town must consider loosening the liquor prohibition status of the community. Two businesses stressed the importance of quality leisure facilities and activities, another two pointed out the benefits of re-establishing a regional business license. Other suggestions included the Town consider an industrial garbage pick-up, uniformity in Town and business signage, and a recommendation that the Town place a link to Travel Alberta on its website.

9. **Can you identify any gaps or opportunities you see in the community?**
   Eighty-seven gaps and opportunities were identified by owner/operators. Some of these gaps and opportunities were presented as actual businesses; others were posed as recommendations for the Town and other stakeholders to consider. **The full list is presented as Appendix C**.

   Seventeen owner/operators (16%) gave specific examples of business gaps or opportunities, another nineteen (18%) indicated the need for light industry and manufacturing development in the community. Sixteen businesses (15%) suggested that licensed restaurants need to be reconsidered for the community for a variety of reasons, while another 13 businesses (13%) felt any additional restaurant option, fast food and fine-dining, is needed. Nine businesses introduced several municipal issues from infrastructure and signage improvement to leadership and business support. Seven businesses indicated the need for enhanced recreation/leisure options, and three businesses each mentioned tourism development and improved community support.

Conclusion

The results of this project provide an honest representation of the Town of Cardston's business community impressions on issues from basic business activities, to market conditions and the established primary market bases, to future plans and potential needs, labour force requirements, and the community's strengths and weaknesses as a place to do business. The report identifies several potential areas where there is a deficit in both economic and community capacity as well as social capital. These are issues which stakeholders should take a close look at.

Sixty-three percent, 104 businesses out of a potential 165, responded to the survey over a three-month period. The project had good representation from all the primary sectors in the community of Cardston. Home-based businesses were perhaps the only under represented sector, however their representation was slightly higher than in several of the other BVP project jurisdictions participating in this program.

The feedback from, and analysis of, this study will provide input into what the community requires to grow and where the potential for growth lies. It will equip leaders with the information they need to make informed decisions about what affects the Cardston business community.

Community Futures Alberta Southwest will be undertaking several future projects utilizing this information and the information from other jurisdictions that were part of this project. We welcome all, municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, businesses and other stakeholders to make use of this document for research and planning purposes.

Should you require information on other reports generated by the BVP program contact our office at 1-800-565-4418 or download the reports from our website at www.southwest.albertacf.com/resources.

As expressed by many of the owners and operators interviewed, who made a commitment of time to participate in this project, this document provides valuable information and can be a useful resource if initiative is taken, and recommendations are considered and acted upon for the benefit of all stakeholders involved.

Appendix A

Business Visitation Survey

SECTION I: Primary Business Data Date: ______________________

Survey Entry Number: ______________________
Business Name: -------- ______________________
Owner/Primary Contact: ______________________
Mailing Address:-------- ______________________
Street Address: --------- ______________________
Phone: -------------------- ______________________
Cell Phone: -------------- ______________________
Fax:------------------------ ______________________
Email: --------------------- ______________________
Website: ------------------ ______________________
Regular Business Hour ______________________

SECTION II: About the Business:

1. How many total years of personal business experience do you have? ------------------- _________
2. How many years of experience in this specific business activity do you have?--------- _________
3. What year was this business originally started? -- _________
4. What percent of the business do you own?--- _________
5. The business was established in the area because of:
   proximity to market ________ proximity to home _________ other ________
6. What year did you become the owner/manager of this business? --------------------------________
7. Which best describes how you came to own/manage this business?
   b) Purchased the business---________
   d) Started the business ---________
   f) Other ---________
8. How is this business organized?
   b) Sole proprietorship --________
   d) Partnership --________
   f) Corporation --________
   h) Franchise --________
   j) Other (list) --________
9. How many family members are investors in this business? ----------------------------------________
10. Is the business premises? owned _______ leased _______ home-based _________
11. Is the business location? accessible ______ adequate ______ out-of-the-way ______
12. Is the business facility size? adequate _______ too small _______ too large ________
13. Which best describes this primary business activity?
   b) Service -- _______
   d) Retail--- _______
   f) Food and Beverage -- _______
   h) Finance/insurance/real estate --- _______
   j) Business and professional services-- _______
   l) Wholesale/distribution --- _______

n) Primary Sector Activity

ii. Energy ___________
v. Agriculture ___________
viii. Manufacturing ___________
xi. Construction ___________
iii. Transportation ___________
vi. Tourism/Recreation ___________
ix. Other ________________________

