



2024 - 2025

Annual Report

Community Futures Wild Rose

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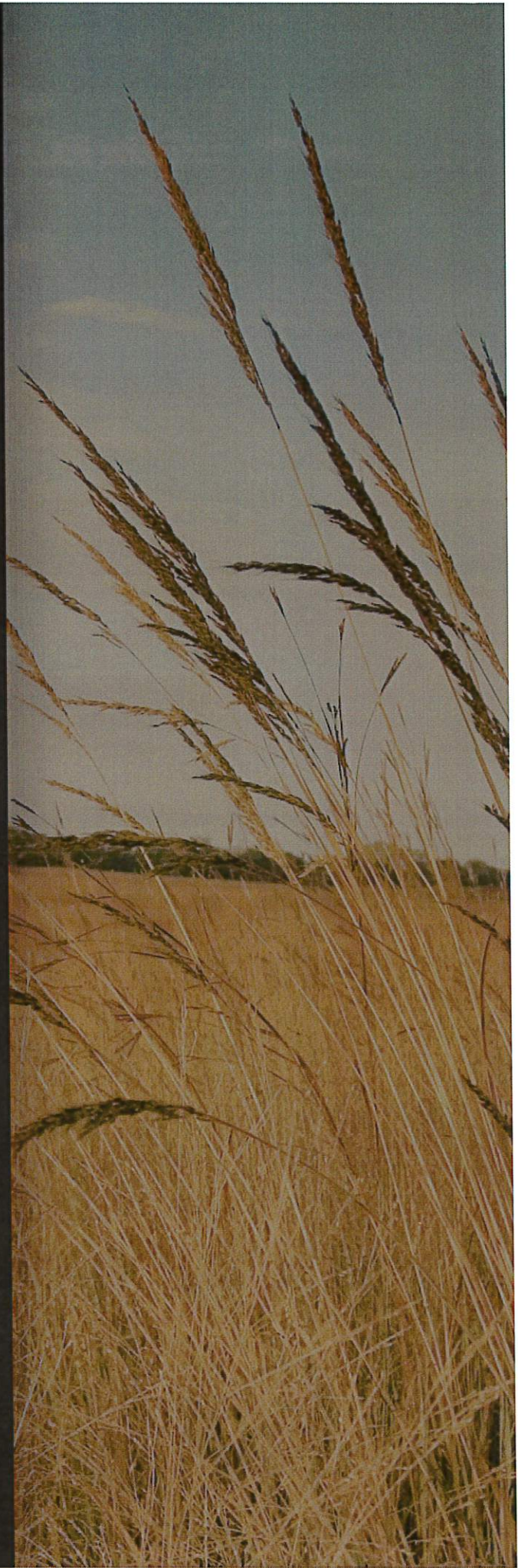


Table of Contents ↘

Message from Leadership	3
CFWR Board of Directors 2024 - 2025	4
Committees	5
CFWR Staff 2024 - 2025	6
CFWR 35 Celebratory Road Trip	7
Heart of our Community campaign	9
Performance Results 2024 - 2025	11
Total Loans	12
CFWR Economic Development Projects	13
Conclusion	15

Message from Leadership

Reflecting on the past year, we find ourselves in a landscape marked by resilience, innovation, and community spirit. The 2024/2025 fiscal year has been a testament to the strength and adaptability of the communities we support as we continue to navigate economic challenges and seize new opportunities.

This year, Community Futures Wild Rose demonstrated strong performance on key KPIs by distributing \$1.5 million in loans supporting 43 jobs, and serving 560 clients. The organization delivered 597 business training sessions, provided 288 business advisory services, and engaged 762 volunteer hours from board and committee members.

Our Community Economic Development initiatives have remained robust and impactful. We successfully concluded the Regional Workforce Study and Digital Economy Programs while maintaining our other vital projects. These efforts continue to align our work with market demands and empower entrepreneurs for competitive success in an ever-evolving economic landscape.

As we wrapped up our 35th-anniversary celebration road trip at the end of 2024, we were deeply moved by the success stories and lasting impact our organization has had across the region. This journey not only highlighted the businesses we've supported over the years but also reinforced the strong partnerships that form the foundation of our work.

