

2022-2023

# **SOUTHGROW** **ANNUAL REPORT**



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# CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

First, I'd like to thank all of you on the board for your continued support as we sustain our current position and pursue new projects and collaborations to further the Economic Development of our region in a continually evolving, competitive world. I began last year's report with a quote from Dickens about "the best of times, the worst of times" and living in "interesting times", and here a year later we seem to be continuing in those times. I appreciate the commitment by all of you and your respective communities to the SouthGrow organization and the trust you have shown.

The attached reports detail the successes our organization has enjoyed over the past year. Great things have happened as always, and they are just the beginning.

One of the good things to happen this year of course is the reinstatement of full funding for the REDAs by the provincial government. It's always easier to do the job when you're not having to hit the reserves.

The Provincial Election saw several ministerial re assignments and we look forward to meeting this Fall with Ministers new and old to continue advocating support and collaboration for the REDA structure in promoting Economic Development throughout the province.

Items of emphasis in our region are the Agrifood, Agribusiness and Alternative Power industries. The highway three corridor, Canada's Premier Food Corridor, is finally receiving the attention it deserves from the government and we will make sure it remains front and center. As far as renewable energy goes we have heard some of the frustrations being voiced by our members over the way the industry at times seems to be running roughshod over best practices, proper land use, and true sustainability and we have started, and will continue, to take these concerns to the government to make sure you are heard.

I consider myself very fortunate to be able to work with an extremely talented and focused executive who dedicate their time and energy to make sure we move forward. With the management team of our Executive Director Peter Casurella, Director of Economic Development Kim Welby, and Marketing Manager Jessie Stilson it is always exciting to see what we have accomplished and what we are doing next.

I look forward to this next year because I know it is guaranteed to be "interesting"!



Mayor Jim Willett  
Village of Coutts, "The Gateway to Alberta"  
Executive Chair, SouthGrow

**"As long as there's coffee in the world, how bad can things be?"  
– Cassandra Clare, City of Ashes**

# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE & BOARD OF DIRECTORS & REPS

## Executive Committee

Chairperson	Mayor Jim Willett	Village of Coutts
Vice Chairperson / Treasurer	Councillor Laurie Lyckman	Vulcan County
Director	Councillor John Turcato	MD of Taber
Director	Councillor Scott Akkermans	Town of Coalhurst
Director	Councillor Diandra Bruised Head	Blood Tribe

## Board of Directors & Reps 2022 - 2023

Director	Councillor Colin Bexte	Village of Arrowwood
Director	Councillor Shayla Anderson	Village of Barnwell
Director	Mayor Gordon Reynolds	Town of Bow Island
Director	Councillor Marsha Jensen	Town of Cardston
Director	Councillor Roger Houghton	Cardston County
Director	Councillor Doug Fraser	Village of Carmangay
Director	Councillor Dale Pickering	Town of Coaldale
Director	Councillor Allen Kuizenga	County of Forty Mile
Director	Councillor Mark Sayers	Lethbridge County
Director	Councillor Robert Donnolly	Village of Lomond
Director	Mayor Byrne Cook	Town of Magrath
Director	Mayor Dean Melnyk	Village of Milo
Director	Councillor Shayne Johnson	Town of Milk River
Director	Councillor Henry de Kok	Town of Picture Butte
Director	Councillor Matt Evans	Town of Raymond
Director	Councillor Gary Bikman	Village of Stirling
Director	Councillor Alf Rudd	Town of Taber
Director	Mayor Raymond Coad	Town of Vauxhall
Director	Councillor Cole Dunham	Town of Vulcan
Director	Councillor Marty Kirby	Village of Warner
Director	Councillor Marsha Mason	Village of Champion
Director	Councillor Brad Schlossberger	Town of Claresholm
Director	Mayor Lorne Buis	Village of Foremost
Director	Councillor Ross Ford	Warner County
Director	Councillor Glen Alm	MD of Willow Creek
Director	Mr. Trevor Lewington	Economic Development Lethbridge
Associate	Mr. Phillip Wright	Milk River Cable Club
Associate	Mr. Mike Warkentin	Exhibition Park
Associate	Mrs. Cyndi Bester	Lethbridge Chamber
Associate	Mrs. Erin Crane	Tourism Lethbridge
Associate	Mr. Scott Alexander	Teralta
Associate	Mrs. Victoria Chester	Highway 3 Twinning Assoc.
Associate	Mrs. Michelle Day	Nikka Yuko Japanese Gardens
Associate	Mr. Rishikesh Kumar	FortisAlberta
Associate	Mr. Troy Grainger	Community Futures Lethbridge
Associate	Mr. Scott Donselar	Ridge Utilities

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S GREETINGS

I write to you today with a profound sense of gratitude and accomplishment as we gather to reflect on yet another year at the SouthGrow Regional Initiative. As I celebrate my fifth year as Executive Director, I am humbled by the unique impact that this organization has had on my own life. It has been a privilege to be part of such rewarding work, year after year, and to witness the incredible transformations that our collective efforts have brought about. I get out of bed every day with a motivating sense of purpose.

In the past year, we have seen several long-term projects come to fruition, yielding tangible and lasting results for the SouthGrow Region. It is a testament to the unwavering dedication and collaborative spirit of our team, as well as the faith that the Board has placed in us. Their trust has allowed us to pursue these projects with a long leash, empowering us to look after the best interests of the SouthGrow Region and push the boundaries of what is possible.

I would like to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation to the Executive Committee for their steadfast support and unwavering dedication to our organization. Your guidance and leadership have been instrumental in shaping our direction and enabling us to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. Few people see the long hours these volunteers put in or understand the importance of what they do for all of us.

I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to our exceptional employees, Kim Welby and Jessie Stilson. Their hard work, ingenuity, and unwavering commitment have been the driving force behind many of our accomplishments. Without their dedication and passion, our successes would not have been possible.

Furthermore, I want to recognize and thank our close partners and supporters, including Linda Erickson, Trevor Lewington, Bev Thornton, Troy Grainger and Erin Crane. Your collaboration, generosity, and shared vision have been invaluable in advancing our mission and enhancing the well-being of southern Alberta. Together, we are creating a stronger, more vibrant region.

Finally, I would like to express my personal gratitude to the Board for their overwhelming attendance at the Truth and Reconciliation training held in Standoff last November. The experience was deeply moving, and it reinforced our shared commitment to fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. Your presence and engagement spoke volumes about our collective dedication to healing and reconciliation.

As we celebrate our achievements over the past year, let us also look forward with renewed enthusiasm and determination. There is much more work to be done, and I am confident that together, we can continue to make a lasting and positive impact on the SouthGrow Region.

With sincere appreciation and warm regards,

Sincerely,



Peter Casurella, Executive Director

# OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

The summary below details some of the operational highlights from the year.

## Administrative Highlights

**Renewed Partnerships:** After receiving a funding decrease of 50% from the Government of Alberta in 2019, SouthGrow and our partners successfully advocated to Ministers Schwietzer and Horner in 2022 for renewed and increased funding as part of the twenty year partnership between our municipalities and the GOA. In the spring of 2022 SouthGrow delivered a report to Minister Schweitzer arguing convincingly for the restoration of the REDA funding. We organized a Chair's meeting with the Ministers in Edmonton, and this meeting produced a mandate to staff to study the issue and re-instate funding. In the fall of 2022 a commitment for \$125,000 per year was delivered, and then followed through on in the spring of 2023.

**A Solid Plan:** Along with the increased funding came the Economic Development in Rural Alberta Plan. This strategic plan published by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, in collaboration with Jobs, Economy and Northern Development, contained the collected advice of rural economic developers from across the province. This plan has a clear mandate and role for partnership with the REDAs and we look forward to working on it together with the GOA.

**Like-Minded Partners:** This year also saw the City of Lethbridge decline continued partnership in SouthGrow which had the interesting effect of causing numerous City-organizations to step forward and request associate memberships with SouthGrow in order to keep the partnership alive. We have surged to 9 associate memberships across the region which are businesses or institutions with a vested interest in working with SouthGrow to grow the regional economy. The support of these organizations has been instrumental in advancing so many important partnerships and projects. Thank you!