14. Describe your primary product or service ____

15. In an average week, how many hours do you devote to your business? ___________________

16. How many employees do you have? ______________

b. Full-time ________________________ c. Part-time_______________

SECTION III: Market Conditions

17. Where is your greatest market competition from?
Local ____ Regional ____ National ____ International ____ No Competition ____

18. What are your business' greatest competitive advantages?
Location____ Product/Service____ Customer Service____ Loyalty____ Other (List)______________

19. What target markets or customers are essential for the success of your business?
____

20. What aspect of your business offers the greatest potential for growth?
____

21. What methods of business promotion are most effective for you?
Radio___ Newsppr___ Industry Ads___ INet___ E-mail___ Word-of-M___ Other (list)____________

22. Is the competition in your market: Why?____
Increasing? ___________ Decreasing? ___________ Staying the same? ___________

23. Is your market share in the region: Why?____
Increasing? ___________ Decreasing? ___________ Staying the same? ___________

24. Does the liquor prohibition status of Cardston and Cardston County have a positive or negative impact on your business (or no effect). Positive ______ Negative ______ No Effect ______

25. Have you or your staff taken courses/programs (✔)? Would they (**X**) if offered in the region on?
Marketing and Market Research ☐ Financing ☐ Accounting ☐ Business Planning and Plan Updating ☐ Customer Service ☐ Business Transition Planning ☐ Bidding on Government Contracts ☐ Social Media ☐

26. What are your thoughts on store hours? (select one)
   a. I am already open the hours I need to be
   b. I can't be open more hours for personal reasons
   c. I would like to be open more hours but can't afford the staff
   d. I would be open more hours if everyone else were
   e. I would like to be open more hours, but can't find good staff

27. Do you see your business as part of a local or regional business cluster? Yes _____ No _____

28. Rank from 1 to 6 (1 being of most value) which business clusters would have the greatest benefit to your business? Equine _____ Value added agriculture _____ Oil & Gas _____ Healthcare _____ Tourism _____ Other __________________________

29. COMMENT: What are your businesses' greatest challenges and its greatest advantages or opportunities in its present location?____
____
____

SECTION IV: Future Plans for the Business:

30. How likely is your business to do each of the following in the next two years?

Please use the following scale in answering these questions: Circle the Best Response.

1=very unlikely 2=unlikely 3=haven't considered this 4=likely 5=very likely

a. Add a new product or service --------------------------------					
b. Sell to a new market--					
c. Research new markets --					
d. Expand distribution channels---------------------------------					
e. Expand advertising and promotion -------------------------					
f. Invest in new equipment --------------------------------------					
g. Replace current equipment-----------------------------------					
h. Expand or relocate current facilities ------------------------					
i. Redesign current facilities ------------------------------------					
j. Seek additional financial capital -----------------------------					
k. Computerize or have presently computerized operations					
l. Upgrade computer systems ----------------------------------					
m. Redesign daily operating activities--------------------------					
n. Expand the scope of your operating activities ------------					
o. Seek professional or technical advice ---------------------					
p. Add unskilled labour--					
q. Add skilled labour --					
r. Invest in onsite training for employees---------------------					
s. Invest in offsite training for employees---------------------					

i. Description of positions you hire for ---------------------- ________________________________

ii. How many positions are presently vacant --------------- ________________________________

iii. # of positions expected to add over next 5 years ------ ________________________________

iv. Are you currently able to attract the required workers for your business? Yes ________ No________

v. If no, what are the types of skills that you are currently unable to obtain? ________________________________

vi. How many current employees do you anticipate will retire or leave over the next five years? ____________________________

31. Is your businesses' primary market
Local? ________ Regional? _________ National? ________ International? ________

32. Do you export (yes, no) or plan to export(yes, no), to markets outside the region?

33. Do you import (yes, no) or plan to import (yes, no) from markets outside the region?

34. Do you require assistance or information to develop an export/import strategy? Yes ___ No ___

35. What obstacles do you face in attempting to import/export? ______________________________

SECTION V: Community Services:

36. Rate your satisfaction with the following community services

Please use the following scale in answering these questions: Circle the Best Response.