In January 2025, we launched an exciting new campaign called "Heart of Our Community." This initiative shines a spotlight on the invaluable contributions our local business owners make beyond their products and services. From volunteering at community events to sponsoring children's sports teams and donating to fundraisers, these entrepreneurs are the true pillars of our communities. Through this campaign, we're celebrating their dedication and thanking them for their integral role in shaping vibrant, supportive neighbourhoods.

Looking ahead, we're embracing both challenges and opportunities. In response to static core funding, we've begun renovations to our office's lower level, with plans to rent office space to four independent organizations. This strategic move will generate additional funds, allowing us to continue providing high-quality services to our community.

As we move forward, we remain committed to crafting a thriving, inclusive future for all. Our dedicated staff, board members, and committee members-at-large continue to be the driving force behind our success, and we're grateful for their unwavering commitment to our mission.

To our community members, partners, and the businesses we serve: thank you for your trust, resilience, and collaborative spirit. Together, we're not just weathering challenges – we're building a stronger, more vibrant future for our region.

Amber Link
CFWR Board Chair

Chantale Sangster
CFWR Executive Director

Meet the Board of Directors



Amber Link, Chair
Wheatland County Reeve



Wade Christie, Vice Chair
Kneehill County Councillor



Jason Montgomery, Treasurer
Strathmore Councillor



Rhonda Laking
Acme Councillor



Les Spurgeon
Beiseker Councillor



Rose Jimmo
Carbon Councillor



Mike Wetzstein
Bassano Councillor



Richard Bryan
Standard Councillor



Dennis Hazelton
Three Hills Councillor



Julie Sim
Irricana Councillor



Les Schultz
Hussar Mayor



Flo Robinson
Linden Mayor



Leah Smith
Rockyford Deputy Mayor



Chris Armstrong
Trochu Councillor



Janelle Sandboe
Chestermere Councillor

COMMITTEES

Investment Review Committee		
Trochu	Chris Armstrong	Chair
Three Hills	Dennis Hazelton	Director
Strathmore	Tari Cockx	Member-at-Large
Chestermere	Pat Wise	Member-at-Large
Bassano	Sabine Nasse	Member-at-Large

Management/Personnel Comm.		
Wheatland County	Amber Link	Chair
Hussar	Les Schultz	Director
Rockyford	Leah Smith	Director
Acme	Rhonda Laking	Director

Governance Committee		
Linden	Flo Robinson	Director
Hussar	Les Schultz	Director
Acme	Rhonda Laking	Director

Audit/Finance Comm.		
Strathmore	Jason Montgomery	Chair
Three Hills	Dennis Hazelton	Director
Standard	Richard Bryan	Director

Sustainability/Succession Comm.		
Kneehill County	Wade Christie	Director
Linden	Flo Robinson	Director
Standard	Richard Bryan	Director
Acme	Rhonda Laking	Director