**The Team Levels Up:** The Board also gave our team job title bumps this year as their expertise has expanded and responsibilities increased. Kim Welby is now the Director of Economic Development at SouthGrow and Jessie Stilson is the Marketing Manager. Well done and well-deserved!

**Awarded for Good Work:** At the Economic Developers Alberta Conference, SouthGrow won the Community Marketing Award for a large community for our Global Marketing work on behalf of the Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative. SouthGrow managed to put the advantages of the agrifood economy of Southern Alberta in front of millions of people's eyes across North America and Europe... and we're doing it all again this year!

## Strategic Collaborations

**Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership:** With investment pouring into Southern Alberta at breakneck speed, SAAEP switched their focus in 2022 to the future, working with the Energy Futures Lab and FortisAlberta to start defining what the future of Alberta's Electricity grid should look like to keep powering our rapidly growing industry in the face of change. We applied for two large-scale programs along with Fortis, worked with them to get wide-spread support for a new EV station demand rate so that small communities could afford to own and operate them, and worked with Fortis to get grant funding out to their communities and customers for subsidizing EV chargers across the region. With the Energy Futures Lab we presented to multiple government committees on the problems emerging in the energy space and the need for a unified vision. This resulted in a panel appointed by the Premier to chart a path forward. The work for next year will continue on this file.

**Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative:** In 2021, SAITI partnered with Canada's Premier Food Corridor, Claresholm, and Vulcan County to build and fund a large global marketing program. We leveraged our collective money with the remnants of an old CARES grant for CPFC and by tapping into a new CanExport Grant. In 2022 we ran that marketing campaign with award-winning results getting 4.3 million views across North America and Europe. We also built 3 YouTube videos and secured a \$10,000 grant from Google, along with renewed grant funding from CanExport for continued work in 2023. The world does not know where or what Southern Alberta is, we are working to change that.

**Canada's Premier Food Corridor and Canada's Western Gateway** have become successful brands and SouthGrow continues to support them and wave their banners. CPFC's brand recognition continues to grow, as does CWG's, propelled firmly by our partners at Economic Development Lethbridge. This year we supported EDL's leadership to secure matching funds for expanding the work of CPFC substantially, with funding from Prairies Canada. The corridor looks set to expand from Lethbridge to Medicine Hat as well, with official provincial government support.



**The Agrifood Hub at Exhibition Park** is almost complete and SouthGrow traveled with our regional partners to the Future of Food conference in Ottawa where we helped sell the venue to 600 food industry professionals from across the nation. We are looking forward to the energy and opportunity that this venue will bring to the agrifood industry of southern Alberta.

**Highway 3 Twinning Development Association:** The H3TDA had a high-water mark this year. With the support of SouthGrow and ALL our partners on this project, the association received a promise from the Premier that Highway 3 will be twinned over 10 years. Alberta Transportation has built a 7-stage plan to accomplish that goal and seems to be aggressively driving forward with that mandate. Taber to Burdett will have construction starting this summer. Engineering is progressing on the Seven Persons to Medicine Hat section and a section in the Crowsnest Pass. Various stages of planning are being advanced on more sections.

**Southwestern Alberta Regional Tourism Initiative:** The regional tourism project we invested in last year blossomed into a \$321,000 project to expand regional tourism offerings, including multiple regional tours - The Southern Alberta Food Tours, the Highway 3 Ale Trail, and 3 Natural Resource Tour routes. That money is also funding the build out of all these tours into a variety of tour apps that gamify the experience for families. The partnership continues this next year with SouthGrow putting \$10,000 towards marketing these regional tours to get more people out and exploring the SouthGrow and Alberta Southwest Regions.

## Marketing and Communication

**Reconciliation:** Community leaders from across southern Alberta came out to attend our Truth and Reconciliation training for municipal leaders event in Standoff. 70 people from across the region listened to Francis First Charger talk about the history of his people, interspersed with personal stories from his own life, unpacking the impacts of colonialism and system racism on the Backfoot people of southern Alberta.

**Website Improvements:** In partnership with Alberta SouthWest and Economic Development Lethbridge, SouthGrow purchased and integrated regional data tools into our websites, displaying accurate and good looking data sets to help with investment attraction and economic intel gathering across the region. We also just kept giving out sites a lovely facelift. ALL of our brands look a lot better this year than last year.

**Economic Development Summit:** In March we held our annual Economic Summit, securing sponsorships from Fortis, Tourism Lethbridge, and Community Futures, and hosted Economists Jack Mintz and Todd Hirsch to discuss the future of the regional economy with our attendees. We had a record breaking 115 attendees and it was a great time!



## Economic Development

**Agri-food:** Our scholarship program grew this year to \$8000, and we added Red Crow College as an eligible institution. We gave out 3 scholarships of \$2500 each to deserving students and spent \$500 marketing the opportunity to young people across the region. Thank you to MNP Taber, Ridge Utilities, and Community Futures Lethbridge Region for your partnership and support!

**Broadband:** This year saw the completion of the POP site upgrades in Vulcan County and the completion of that project. The communities here have seen increasing investment in network upgrades from multiple service providers because of our work! To reiterate what was done, we built a P3 partnership that upgraded 6 POP sites on the SuperNet from 1 GIG to 10 GIGs, enabling vastly upgraded potential for connectivity.

**EV Bus Pilot Project:** After 3 years of work, this has finally come to fruition. The now \$402,000 vehicle funded by the FCM and the MCCAC has been ordered by the Town of Milk River and will be in operation before March of 2024 providing sustainable and comfortable transportation up and down Highway 4 for our seniors.

**Investment Attraction:** With Invest Alberta spreading their wings we spent our Agrifood conference attendance money on taking 25 regional representatives to Calgary for a day of meet and greets with the Invest Alberta and Invest Canada Teams. Relationship building efforts like this are creating direct connections between them and our people, facilitating investments. SouthGrow has repeatedly served as the on-the-ground contacts this year for investment attraction, helping to identify the right sites to compete for opportunities. We also completed Year 2 of our Targeted Lead Generation work with CIDEP, getting 8 high-quality introductions that have led to conversations with potential investors about opportunities in-region.

**Labour Market Initiatives:** SouthGrow worked hard this last year to promote the Rural Immigration Designation to our communities, hosting a workshop on it in September, and blasting out communications. The result has been a rapidly growing interest in the program. Building off of Claresholm's success, Taber launched their own program. Coaldale joined Taber's project and other communities are exploring partnerships with them as well. Bow Island, Foremost, the County of 40 Mile, Vulcan and surrounding communities, Cardston, and more are also looking into the program.

We also applied for, received money, and launched a grad retention program late in the year, to study what measures and efforts will help to keep graduates in southern Alberta. This project will conclude in the fall.

**Solar for SouthGrow:** Our flagship project has made substantial progress. SouthGrow plans to build a 4.5 MW solar array near Monarch. This year we secured the land, we secured the support of Lethbridge County, we secured Section 95 sign off form the GOA (we're allowed to actually do this), we received an NRED grant for some of the money needed for applications, and we received important support from FortisAlberta. Most importantly, we received support from Lethbridge County to help us find the funding we need to build the thing. It's a promising year ahead!

**Supply Chain Identification:** Our Supply Chain Identification project finally launched this year. Startup work is done, and we are moving into the data gathering stage in the coming year!

**ZEVIP:** By the end of the operational year, our EV Charging program was fully subscribed and with project completion notices starting to roll in. Through our work, we have enabled the construction of 241 Charging Stations! Partners are eager to work on



# OPERATIONAL OUTCOME TRACKING 2022

An evaluation of the operational plan from 2022-2023 tracking our independently evaluated work items in our operational plan. SouthGrow met or exceeded most of its operational objectives. Several were not achieved. Where our outcomes deviated from our goals, explanations are provided.