1=does not apply 2=very unsatisfied 3=slightly satisfied 4=satisfied 5=very satisfied

a. Police Services --					
b. Ambulance Services --					
c. Health care ---					
d. Electric Services---					
e. Gas Services --					
f. Sewer ---					
g. Water---					
h. Local Roads --					
i. Traffic signs and lights --					
j. Signage – Business and Municipal --------------------------					
k. Highways--					
l. Adequate/Appropriate Housing -------------------------------					
m. Local transportation ---					
n. Education (K to 12) --					
o. Education (Post-Secondary) ----------------------------------					
p. Industry Training ---					
q. Locally Supplied Services and products--------------------					
r. Business Support Services ------------------------------------					
s. Local Recreation & Leisure Facilities -----------------------					
t. Other quality of Life Factors -----------------------------------					

SECTION VI: Entrepreneur Support Services

37. Were you aware of Community Futures Alberta Southwest and the services we provide? Yes _No_

38. Have you utilized the services of Community Futures Alberta Southwest (CFABSW)? Yes __ No__

39. Do you require further information on CFABSW services? Yes _____ No____

40. Are you a member of the Cardston & District Chamber of Commerce? Yes ____ No____

41. If not a member, why?____

42. As a member, are you receiving value from your Chamber membership? Yes ______ No______

43. What specific services or initiatives (promotions) would you like the Chamber to provide? __________
____

44. List any Comments you have, or additional services or information you would like from Community Futures Alberta Southwest, the Chamber, or the Town.____

45. Identify any business gaps or opportunities you see in the community. _________________________

____

Appendix B

Positions Requiring Post-secondary Training, Certification, Skilled Labour		
Management and Administration		
Editor		
Management		
Management		
Management		
Managers		
Managers		
Managers		
Office manager		
Production manager		
Supervisor		
Supervisors	Subtotal:	11
Business Support Personnel (Assistants)		
Administration		
Administrative		
Administrative assistant		
Administrative assistant		
Client care representatives		
Customer service representative		
Customer service		
Customer service		
Customer service		
Experienced cashiers		
Front desk		
Front end		
Licensed, trained customer		
Motor vehicle registrars		
Office administration		
Office administrative staff		
Office assistant		
Photography assistant		
Reception		
Reception		
Receptionists		
Receptionists		
Receptionists		
Receptionists		
Secretary		
Secretary		
Service clerk		
Trained support aides	Subtotal:	30

Positions Requiring Post-secondary Training, Certification, Skilled Labour

Technician, Professionals and Semi-professionals		
Accounting technician		
Accounting technician		
Accounting technician		
Accounting technician		
Assistant technician		
Bank Tellers		
Bank Tellers		
Bookkeeping		
Dental assistants		
Eye care technician		
Financial advisors		
Hygienists		
Photo editing technician		
Veterinarian or vet technician	Subtotal:	14
Trades Staff		
Apprentice and qualified stylists and nail specialists		
Apprentices or licensed auto technicians;		
Assistant ticketed plumber		
Cabinetmaker		
Carpenter		
Carpenters,		
Concrete trades		
Electrical technician		
electricians		
Experienced technician		
Hair stylist		
Hair stylists;		
Massage therapists and qualified assistants		
Mechanic		
Mechanic		
Mechanic		
Mechanics		
Mechanics		
Mechanics		
Mechanics		
plumbers		
Qualified trades staff		
Roofers and siding techs		
Service technicians		
Skilled framer		
Skilled tradespersons		
Small equipment technician		

Positions Requiring Post-secondary Training, Certification, Skilled Labour		
Trades Staff (continued)		
Ticket gas fitters		
Tire technician		
Trades staff		
Trained equipment operator		
Welders	Subtotal:	32
Truck Drivers and Heavy Equipment Operators		
Drivers		
Drivers		
Fuel truck driver		
Heavy equipment		
Heavy equipment Operator		
Licensed equipment operator		
Truckers	Subtotal:	7
Certified Food Staff		
Bakers		
Bakers		
Cook		
Cook		
Cooks		
Cooks		
Meat cutters	Subtotal:	7
	TOTAL:	**116**

General Labour, Unskilled, or Staff to be Trained On-site
General Labour Positions
General labour
General labour
General labour
General labour
General labour
Delivery
Delivery
Furniture assembly
General labour
General labour
General labour
General labour
General labour
General labour
General labour

General Labour, Unskilled, or Staff to be Trained On-site

General Labour Positions (continued)		
General labour		
General labour		
General labour		
General labour		
General labour - competent		
Parts staff		
Parts man		
Short-term temporary labourers	Subtotal:	18
Cashier		
Cashier		
Cashiers		
Cashiers		
Clerk		
Clerks		
Clerks		
Clerks		
Retail sales		
Retail sales		
Retail sales		
Sales		
Sales		
Sales		
Sales clerks		
Sales clerks		
Shipping and receiving staff		
Stock clerks		
Stockpersons	Subtotal:	19
Cleaning and Maintenance Staff		
Cleaners		
Housekeeper		
Housekeeper		
Housekeeper		
Housekeeper		
Housekeeping		
Maintenance		
Maintenance		
Maintenance		
Mowing and irrigation staff	Subtotal:	10