CFWR Staff 2024 - 2025



Chantale Sangster
Executive Director



Lindsay Desrosiers
Business Development Officer



Trisha Breault
Community Economic
Development Coordinator



Pat Grabo
Business Analyst



Jo Huzan
Office Administrator

CFWR 35 Celebratory Road Trip

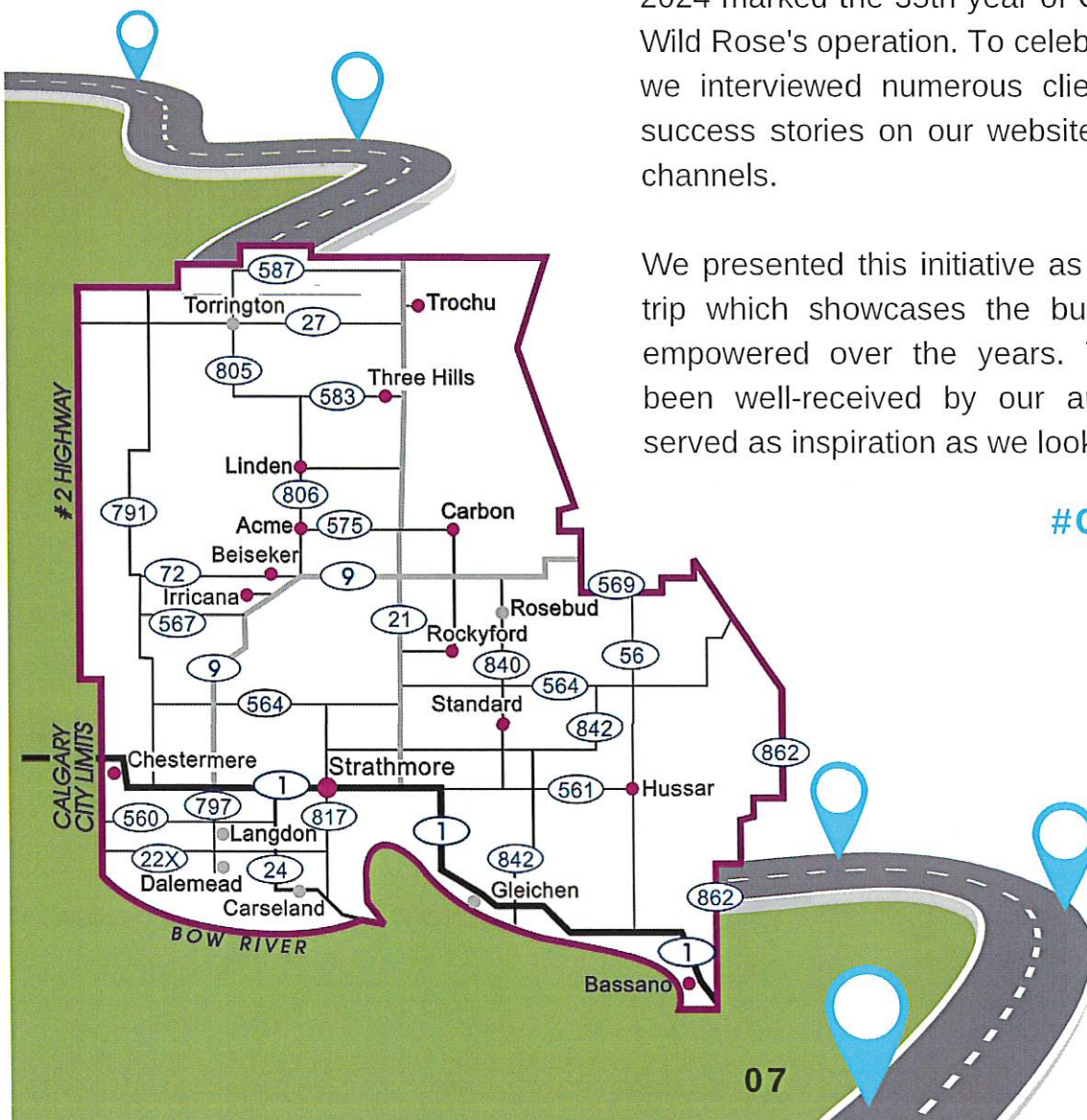
Celebrating 35 years of serving the Wild Rose region!

Since 1989, CFWR has invested **\$38,848,708.83** in loans benefiting businesses in our region and contributing to the creation and maintenance of **35,134 jobs**. In addition to these direct investments, CFWR has leveraged an additional **\$53,463,945** in funding for our region!

2024 marked the 35th year of Community Futures Wild Rose's operation. To celebrate this milestone, we interviewed numerous clients to share their success stories on our website and social media channels.

We presented this initiative as a celebratory road trip which showcases the businesses we have empowered over the years. These posts have been well-received by our audience and have served as inspiration as we look to CFWR's future.

#CFWildRose35



CFWR 35 Story Highlights

High Seas Coffee

High Seas Coffee in Linden is a cozy café owned by Krista Boese, offering big-city quality with small-town charm. From classic London Fogs to adventurous Honey Badger Lattes, there's something for every coffee lover. Krista's journey began in 2016 with the support of Community Futures Wild Rose, transforming a Pinterest dream into reality. Today, she leads a dedicated team, creates a welcoming hub for locals, and inspires other women to pursue their entrepreneurial goals. Stop by and experience the heart behind every cup.