## 1. Strategic Collaborations

### Member Engagement

**Activity: Annual Council Presentations.**

**Goal:** The Executive Director will endeavor to deliver a direct report to council to 40% of our members on an annual basis. (12) Staff will also provide a once-per-year recorded update to all members that they can play for their councils, and will distribute the monthly Mayors and Reeves reports to the full board with

**Target:** 40% of members receive a report directly to council (12)

**Progress:** Completed 14 direct presentations to councils.

**Status:** COMPLETED

**Outcome:** Exceeded Target

**Activity: Councilor Training (Reconciliation Training for Municipalities)**

**Goal:** SouthGrow hosts a Reconciliation and Inclusion Training session for Municipal Staff and Councils that is attended by at least 40 individuals from across the region. This session will take place in quarter 1 or quarter 3 of the 2022-23 fiscal year (depending on scheduling conflicts and will be MC-ed by a member of our Board from the Blood Tribe, or their alternate.

**Target:** One session held in Q 1 or 3 of 2022. 40 registrants.

**Progress:** Event was held in Standoff in November of 2022.

**Status:** COMPLETED. EXCEEDED ATTENDANCE TARGETS.

**Outcome:** Event was sold out with 70 registrants. Feedback from was completed. Participants generally enjoyed the event although it was hard to hear the speaker.

### **Activity: Government Relations Committee**

**Goal:** SouthGrow will convene a government relations committee of volunteers pulled from its members to re-develop communications and partnerships with the political leadership and bureaucracy of the Government of Alberta to grow collaboration for increase outcomes. This will include achieving a meeting with the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation, the Minister of Ag and Forestry and Rural Economic Development, and ADM or Director level meetings with Bureaucrats.

**Target:** Favorable communications are re-established with Government of Alberta Ministers and staffs for the re-establishment of partnerships.

**Progress:** Full formal committee did not materialized due to early promises by the GOA in spring 2022 that met our intentions and goals. GOA staff did what they said they would do. Renewed REDA funding was announced in October 2022 for the coming year with long-term commitments given.

**Status: COMPLETED**

**Outcomes:** REDA funding secured at \$125,000 for the coming year with commitments given by GOA staff for continuous funding for rural economic development beyond that.

### **Activity: Economic Development Summit**

**Goal:** SouthGrow hosts a regional Economic Development Summit in March of 2023 that provides stakeholders with access to speakers and engagement on important economic development topics, trends, and issues that affect our region.

**Target:** Greater than 70 attendees from member communities, partners, and stakeholders.

**Progress:** Event was held on March 30, 2023. 115 registrants attended. Budget was a few hundred in the green.

**Status: COMPLETED, EXCEEDED ATTENDANCE TARGETS**

**Outcomes:** 115 registrants attended. Budget was a few hundred \$ in the green. Sponsored by 3 organizations.



## Build and Sustain Collaborations

### Activity: Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership – Community Energy Forum

**Goal:** SouthGrow will increase community awareness of opportunities in renewable energy by hosting a community energy forum that offers staff and councilors an in-depth look at the opportunities available in community energy, how to pursue them, how to fund them, and the benefits they bring; and we will host this forum in the early fall of 2022, before municipal budgets are set for the coming year.

**Target:** 50 staff and councilors, or other interested parties attend.

**Progress:** Event was planned and aggressively marketed, but signups were very low. Ticket sales not forthcoming, and decision was made to cancel event and cut losses. Re-worked key topics into Economic Summit, and held a webinar on Municipal Energy Management instead.

**Status:** CANCELLED, mixed outcomes.

**Outcomes:** Event was not held, and core metrics not achieved due to lack of signups. Lessons learned about event hosting and timing in post-pandemic space. Core conversation was added to Economic Summit event which was well attended. Webinar on Municipal Energy Management had 22 attendees and resulted in one community committing to pursue energy management, which led to Alberta SouthWest considering a regional energy management program for their 15 communities, or a subset of them.



### **Activity: Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership – ARRCUS Mapping Project**

**Goal:** SouthGrow will integrate the ARRCUS renewable energy mapping tool provided through RINSA into the SAAEP website by Q3 of 2022. We will also encourage Palliser Economic Partnership to seek RIN funding to build out the tool to cover their region as well.

**Target:** ARRCUS delivers tool. RINSA pays Invoice and is thanked. SouthGrow integrates tool into websites by Q3 of 2022. SouthGrow and RINSA issue press release.

**Progress:** Work has been completed and project is live, paid for, and done. We are making additional improvements.

**Status:** COMPLETED

**Outcomes:** ARRCUS real-time energy data for SouthGrow and Alberta Southwest is live on the saaep.ca website. Very successful project.

### **Activity: Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership – Government Education**

**Goal:** SouthGrow will aim to present to one standing government committee on the opportunities and obstacles in nontraditional energy in Alberta. We will do so with the support of our SAAEP partners and our partners with the Energy Futures Lab.

**Target:** 1 presentation to a standing committee.

**Progress:** Invest Alberta has dedicated a full-time staff position to advancing renewable energy investments. This is a result of our collective efforts on this file. We presented to the Resource Stewardship standing committee in Edmonton and the UCP Energy Caucus online in the first week of February and followed up with a meeting with Minister Neudorf in February. A week later the GOA announced the establishment of a panel to develop a vision for the provinces energy sector. This was a direct result of our work. We've been officially invited by the Energy Futures Lab to participate in the next iteration of these conversations and will carry that work forward into the next operational year! We have also put together a budding coalition of rural municipalities to make policy recommendations in the coming operational year to address municipal concerns with renewable energy developments in agricultural settings with new municipal government input. Recent government commitment to a net zero by 2050 plan was additionally influenced by our communications. This has been a successful year.

**Status:** COMPLETE

**Outcomes:** Exceeded our goals. Presented to two committees and talked to several ministers. Premier has created a panel to develop a vision for the provinces energy sector. This was a direct response to our efforts. Invited to participate with provincial leaders in next stages of the development of this conversation. Work set up nicely for next year.

### **Activity: Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative**

**Goal:** SouthGrow maintains its participation and leadership in the Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative, pursuing meaningful projects under its umbrella as detailed in other plan sections.

**Target:** At least one project is advanced under the brand within 2021 as detailed elsewhere.

**Progress:** Global ad campaign went really well. 4.3 million views over 7 months in our targeted audience. Created 4 YouTube ads with extra money. Got project refunded for coming year. Won an award for our work at the EDA Conference. CIDEP came through and delivered 8 high quality leads before the end of January.

**Status:** COMPLETED - AWARD WINNING RESULTS

**Outcomes:** 4.3 million views, 8 high quality leads from CIDEP, Award winning project, refunded for another year.

### **Activity: Canada's Premier Food Corridor and Canada's Western Gateway**

**Goal:** SouthGrow supports the growth of sub-regional collaborations that promote industry clusters by convening them when necessary, hosting meetings, providing advisor services, connecting them with resources, and by actively using those brands in our own communications efforts. This support is ongoing and continual.

**Target:** CPFC and CWG remain active and managed by their own membership.

**Progress:** CPFC successful in their application to NRED for \$100,000 in matching funds for the corridor project. Prairies Canada likely to announce funding from the federal government soon. CWG slated for a funding application in coming year. SouthGrow has maintained and paid for the CWG website for the coming year.

**Status:** COMPLETED

**Outcomes:** CPFC going from success to success and soon to have funding and staff. SGRI has maintained and kept CWG alive. The brand remains present and part of the active marketing ecosystem.

The CPFC  
Advantage

If you're in the business of food... you should be here!



### **Activity: Southern Alberta Tourism Collaboration**

**Goal:** SouthGrow partners with Tourism Lethbridge and Alberta SouthWest to leverage partnership dollars to secure Federal funding for a robust regional tourism development project that enhances tourism product throughout south-central and south-western Alberta and provides a robust slate of services for local operators to help them recover and expand their operations. To this end we will expand our use of the Driftscape app to include regional tours with specific development of an Indigenous Tour, a Food Tour, and an Alternative Energy tour. In addition, we will provide support and training for regional operators to help them enhance visitor experiences and provide coaching and support for access to additional small grants or business improvement loans. Conversations are advanced with the EDA regarding province-wide rollout of municipal apps for broad impact.

**Target:** App Tech expanded, Three tours created and in use, One training event held, 50 Coaching points of contact, Advancement of conversation with EDA.

**Progress:** Grant applied for; deal struck with partnership. Letters of support submitted. Tourism Lethbridge has rolled out their first agri-food tour that was a deliverable from last year's funding. Excellent outcome for the level of our investment. Routes built into Driftscape app. Prairies Can funding approval is expected within the operational year.