General Labour, Unskilled, or Staff to be Trained On-site		
Food Services Staff		
Dishwasher		
Food preparation		
Front counter staff		
Servers		
Servers		
Wait staff		
Waitress		
Waitresses		
Waitresses	Subtotal:	9
	TOTAL:	**56**

Appendix C

Potential Business Gaps and Opportunities
A business catering to the recreational vehicle users sales and service
A competing car dealership
A computer services business - those that were open have all closed
A good fitness facility
A seniors–focused business catering to personal care, transportation, housekeeping, etc.
A storefront staffed by a receptionist that can coordinate and schedule trades people
An importing service to assist businesses in Cardston
ATV dealership
Car dealership
Car dealership
Clothing stores
Dry cleaner
Dry cleaner
Good clothing store; shoe store
Modern Laundromat
Services for seniors - housekeeping, laundry, meals, drivers, companions
Shoe store; family clothing store
Subtotal: 17

Potential Business Gaps and Opportunities		
Business/industry which fits the community (supported through municipal incentives)		
Evaluate what Cardston has to offer then promote it. Seek out businesses to locate here		
Government offices or private sector industry to bring jobs to the community		
Industries which match the town's strengths and labour force		
Industry - manufacturing and processing		
Light industry - but it must be supported by the Town		
Strong infrastructure and incentives to locate in the community		
Light industry compatible with existing community strengths		
Light industry; tech-based industry that can be located anywhere		
Light manufacturing		
More industry in the community, supported by the Town; a base to draw taxes from		
Need light manufacturing and complementary industry to attract young families		
Needs more industry and access to basic services		
Oil and gas service companies to associate with Del Bonita developments		
Provide incentives and support for business community		
Town needs to focus on attracting and supporting new industry to revive the economy		
Town needs to give tax breaks and other incentives to attract new business operations		
Town lacks industry; a machining shop		
Town must identify viable options in oil and gas and the manufacturing sector to attract young families to the community	Subtotal:	19
A full service licensed dining establishment		
A hotel that has licensed dining		
Access to licensed restaurant		
Decent restaurant with licensed dining option		
Licensed restaurants		
Licensed restaurants;		
Licensed restaurant		
Licensed restaurant;		
licensed restaurants		
Licensing dining; light industry		
Licensing of establishments to increase tourism and length of stays in town		
Liquor legislation should be changed to allow restaurants to sell alcohol		
Remove liquor restrictions to open up opportunities for many businesses		
The town is lacking licensed dining;		
The town needs to allow licensed restaurants to support tourism		
Town needs to craft a bylaw to allow wine and beer in restaurants	Subtotal:	16

Potential Business Gaps and Opportunities

A better variety of restaurants; Tim Horton's		
Better food service - restaurants		
Breakfast cafe		
KFC; Tim Horton's		
More restaurants are needed		
Need for more fast food places		
New, quality restaurants, especially good dining in the evening;		
Restaurant hours and more restaurants		
Restaurants in town need to be improved; also additional fast food restaurants		
Restaurants need to be open for breakfast		
The town could use a KFC		
Tim Horton's		
Tim Horton's; restaurants	Subtotal:	13
Leaders are required to help all businesses and people who want things to progress		
Local businesses have to address existing needs more effectively with a cheaper, broader range of offerings		
More investment in the community from the County and the Blood reserve		
Nothing unless it is supported by a strong economic base		
Support businesses in the trade sector		
Town needs to be more proactive towards economic/business development	Subtotal:	9
Additional recreation options (bowling, indoor swimming pool)		
Arts and cultural activities could be improved		
Entertainment options - entertainment in a community is a huge factor in keeping people here as opposed to having them leave.		
Leisure and recreational opportunities		
Need facilities for 4 to 19 year olds		
Personal entertainment in the community is marginal – esp. for young professionals		
There is a need for more entertainment and recreation services.	Subtotal:	7
No support/loyalty from local residents - attitudes must change		
Locals have to know where to find and support businesses and services in Cardston		
The Town and residents need to support existing businesses (buy local)	Subtotal:	3
Collaboration of organizations that provide tourism-related services		
Tourism should focus more on the Mormon pioneer and local native themes		
Tourism development	Subtotal:	3
	TOTAL:	**85**

Notes

Notes

Community Futures

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