TrailblazHer Co.

Founded by mother-daughter duo Jan and Erin Johnson in Rocky View County, Trailblazher Co. celebrates the creativity and resilience of rural women. What began as a business journal in 2011 has grown into an international print magazine, podcast, and soon, an online marketplace. Their mission is to amplify rural voices and foster community through storytelling. With CFWR's support, they continue to inspire women across North America to pursue bold, gutsy lifestyles rooted in authenticity, entrepreneurship, and connection.

Strathmore Station Restaurant & Pub

Owned by Peter Klironomos and Loizos Zakos, it is a beloved local landmark blending exceptional food with Strathmore's rich rail history. Since 1999, the duo has created more a restaurant that serves as a community hub. With a diverse menu, cozy fireside seating, and a vibrant patio, The Station offers a welcoming space for all. Their legacy celebrates heritage, fosters connection, and supports local prosperity through meaningful employment and hospitality.





In 2025, Community Futures Wild Rose launched the Heart of Our Community campaign to celebrate the vital role small businesses play in our region. These businesses do more than provide goods and services, they sponsor local events, support youth programs, donate to community causes, and help foster vibrant, resilient communities.

The campaign functions as both a Small Business Award and a regional spotlight, with the Wild Rose service area divided into four geographic quadrants receiving individual focus each quarter. Weekly social media features highlight nominated businesses, and at the end of each quarter, one exceptional business is selected by the CFWR Board to receive a \$1,000 award. The campaign began with Quadrant 1 (January–March 2025), recognizing Joker Bicycle Co. as the inaugural winner. Community engagement has been strong, with nominations actively promoted via CFWR’s social channels and local Facebook groups. **CFWR has received 119 nominations so far.** Currently, nominations are open for Quadrant 3, which includes Torrington, Linden, Acme, Beiseker, Irricana, and the surrounding area.

Campaign Timeline and Focus by Quadrant:

Quadrant 1 Spotlight: January – March 2025
Strathmore, Rockyford, Standard, Hussar, Gleichen, Bassano, and Wheatland County.

Taking Nominations: Dec 1st, 2024 - Feb 28th, 2025

Quadrant 2 Spotlight: April – June 2025
Trochu, Three Hills, Carbon, Rosebud, and Kneehill County.

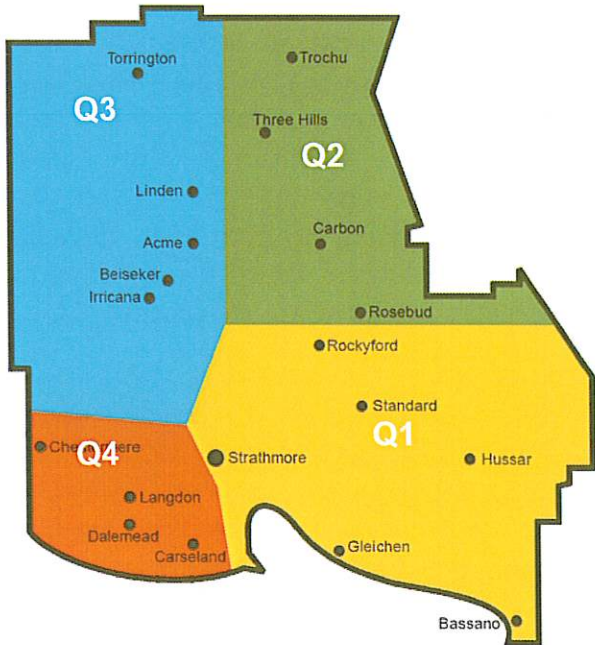
Taking Nominations: March 1st - May 30th, 2025

Quadrant 3 Spotlight: July – September 2025
Torrington, Linden, Acme, Beiseker, Irricana, and the surrounding area.