**Status: COMPLETED**

**Outcomes:** Grant applications were successful on multiple fronts, and regional work is moving ahead with new routes developed, and funding support for Blackfoot Signage project from Tourism Lethbridge received. Tourism Lethbridge also sponsored our conference with \$5000 and hosted a session on regional tourism opportunities.

### **Activity: Highway 3 Twinning Development Association**

**Goal:** SouthGrow supports the Highway 3 Twinning Development Association towards Its goals by providing matching funding, board representation, In-kind support, and by helping to continually secure regional buy-in from our membership. SouthGrow ensures that the H3TDA remains a vibrant, active, and impactful organization.

**Target:** H3TDA maintains a slate of work advancing the goal, H3TDA appears to be on track to accomplish their strategic goals.

**Progress:** PriceWaterHouse Cooper completed Economic Impact Study. Premier Smith Announced that all of Highway 3 will be twinned over the next 10 years and has directed Transportation to make a plan to get it done.

**Status: COMPLETED**

**Outcomes:** Highway not twinned YET, but this is a high-water mark and SouthGrow has pulled hard on this in support. Alberta Transportation is proceeding as IF they have a mandate to twin the corridor over 10 years, which is promising.



## Sustain or Expand Membership

### Activity: Sustain Membership

**Goal:** SouthGrow sustains its paying membership within 10% of its current membership income levels (+ or - \$10,000).

**Target:** Retention of membership dollars within 10% of expected income level.

Expected membership income is \$96,515.00, so plus or minus \$9651.50

**Progress:** Willow Creek joined (+5165). Barnwell joined (+947). City of Lethbridge dropped out (-10,000). Associate members added: Economic Development Lethbridge (+200), Terralta (complimentary), Nikka Yuko (+200), Tourism Lethbridge (+200). Potentially more.

+/- is -\$3288 so we are within our tolerated variance.

**Status:** COMPLETED

**Outcomes:** Met membership retention goals. City of Lethbridge dropping out spurred multiple signups from organizations in the City. While this was a financial hit, it has increased our influence. Supporters at City Hall continue to participate in events and initiatives that we run, despite the majority of council (by 1 vote) having declined membership. Barnwell coming back onboard was a big win.

### Activity: Expand Associate Memberships to Industry and Institutions

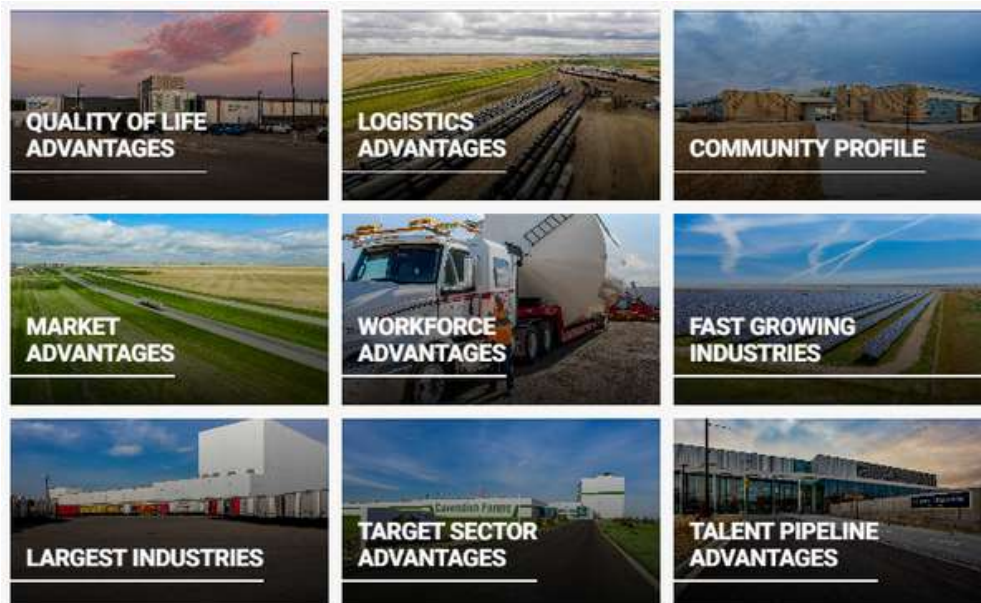
**Goal:** SouthGrow retains at least 2 existing associate members and adds 2 more for a total end of year of 4 associate members.

**Target:** 2 additional Associate Members within 2022 for a sustained total of 4.

**Progress:** Added EDL, Tourism Lethbridge, Teralta, and Nikka Yuko so far while retaining Lethbridge Chamber, Milk River Cable Club, and Exhibition Park. Total of 8 associate members.

**Status:** ON TRACK - EXCEEDED TARGET

**Outcomes:** Added 6, retained 3. Total is 9 now.



## 2. Marketing and Communications

### Regional Promotion

#### Activity: Website Improvements

**Goal:** SouthGrow updates its easy-to-use WIX website with additional resources from its digitization program in 2020 and makes these resources available. Links are tested, content refreshed, and meta data improved for greater visibility and impact. Backlinks to core partner websites are added in a visible location before end of year.

**Target:** Website is refreshed by end of May 2022 with opportunities for additional improvements throughout the year.

**Progress:** Website has been re-built and published. Some additional work on investment attraction page to be completed, but this is underway and will be completed as we roll into next operational year with purchase of Local Intel tools and completion of work on SAITI.com site.

**Status: COMPLETE**

**Outcomes:** Website is fully refreshed. Additional improvements have been made. Social media is vastly improved as well with a rolling social media calendar that is actively populated.

#### Activity: Global Marketing Project

**Goal:** SouthGrow project manages a digital marketing campaign that was built in 2021 and funded in early 2022 by Canexport as part of the SAITI partnership. In 2022/23 we run a digital campaign that raises the profile of our region in target markets around the world, with particular emphasis on the United States, Canada, and Western Europe.

**Target:** SouthGrow has the campaign running by June of 2022 with our selected consultants. Campaign runs for a full 12 months. Collect meaningful data on penetration and conversions from this pilot for base metric in future campaigns.

**Progress:** Campaign completed. Actively ran 7 months. Created youtube videos for next year with extra money.

**Status: COMPLETE**

**Outcomes:** Ran campaign for 7 months. 4.3 million impressions. Award winning project. Built more assets for next year. Refunded project for next year.



## **Activity: SAITI FDI Test Drive Year 2**

**Goal:** SouthGrow funds the delivery of a target FDI project aimed at identifying and starting conversations with 8 - 10 highly qualified investment leads with regional economic development officers from our contributing communities and conversations are assigned and ongoing by Q3 of 2022 and are in the CRM hosted for the region by EDL. Funding already provided by partners and Canexport.

**Target:** SouthGrow has the campaign running by June of 2022 with our selected consultant (CIDEP)

CIDEP delivers 8 - 10 leads. 8 - 10 high quality conversations opened with lead information captured in CRM for follow up.

**Progress:** CIDEP delivered 8 high quality leads by the end of January. Ben and Peter both met with the leads. Conversations started or ongoing.

**Status:** COMPLETED

**Outcomes:** Met minimum objectives for this task with 8 high quality leads delivered and engaged with.

## **Internal Communications**

### **Activity: Newsletters**

**Goal:** SouthGrow keeps its internal members and stakeholders well-advised of trends, opportunities, threats, and events that impact community and regional economic development. We also keep them well informed of Provincial Government initiatives.

**Target:** Newsletters are issued bi-weekly to a distribution list of anyone who wants it. Board members receive a daily Government Relations newsletter forwarded from the SouthGrow office.

**Progress:** Jessie retained for another year. Rolling forward. We have done some work to increase subscriptions. \$50.00 spent on advertising resulted in 2 signups. Targeted invitations likely to yield more results.

**Status:** COMPLETE

**Outcomes:** Increased distribution list. Hired a new student as we moved Jessie to full time on other work. Makayla Gross is our new newsletter production person, she won one of our scholarships.

# 3. Economic Development & Innovation

## Ag-Tech Market Development

### Activity: Ag-Tech Scholarship / Incentive Program

**Goal:** SouthGrow actively supports youth engagement in the Hi-Tech Ag sector by partnering with educational organizations in the region to deliver up to 4 scholarships to students attending Lethbridge College or the University of Lethbridge who plan to build a career in agri-food in southern Alberta.