Taking Nominations: June 1st - Aug 31st, 2025

Quadrant 4 Spotlight: October – December 2025
Chestermere, Langdon, Dalemead, Carseland, and the surrounding area.

Taking Nominations: Sept 1st - Nov 30th, 2025



"Heart of our Community" aims to remind everyone of the critical role local businesses play in making small towns thrive and encourage the community to support them.

THINK BIG, Shop Small

Heart of Our Community Business Award - Q1 Winner



Joker Bicycle Co.

Owner: Jake Gelderblom

Joker Bicycle Co., a local bicycle repair business based in Carseland, was named the Quarter 1 recipient of our new **Heart of Our Community Business Award**. This award celebrates small businesses that go above and beyond in their dedication to community well-being, and Joker Bicycle Co. exemplifies that spirit.

Founded and operated by Jake Gelderblom, Joker Bicycle Co. is a customer-first bicycle repair shop offering pick-up and drop-off services, new and refurbished bikes, and accessible, reliable repairs. But it's not the business model that sets this shop apart, it's Jake's unwavering commitment to giving back.

Jake has partnered closely with Denise at Lil' Hoots on a unique and deeply impactful community initiative. Together, they collect used bikes, many of which are no longer functional, and through Jake's time, skill, and generosity, restore them to working condition. These bikes are then made available (entirely free of charge) to community members in need. Jake donates approximately 80% of his earnings back into this initiative, ensuring as many people as possible have access to affordable, safe transportation.

Beyond this partnership, Jake's community involvement includes supporting Carseland School fundraisers, the Carseland Church Thrift Store, and local events such as martial arts raffles. He also donates his time and expertise to the Strathmore Kiwanis Bicycle Rodeo, where he provides on-site repairs and teaches children about bike safety.

Nominators praised Jake for his "incredible community spirit" and his consistent effort to "go above and beyond to support local initiatives and pro-healthy activities." One nominator highlighted how vital Jake's contributions are to the success of the Lil' Hoots bike program:

"Jake generously donates his time to repair all the bicycles that get donated at Lil'Hoots each summer. Local residents can drop off their old bikes, and Jake drives in, picks them up, fixes them, and delivers them back to Lil' Hoots. These bikes are then available for free to community residents who need a bicycle but can't afford to purchase a new one."



Jake's commitment to accessibility, community care, and healthy living is truly admirable. Joker Bicycle Co. embodies what it means to be the Heart of Our Community.

OUR IMPACT

Community Futures (CF) is a program that supports community economic development and builds the capacity of communities to realize their full sustainable potential.

Our Impact since 1989:

35,134
Jobs Created
or Maintained

\$38,848,708
in Loans

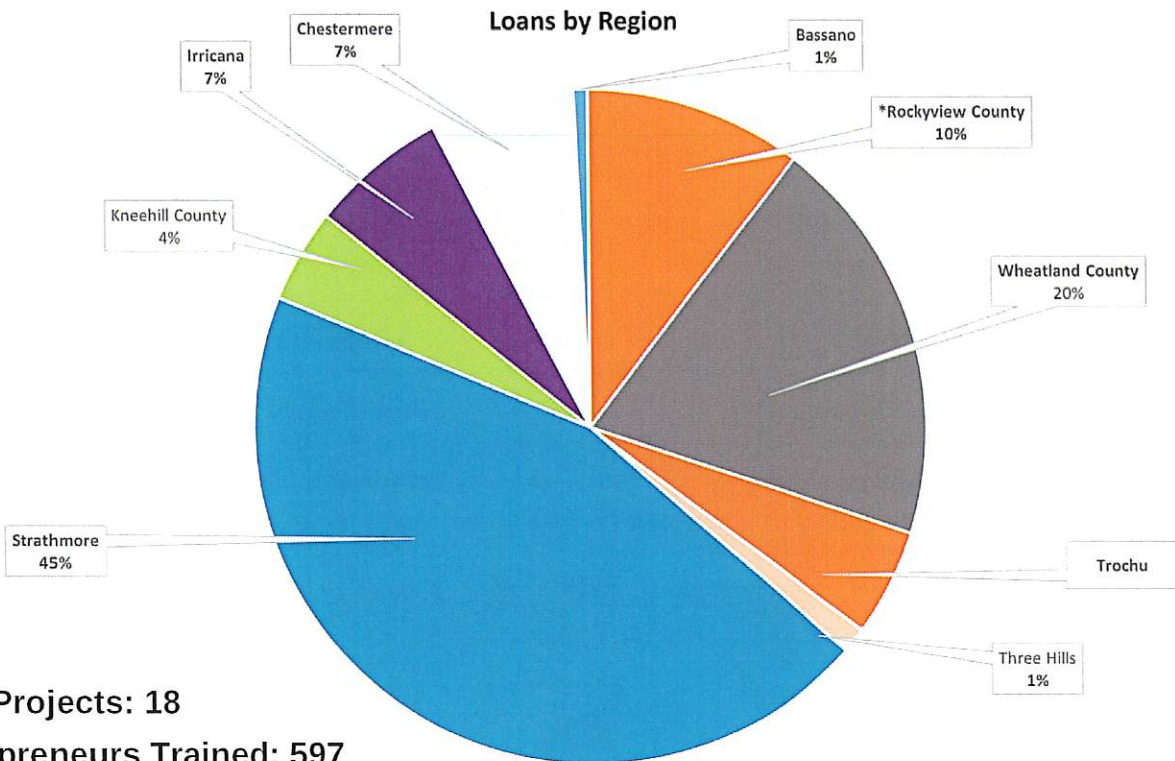
50,883
Business Coaching
Sessions

102,344
Client Services
Delivered

\$53,463,945
Leveraged Funds
into our Communities

28,283
Business Training
Sessions

From April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025:



CED Projects: 18
Entrepreneurs Trained: 597
Approved Loans: \$1,446,775
Leveraged Funds: \$518,718

**Rocky View County, non-shareholder community within service region*

Total Loans for 1989 - 2024

\$38,469,044.39

COMMUNITY	LOAN
Acme	\$264,100.00
Bassano	\$892,177.38
Beiseker	\$501,829.28
Carbon	\$487,890.86
Chestermere	\$1,658,232.45
Hussar	\$621,000.00
Irricana	\$847,572.71
Kneehill County	\$685,599.31
Linden	\$454,274.04
Rockyford	\$1,031,878.88
Standard	\$308,200.00
Strathmore	\$15,339,271.59
Three Hills	\$4,770,325.47
Trochu	\$550,137.24
Wheatland County	\$6,617,071.27
*Rocky View County	\$2,276,650.58
**Partnership Loans	\$1,162,833.33

**Rocky View County, non-shareholder community within service region*

*** Loans in partnership with other CF offices or Financial Institutions*

CFWR Economic Development Projects

In the past year, Community Futures Wild Rose has successfully implemented a variety of community economic development projects aimed at fostering local entrepreneurship, creating sustainable job opportunities, and enhancing the overall economic vitality of our region.

Regional Workforce Development Project

This project began in March 2023 and concluded in June 2024. Collaborating with strategic partners, including the Government of Alberta, Wheatland County, the Town of Strathmore, Prospect Human Services, Kneehill County, and Rocky View County, we addressed workforce challenges in the CF Wild Rose Region. The Ballard Group delivered a comprehensive regional labour market report, providing insights into economic labour dynamics and challenges. Moving forward, we are implementing the consultant's recommendations to create a robust framework that meets current and future labour market demands. This framework aims to close labour gaps, improve training access, enhance workforce resilience, and foster sustainable economic growth. Continued collaboration ensures ongoing support for businesses and communities in the region.

Digital Economy Program #2

The Digital Economy Program (DEP) #2, running from April 2023 to September 2024, significantly expanded its impact in our region. Through our partnership with Business Link, Community Futures Wild Rose (CFWR) operated the Digital Service Squad (DSS) as part of this province-wide initiative. Our team provided in-person and virtual services, serving 301 businesses with free digital marketing assessments and tailored support. The DSS offered one-on-one advisory sessions and digital training courses, enhancing businesses' online presence and digital capabilities. This initiative has been crucial in helping local enterprises adapt to the evolving digital landscape and expand their customer reach in an increasingly online-oriented market.