**Target:** Up to 4 scholarships worth \$2500 each are awarded in the fall of 2022.

Applicants exceed 2021 numbers. (10)

**Progress:** Several donors identified. Bruce Warkentin, Ridge Utilities, AFSC. Bruce has committed \$2500.00. \$2500 from Ridge Utilities. Still \$2500 shy. Call out to go for first week of August. Got \$500 from Community Futures for a total of \$8000. Decided on 3 Scholarships of \$2500 each and pushed the call out. Used the remaining \$500 for marketing. Marketing has seen over 150,000 views of our ad. We received 21 applications this year, up from 11 last year. Scholarships awarded!

**Status:** COMPLETED

**Outcomes:** 3x students received \$2500 scholarships. We spend \$500 on marketing the opportunity and received many thousands of views on the ads. Students who won attended Red Crow College, Lethbridge College, and U of L. Next year, we need more developed guidelines for the program as it gets larger.



### **Activity: Agri-food Conference Representation**

**Goal:** SouthGrow represents southern Alberta at least one global agri-food convention or trade show to build relationships and increase awareness of opportunities within the region.

Furthermore, we collaborate with our partners to divide up conference attendance so that we have the maximum reach possible.

**Target:** One convention attended. 5 conversations started that lead to local introductions.

**Progress:** Tried to find attendees for SIAL conference in Montreal, unsuccessful. Everyone who could have gone was too busy. Decided to target FI Global in Las Vegas in November. Peter worked to go but prices spiralled and life got in the way. Held January 26th event in Calgary with Invest Alberta for regional partners to attend and build partnerships as we prepare for Regional Investment Readiness work with Invest Alberta. We filled the bus and had a great trip.

**Status: COMPLETED**

**Outcomes:** Took 30 people to Calgary for a day with Invest Alberta. Good relationship building and education event. Highly valued by all attendees.

## **Broadband Deployment**

### **Activity: Terragraph Project for Below CRTC Speed Members**

**Goal:** SouthGrow continues to organize and assist the efforts of our members in Vulcan County, the Highway 4 region, the Town of Cardston, and the Blood Tribe to move them towards high-speed status by utilizing terragraph technology or other solutions and partnerships. By the end of the operational year, at least 2 more communities will have instituted very high speed networks, and POP site upgrades will have been completed for all of the Vulcan County and Highway 4 sites.

**Target:**

5 POP sites upgraded in Vulcan County

2 POP sites upgraded down Highway 4

Town of Cardston Issues RFP for build or has advanced a partnership to complete build.

**Stretch Goal:** Blood Tribe has a partnership and/or a path towards deployment.

**Progress:** All Vulcan County POP sites upgraded and paid for. All Highway 4 POP sites upgraded and paid for. Town of Cardston issued their RFP, incumbent came back and promised upgrades for retraction of RFP. Upgrades underway in Cardston. Regional ISP's have all received UBF funding. MRCC, Wi-fibre, Explornet (among others) moving forward with 50/10 projects. Blood Tribe conversation has not advanced.

**Status: COMPLETED**

**Outcomes:** 50/10 for the region has been achieved and additional upgrades and redundancy are being built out. All invoices paid for the Vulcan County POP site upgrade project. Blood Tribe was engaged with but no action to move forward. Rep from Blood Tribe is eager to advance the conversation.

## Labour Market Solutions

### Activity: Introduction to Rural Immigration Pathways

**Goal:** SouthGrow will host a workshop for regional municipalities, chambers, large industrial stakeholders, and our economic development partners to introduce the region to the opportunity available through rural immigration streams to help provision the labour needs of the region and coach them on how to get started. Our goal will be to host a half-day event with 70 attendees, in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, to significantly raise the profile of the opportunity.

**Target:** 70 registrants.

**Progress:** Event was held in October. 55 people registered to attend. Only 25 showed up.

**Status:** COMPLETED

**Outcomes:** We missed our attendance target despite a very strong push to get attendees. Post-op revealed free tickets was the problem. Excellent session regardless. Key outcome: Coaldale has dedicated human resources to pursuing rural immigration status and developing the program in-house.

## Community Supports

### Activity: Community Ec Dev Resource Promotion

**Goal:** By Quarter 3 of 2022 SouthGrow provides resources to support community level economic development by delivering customized reports to our councils and their administrations that detail the supports and information already available to them, reminding them of their existence so that they can be leveraged. SouthGrow also increases the resources available on our website and through our newsletter, and works to increase readership of the bi-weekly newsletter.

**Target:** 30 reports sent out. Newsletter subscriptions increase by 50

**Progress:** Tools for communities complete and integrated into website. Letters sent out to all members informing them of tools. Newsletter subs increased past 50.

**Status:** COMPLETED

**Outcomes:** Resources completed. Targets reached.



How can we  
help you?

## Pilot Projects

### **Activity: Supply Chain Opportunity Identification Project (Import Replacement Project)**

**Goal:** Together with Economic Development Lethbridge, SouthGrow launches a 2-year Supply Chain Identification project that profiles regional inputs and outputs from our 200 largest industrials, investment opportunities, red flags, and more, and captures that information in a database to begin matchmaking and the sharing of opportunities. This project is underway by summer of 2022 with a contractor hired and implementing the deliverables. Project moves into phase 2 by summer of 2023 for completion in 2024.

**Target:**

200 stakeholders contacted.

100 share their information

10 introductions made

10 red flags identified

10 business opportunities or investments identified.

**Progress:** All funding secured and signed for. RFP sent out. Submissions evaluated. Winner selected and contract awarded. Deadlines very behind due to Prairies Canada delay of 6 months from award to contract signing. Project initiated and setup work complete. Ready to go to interview stage.

**Status: COMPLETE**

**Outcomes:** Project funded and initiated.

### **Activity: Zero Emissions Vehicle Infrastructure Project (2-year)**

**Goal:** SouthGrow manages the disbursement of ZEVIP funding from NRCAN to fund a wide array of charging infrastructure in the region. This project is completed by 2024 and involves an active partnership with the MCCAC allowing many of our member municipalities to get fully subsidized infrastructure, and institutions and businesses to get 46% matching funding for their projects. The full amount is successfully spent by project end in 2024.

**Target:** Est 1.7 million dollars in spend on infrastructure in the region.

2022 Target. Funding is secured, Project Manager hired, operational plan is on-schedule for completion.

**Progress:** Reached goals. Program is oversubscribed with over \$1.8 million in applications for only \$1.7 million in available funding. Applications are now closed!

**Status: COMPLETE**

**Outcomes:** Money has been fully subscribed. First station complete and commissioned. Many more to follow. 276 possible charging plugs enabled across Alberta. Admin funding made second employee for SouthGrow possible. Program helped us build strong relationships with Alberta Municipalities, ATCO Electric, FortisAlberta, Equus, the Energy Futures Lab, and others. The relationship capital we have accrued from this project has been immense. ATCO, Fortis and Alberta Municipalities want to jointly pursue another project together with SouthGrow as the lead delivery organization.

**Activity: EV Bus Pilot Project**

**Goal:** SouthGrow completes multi-year application process to get EV bus for highway 4 corridor funded, with funding landed within 2022 and bus purchased and operational in-region by Fall of 2022.

**Target:** Bus is purchased and delivered by fall of 2022.

**Progress:** FCM has approved budget increase of vehicle to \$407k (80%). MCCAC approved grant for remaining amount. Peaks to Prairies has offered free power for next 6-7 years, just have to fill out an application with William York. In process of buying bus from Crestline in Saskatoon. There is some question about timelines for delivery that is being worked through.

**Status:** COMPLETED – timelines changed.

**Outcomes:** Fully funded, in process of ordering vehicle. We have got a \$402,000 EV handibus fully funded by granting organizations to service Highway 4. Bus has been officially ordered.

## Targets of Opportunity

**Activity: SouthGrow Power Project**

**Goal:** SouthGrow advances the implementation of a < 5MW solar installation that will be owned and operated by SouthGrow the intent of funding the organization. Within the operational year, we will attempt to Identify eligible land, purchasers for the power, and a viable grid connection while completing a feasibility study. By the end of the operational year, we will reach the point where the Board will need to decide on a go-no-go for the project.

**Target:** All the information is available for the Board to make a fully informed go-no-go decision.

**Progress:** Land identified, project ready to go, Applications ready to submit, Working with Lethbridge County to identify correct funding stream for loan. Prairies Canada is viewing our grant application favorably. Have money to pay for application, trying to reduce cost by working with Fortis. Terralta has been amazingly helpful. Key concern, I don't want to drain our reserves in order to make this project happen because we need our reserves to fund pass through programs.

**Status:** COMPLETE

**Outcomes:** Project is advancing very nicely. We've reached that point there the Board can decide to go-no-go.



# SPECIAL THANKS

To the **Government of Alberta**, Ministry of Jobs, Economy, and Innovation for their continued partnership.

To **Economic Development Lethbridge** for their continued partnership and belief in growing the economic strength of the region.

To **Alberta SouthWest Regional Alliance** for being the best neighbours a REDA could hope for and to **Bev Thornton** for her mentorship and guidance.

To the **Palliser Economic Partnership** for forging new relationships with us and working together for all Southern Albertans.

To the hardworking people of **Alberta Innovates and the NRC**, for supporting local innovators to grow new business in our region.

To **FortisAlberta** for ongoing partnerships that are helping our communities get the infrastructure they need in a changing landscape, and for your game-changing support of our Solar Project that is transformative in nature. You deserve the Community Partner award you won at EDA very much.

To the **Regional Innovation Network of Southern Alberta** for running so many programs that support entrepreneurs and innovators across the south.

To **Linda Erickson** for her continual support of our staff and organization. Your commitment to our shared goals every year is a blessing and an aid.

To **Community Futures Lethbridge Region** for your partnership in the past year on core projects.

To **Alberta Municipalities** for partnering with us on our EV infrastructure programs and for being such a support and help on webinars.

# SPECIAL THANKS

To our energy-world friends, **Rishikesh Kumar, Jennifer Shillam, Leanne Kubiseski, William York, Brad Nickel** and the people of the **Energy Futures Lab** for helping us navigate this sector as it grows in importance, thank you so much for all you do!

To the **Economic Developers Alberta** for their professional support and resources that help us succeed.

To the members of the **Executive Committee** who go above and beyond as volunteers to further the work of our alliance.

To the people of the **Highway 3 Twinning Development Association** who work hard to have our central agri-food highway twinned.

To our staff, **Peter Casurella, Kim Welby and Jessie Stilson** for giving of your time and talents to advance our mandate.

To **Minister Nathan Neudorf** in particular for going above and beyond to advocate for our region.

**THANK YOU ALL!**

**SOUTHGROW REGIONAL INITIATIVE**

**Financial Statements**

**Year Ended March 31, 2023**

*Draft for discussion purposes only*

**SOUTHGROW REGIONAL INITIATIVE**  
**Index to Financial Statements**  
**Year Ended March 31, 2023**

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*Draft for discussion purposes only*

# INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

## To the Members of SouthGrow Regional Initiative

### Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of SouthGrow Regional Initiative (the organization), which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2023, and the statements of changes in net assets, revenues and expenses and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the organization as at March 31, 2023, and the results of its operations and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNPO)

### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the organization in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with ASNPO, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the organization's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the organization's financial reporting process.

### Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

(continues)

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of SouthGrow Regional Initiative *(continued)*

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the organization's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the organization to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Lethbridge, Alberta  
June 21, 2023

Chartered Professional Accountants

*Draft for discussion purposes only*

**SOUTHGROW REGIONAL INITIATIVE**  
**Statement of Financial Position**  
**March 31, 2023**

	2023	2022
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Cash	\$ 234,263	\$ 159,424
Accounts receivable	136,626	41,700
Goods and services tax recoverable	17,434	5,167
Prepaid expenses	3,163	3,242
	<u>\$ 391,486</u>	<u>\$ 209,533</u>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 32,491	\$ 4,001
Deferred contributions <i>(Note 3)</i>	171,598	14,100
	<u>204,089</u>	<u>18,101</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<u>187,397</u>	<u>191,432</u>
	<u>\$ 391,486</u>	<u>\$ 209,533</u>

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**APPROVED BY THE BOARD:**

\_\_\_\_\_ *Director*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Director*

**SOUTHGROW REGIONAL INITIATIVE**

**Statement of Changes in Net Assets**

**Year Ended March 31, 2023**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 191,432</b>	<b>\$ 227,336</b>
<b>DEFICIENCY OF RECEIPTS OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>(4,035)</b>	<b>(35,904)</b>
<b>NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 187,397</b>	<b>\$ 191,432</b>

*Draft for discussion purposes only*



**SOUTHGROW REGIONAL INITIATIVE****Statement of Revenues and Expenses****Year Ended March 31, 2023**

	2023	2022
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program	\$ 162,727	\$ 41,500
Memberships	90,024	49,605
Alberta Jobs, Economy and Innovation Grant	75,000	50,000
Services	74,948	18,775
Alberta Labour & Immigration	70,549	-
SAITI Grant	19,883	2,000
Other revenue	5,580	-
Alberta Agriculture and Forestry	-	8,020
	<u>498,711</u>	<u>169,900</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b> <i>(Schedule 1)</i>	<u>502,746</u>	<u>205,804</u>
<b>DEFICIENCY OF RECEIPTS OVER EXPENSES</b>	<u>\$ (4,035)</u>	<u>\$ (35,904)</u>

Draft for discussion purposes only

**SOUTHGROW REGIONAL INITIATIVE****Statement of Cash Flows****Year Ended March 31, 2023**

	2023	2022
<b>OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Excess (deficiency) of receipts over expenses	\$ (4,035)	\$ (35,904)
Changes in non-cash working capital:		
Accounts receivable	(94,926)	(41,700)
Goods and services tax recoverable	(12,267)	3,146
Prepaid expenses	79	(245)
Advances for affiliated program	-	10,034
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	28,490	(3,150)
Deferred contributions	157,498	12,100
	<u>78,874</u>	<u>(19,815)</u>
<b>INCREASE (DECREASE) IN CASH FLOW</b>	<b>74,839</b>	<b>(55,719)</b>
<b>CASH, BEGINNING OF PERIOD</b>	<u>159,424</u>	<u>215,143</u>
<b>CASH, END OF PERIOD</b>	<u>\$ 234,263</u>	<u>\$ 159,424</u>

Draft for discussion purposes only

# **SOUTHGROW REGIONAL INITIATIVE**

## **Notes to Financial Statements**

**Year Ended March 31, 2023**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF THE ORGANIZATION**

SouthGrow Regional Initiative (the "organization") is a not-for-profit organization established to accelerate and enhance development and sustainability for the member communities in Southern Alberta.

### **2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

#### Basis of presentation

The financial statements were prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNPO).

#### Cash and short term investments

Cash includes bank balances and cash equivalents of less than three months. Short-term investments purchased with maturity of greater than three months are classified as marketable securities.

#### Property and equipment

Property and equipment consisting of furniture, equipment and computer equipment are not amortized and are expensed in the year of purchase. During the current year the organization did not purchase any capital equipment.

#### Revenue recognition

SouthGrow Regional Initiative follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions.

Restricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenses are incurred. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when received or receivable if the amount to be received can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured. Endowment contributions are recognized as direct increases in net assets.

Membership revenue is recognized in the period the membership covers.

Training and workshop fees are recognized as revenue when the seminars are held.

Investment income is recognized as revenue when earned.

#### Contributed services

The operations of the organization depend on both the contribution of time by volunteers and donated materials from various sources. The fair value of donated materials and services cannot be reasonably determined and are therefore not reflected in these financial statements.

*(continues)*

## SOUTHGROW REGIONAL INITIATIVE

### Notes to Financial Statements

Year Ended March 31, 2023

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#### 2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES *(continued)*

##### Measurement uncertainty

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amount of assets and liabilities, disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the period. Such estimates are periodically reviewed and any adjustments necessary are reported in earnings in the period in which they become known. Actual results could differ from these estimates.