**Digital
Economy
Program**



Capacity Building for Entrepreneurs

This initiative, funded by the Northern Regional Economic Development Fund (NRED), aims to provide business training and mentorship in response to the RRRF Needs Assessment. The project has created six training modules focusing on Financial Literacy, Human Resources Management, Marketing, Work/Life Balance, Growth in Business, and Operations. Additionally, a mentorship program has been established to support businesses in their development by offering coaching and guidance to overcome key challenges. A Business Development Officer has been hired to assist in the development of training curriculum and to manage the Business Mentorship program.

Online Learning Management System

The dual-phase initiative led by CF Central Alberta focuses on implementing an intuitive online learning platform to support entrepreneurs and CF office staff. This collaborative effort involves CF Wild Rose's participation on the steering committee for the three-year project. The goal is to modernize existing resources and tools into a unified online platform that caters to a younger demographic, offering robust training and business plan development support. Tailored to the RRRF Small Business Needs Assessment, the platform aims to provide self-directed, 24/7 access to Business Training and Guidance for entrepreneurs at all business stages. The ultimate aim is to establish a comprehensive online learning solution that meets entrepreneurs' needs and enhances CF office support.

CFWR Economic Development Projects (Cont.)

YETI - Youth Entrepreneurs Training Initiative

Community Futures Wild Rose's YETI program, in partnership with CF Capital Region, is a dynamic initiative targeting the entrepreneurial spirit in young individuals. This program offers aspiring entrepreneurs the tools, resources, and mentorship needed to actualize their business ideas. Through workshops, training sessions, and networking events, participants gain insights into key entrepreneurial aspects such as business planning, marketing, finance, and customer service. The goal is to inspire and support the next wave of business leaders, fostering innovation and growth in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.



Disaster Recovery & Business Continuity Project

In partnership with CF West Yellowhead, this project aims to enhance disaster preparedness in Alberta's Community Futures (CF) offices. With a focus on wildfires, floods, and pandemics, the project seeks to better equip CF offices to support businesses and non-profits during emergencies. Objectives include educating CF staff and municipalities on disaster preparedness, developing internal tools and policies for disaster management, and creating resources for non-profits and businesses. Training sessions, round table discussions, and workshops will promote collaboration and knowledge sharing. The project aims to provide templates, policies, and toolkits for disaster readiness, tailored resources for non-profits and businesses, and emphasize a collective approach among participating CF offices and is expected to wrap up in March 2026.

The Capital Growth Initiative

The Capital Growth Initiative (CGI), funded by the Alberta Government, supports rural women entrepreneurs through low-interest loans and business advisory services. In partnership with Alberta Women Entrepreneurs, the initiative aids women entrepreneurs in elevating their business. This \$6 million project allocated \$3 million each to Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) and the Community Futures Network of Alberta (CFNA). The CGI enhances Community Futures services by providing partially forgivable repayable loans at preferential rates and wrap-around support, including mentoring and networking.

Funded by:



Business Mentorship Program

The Business Mentorship Program pairs participants with experienced mentors in their specific business development interests, fostering unique relationships that inspire thought, reflection, and skill development. Mentors provide support, guidance, and a positive influence, benefiting both parties. Meetings are scheduled bi-weekly to accommodate mentor and mentee availability, with the first meeting initiated by the mentee within a specified deadline. Virtual support sessions are available throughout the program. The structured program spans Spring 2024, Fall 2024, and Fall 2025, offering leadership growth and networking opportunities through connections with seasoned professionals who align with the mentees' requested skillset development needs.



Conclusion



In conclusion, the 2024/2025 year was marked by significant achievements and contributions by Community Futures Wild Rose. Overall, the Annual Report highlights CF Wild Rose's commitment to driving economic development, addressing workforce challenges, empowering youth entrepreneurs, and enhancing marketing initiatives. We remain dedicated to supporting entrepreneurship, fostering economic growth, and creating sustainable communities in the regions we serve.

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