##### Financial instruments policy

Financial instruments are recorded at fair value when acquired or issued. In subsequent periods, financial assets with actively traded markets are reported at fair value, with any unrealized gains and losses reported in income. All other financial instruments are reported at amortized cost, and tested for impairment at each reporting date. Transaction costs on the acquisition, sale, or issue of financial instruments are expensed when incurred.

#### 3. DEFERRED CONTRIBUTIONS

Deferred contributions represent unspent receipts that are externally restricted for specific purposes. Related expenditures are expected in a subsequent period. Changes in deferred contributions during the year are as follows:

	2023	2022
Balance, beginning of the year	\$ 14,100	\$ 2,000
Add: Restricted receipts received	204,795	14,100
Less: Amount recognized as revenue	(47,297)	(2,000)
Balance, end of the year	<u>\$ 171,598</u>	<u>\$ 14,100</u>

#### 4. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The organization is exposed to various risks through its financial instruments and has a comprehensive risk management framework to monitor, evaluate and manage these risks. The following analysis provides information about the organization's risk exposure and concentration as of March 31, 2023.

##### *(a) Credit risk*

Credit risk arises from the potential that a counter party will fail to perform its obligations. The organization is exposed to credit risk in respect to its accounts receivable.

##### *(b) Liquidity risk*

Liquidity risk is the risk that an entity will encounter difficulty in meeting obligations associated with financial liabilities. The organization is exposed to this risk mainly in respect of its accounts payable.

*(continues)*

## **SOUTHGROW REGIONAL INITIATIVE**

### **Notes to Financial Statements**

**Year Ended March 31, 2023**

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#### **4. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS *(continued)***

##### ***(c) Market risk***

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. Market risk comprises three types of risk: currency rate risk, interest rate risk and other price risk. The organization does not have any significant exposure to market risk.

Unless otherwise noted, it is management's opinion that the organization is not exposed to significant other price risks arising from these financial instruments.

#### **5. COMPARATIVE FIGURES**

Some of the comparative figures have been reclassified to conform to the current year's presentation. The changes do not affect prior year earnings.

*Draft for discussion purposes only*

## SOUTHGROW REGIONAL INITIATIVE

### Expenses

(Schedule 1)

Year Ended March 31, 2023

	2023	2022
Strategic Collaboration		
Professional development	5,111	1,340
Training	4,291	-
Highway 3 Extension	4,252	14,014
Develop and build partnership	3,071	1,183
Government Relations Committee	870	-
REDA collaboration	440	945
Sponsorship	-	1,500
	<u>18,035</u>	<u>18,982</u>
Marketing & communication		
Global Market Development	28,222	11,000
SAET1 FDE Marketing	16,479	6,100
Website	9,155	268
AGM/ Meetings	3,793	4,869
Travel expenses	2,766	3,248
Newsletters	2,500	2,300
Advertising/Subscriptions	924	590
Regional Photography Project	-	5,000
	<u>63,839</u>	<u>33,375</u>
Economic Development and Innovation		
Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program	167,657	43,597
Supply Chain	36,750	-
Labour market study	33,197	-
Broadband	31,998	500
Economic summit	22,539	-
Tourism promotion	9,000	5,000
Agriculture education promo	8,003	5,000
Rural Immigration Pathways	3,205	-
Alternative Energy/SAAEP	2,954	3,732
	<u>315,303</u>	<u>57,829</u>
Administration		
SouthGrow advisor costs	86,583	82,143
Professional fees	5,604	5,795
Telephone, internet, postage and office supplies	4,217	3,360
Miscellaneous	2,906	100
Insurance	2,543	2,449
Meetings and conventions	1,250	-
Travel	1,078	997
Meetings	616	536
Sub-contracts	545	-
Advertising and promotion	206	-
Interest and bank charges	21	238
	<u>105,569</u>	<u>95,618</u>
	<u>\$ 502,746</u>	<u>\$ 205,804</u>

# Operational Plan

## 2023- 2024



Prepared by Peter Casurella, Executive Director  
March 2023 for the SouthGrow Management Board.

# PART I: STRATEGIC LADDER

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## REGIONAL VISION

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The Vision of the Region is a broad statement that encompasses what sort of economic environment our membership would like to see realized. It informs SouthGrow's mission and gives us a direction to lay our efforts towards. SouthGrow cannot achieve the vision alone, but we can play our part to realize it.

*The SouthGrow region is home to collaborative, prosperous and vibrant communities which have diverse economies, anchored by a progressive agricultural industry.*

## THE ASSOCIATION'S MISSION

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This is our mandate to realize the vision above. We feel that this is the mission we can pursue to help realize the Regional Vision.

*In collaboration with its members and supporters, SouthGrow will proudly deliver economic development programs and initiatives that contribute to growth potential throughout the region.*

## CORE GOALS

---

These are the core goals that we will keep in focus as we look to achieve our mission:

- I) To foster a south-central Alberta shared vision for regional economic development.
- II) To create awareness and support for new economic development opportunities in the region
- III) To encourage and enhance collaborative approaches to regional economic development services delivery.
- IV) To provide south central Alberta with a unified voice on regional economic development priorities





## OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

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The Core Goals inform our Strategic Pillars. These pillars are the objectives that we will focus on, and through which we will filter our scope of work, limiting ourselves to an achievable level of work. If a project or deliverable falls outside these pillars, it is outside our association's mandate to pursue. If it is within these pillars, we have the option of pursuing it, provided we have the organizational capacity to do so.

### **Strategic Collaboration**

*Build regional economic development capacity by promoting a shared vision and fostering a unified sense of purpose through collaborations with member communities, industry and business, and government.*

### **Marketing & Communications**

*Promote south-central Alberta's lifestyle and business advantages to internal and external audiences.*

### **Economic Development & Innovation**

*Facilitate new and existing regional economic development opportunities through targeted programs that reach domestic and international audiences, and in partnership with member communities, regional businesses/industry, and government.*



## OPERATIONAL PLAN 2023 / 2024

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These are actionable projects within each Strategic Pillar that we build one-year timelines for. Each tactic is fleshed out with a SMARTER goal, desired outcomes, measures of success, specific targets, and a three-year work-plan broken down by quarter to allow the organization to remain flexible yet on-pace.

These projects are proposed. Due to board approvals and other possible extenuating circumstances, we may not initiate all projects in the 2023-2024 year, however all Government of Alberta funding will be spent on programs and operations listed in this operational plan.



## **Pillar I: Strategic Collaboration**

- I. **Member Engagement**
  - A. Annual Council Presentations
  - B. Councillor Training
  - C. Government Relations
  - D. IEDC Accreditation
  - E. Economic Development Summit
  - F. Community Ec Dev Matchmaking
  
- II. **Build and Sustain Collaborations**
  - A. Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership – Government Education
  - B. Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative
  - C. Canada's Premier Food Corridor and Canada's Western Gateway
  - D. Southern Alberta Tourism Collaboration
  - E. Highway 3 Twinning Development Association
  - F. REDA Collaboration
  
- III. **Sustain or Expand Membership**
  - A. Sustain Membership
  - B. Expand Associate Memberships

## **Pillar II: Marketing & Communications**

- I. **Regional Promotion**
  - A. Website Improvements
  - B. Market the Region Globally
  
- II. **Internal Communications**
  - A. Newsletters
  - B. Regional Sponsorships

## **Pillar III: Economic Development & Innovation**

- I. **Ag-Tech Market Development**
  - A. Agri-food Scholarship Program
  - B. Agri-food Conference Representation
  
- II. **Broadband Deployment**
  - A. Project Manage upgrade of remaining regional POP sites.
  
- III. **Labour Market Solutions**



- A. Regional Grad Retention Strategy
- B. Implementation of Regional Grad Retention Strategy

IV. **Community Supports**

- A. Regional Investment Initiative

V. **Special Projects**

- A. Zero Emissions Vehicle Infrastructure Project (2-year)
- B. EV Bus Project
- C. Demand Side Management Pilot Project (PENDING)
- D. Supply Chain Opportunity Identification Project
- E. Blackfoot Language Signage

VI. **Flagship Project**

- A. SouthGrow Power Project

VII. **Shelved Wish List Projects**

- A. Solar Rural Land Use Study
- B. Local Waste Solutions Study



# PART II: TACTICAL PLAN

## PILLAR I: STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

### I. MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

#### Annual Council Presentations

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	The Executive Director will endeavor to deliver a direct report to council to 40% of our members on an annual basis. (12) Staff will also provide a once-per-year recorded update to all members that they can play for their councils, and will distribute the monthly Mayors and Reeves reports to the full board with
OUTCOME	40% of the SouthGrow members receive a report directly to council.
MEASURE	Numbers of councils that receive reports on an annual basis.
TARGET	40% of councils are visited within the year. A recorded report goes to all members and associate members.
WORKPLAN	Book visits to councils in July after release of the annual report and attend councils in August through November.
Budget	Administrative work.

#### Councillor Training

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow hosts an Economic Disaster Resilience & Recovery Course for Municipal Staff and Councils that is attended by at least 40 individuals from across the region. This session will take place in quarter 1 or quarter 3 of the fiscal year.
OUTCOME	Staff and councillors from across the region have an increased awareness of proactive work that is needed to prepare for, and recover from, and economic disaster.
MEASURE	Did training session (s) occur.



	How many people attended.
TARGET	One session held in Q 1 or 3 of 2022. 40 registrants.
WORKPLAN	Find appropriate date and venue, book trainer, advertise event and fill up attendance, secure catering and value-added elements, host training, report.
Budget	\$3000

## Government Relations

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow will work to secure multi-year funding for SouthGrow (at or above current funding levels), to retain the promise of a 10-year commitment to twinning all of Highway 3, to retain the core elements of the present rural economic development strategy, and to secure other regional priorities that only partnerships with other levels of governments can bring. We will do this by proactively communicating the value of our priorities to all personalities involved that we can in a politically neutral fashion and by providing them with data that substantiates our claims.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow has met with the Ministers responsible for economic development, agriculture, transportation, and other files as they become important. SouthGrow has met with the beurocrats in these ministries as well. SouthGrow makes tangible progress on its relationship building efforts on key files.
MEASURE	Did the meetings occur? How many meetings were held? What were the narrative outcomes of the meetings? Did the REDA funding get extended? Which commitments were retained past the May election?
TARGET	Favorable communications are re-established with Government of Alberta Ministers and staffs for the extension of the REDA partnership and the retention of core priorities listed above.
WORKPLAN	Organize meetings, prepare notes, brief officials, follow ups, consistent messaging. Prepare briefing notes for councillors for AB Munis and RMA Conferences. Have representatives attend these conferences and discuss issues with key Ministers. Recruit champion ministers to advance issues within government.



Budget	\$2000 (Specifically sourced from Membership dollars)
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### **IEDC Accreditation**

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow secures a membership with the International Economic Development Council, applies for Accredited Economic Development Organization status, and completes the deliverables necessary for accreditation. This will be completed early in the fiscal year. The process will culminate in an SGRI representative attending the IEDC annual conference in Dallas TX in October to receive our accreditation (board or staff member as convenient)
OUTCOME	SouthGrow is an Accredited Economic Development Organization.
MEASURE	Did we join IEDC? Was the accreditation process successful? Did a representative attend the conference in Dallas?
TARGET	Accreditation through the IEDC.
WORKPLAN	Procure membership in April and launch accreditation process. Complete accreditation by end of June (target) Book 1 representative in to IEDC conference for October and send them. Contingency: If accreditation presentation not available till 2024, consider delaying conference trip unless alternative funding can be found.
Budget	\$10,000

### **Economic Development Summit**

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow hosts a regional Economic Development Summit in 2023 that provides stakeholders with access to speakers and engagement on important economic development topics, trends, and issues that affect our region. Importantly, this year we attempt to expand the summit scope to include active partnerships with stakeholders in the Alberta SouthWest and Palliser regions with the intent of growing the event into a pan southern-Alberta partnership. Dates this year have been left vague to accommodate potential partnerships.



OUTCOME	The summit is held in a member community with local hosts and excellent attendance as measured against previous years. (2022 - est 80 people)
MEASURE	Was the event held? Attendance levels? Feedback from attendees. Were partnerships expanded? How much money was leveraged from other sources?
TARGET	Greater than 70 attendees from member communities, partners, and stakeholders.
WORKPLAN	Reach out to members to secure host community. Secure venue in member community. Develop list of speakers and agenda. Develop invites and issue to members, especially new council members. Secure catering for event. Host event.
Budget	\$5000

### Community Ec Dev Matchmaking

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow surveys its member municipalities by the end of Q2, 2023 to identify what community level Ec Dev projects are being pursued by our administrations, and then offers matchmaking introductions between communities who are pursuing similar projects for potential collaboration. SouthGrow also identifies resources and connections which might help each community to pursue their projects.
OUTCOME	All 29 rate-paying member communities and EDL are afforded the opportunity to share what they are working on, get introduced to communities pursuing the same goals, and are offered resources and connections who can assist with their projects.
MEASURE	Were the communities surveyed? How many responded? How many introductions were made? Were resources shared? Did any communities collaborate?





TARGET	All 29 rate paying municipalities and EDL are surveyed. Resources and connections are shared with those who respond.
WORKPLAN	Develop Survey, Send to CAO's/EDOs/leave open for two weeks/review responses/make connections/write resource reports to support respondents/share outcomes with all communities to encourage further participation/respond to any latecomers/follow up to see how things went.
Budget	Staff Work

## II. BUILD OR SUSTAIN COLLABORATIONS

### Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership - Government Education

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-Enabling Infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow will continue to advocate for a unified vision for Alberta's electrical grid and regulatory reform within the province with the intent of creating certainty in the market for investment and updating Alberta's regulatory codes to account for the modern energy mix and issues on the ground. We will do this by communicating the issues at stake to decision makers along with SAAEP's partners across the province.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow communicates the need for a unified grid vision for Alberta to relevant government entities. Progress is made on communicating opportunities and liabilities in the electricity market to key decision makers and relationships are advanced with key partners.
MEASURE	Did we present to decision makers? How many and who? Were any actions taken by decision makers in response to our efforts? How many partners joined us in the effort?
TARGET	The partnership is maintained or expanded (currently SAAEP and the Energy Futures Lab). Some targets include Alberta Municipalities, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta or other municipalities.
WORKPLAN	Talk internally with SAAEP partners about messaging goals. Re-affirm partnership with EFL. Send invitations to recruit AB Munis, RMA and others as identified. Proceed with coalition of the willing. Book meetings with



	decision makers in Edmonton, have meetings, send letters, consider paid advertising focused on decision makers and industry.
Budget	Administrative Budgets / Government relations / SAAEP budgets

### Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow maintains its participation and leadership in the Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative, pursuing meaningful projects under its umbrella as detailed in other plan sections.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow maintains the SAITI collaboration with meaningful work underway.
MEASURE	Partnership is active and has ongoing projects. Programs pursued under the partnership meet their goals.
TARGET	At least one project is advanced under the brand within 2023 as detailed elsewhere.
WORKPLAN	Participate In bi-monthly meetings of the collaboration. Drive forward projects as assigned to SouthGrow under other work plans.
Budget	Administrative work and project specific budgets.

### Canada's Premier Food Corridor and Canada's Western Gateway

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow supports the growth of sub-regional collaborations that promote industry clusters by convening them when necessary, hosting meetings, providing advisor services, connecting them with resources, and by actively using those brands in our own communications efforts. This support is ongoing and continual.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow is home to active sub-regional marketing brands that independently invest additional money in Initiatives that raise the profile of the region.
MEASURE	Do the brands have marketing projects underway? Are they being Independently managed by their members?



	Are they investing money in their own initiative?
TARGET	CPFC and CWG remain active and managed by their own membership.
WORKPLAN	Attend meetings of both groups. Invite them to participate in SouthGrow initiatives. Check in with managing partners periodically to stay apprised of their efforts. Send opportunities to both brands as opportunity allows.
Budget	Administrative work.

### Southern Alberta Tourism Collaboration

EDRAP Alignment	Marketing and Promoting Rural Tourism
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow's will partner with Tourism Lethbridge and contribute funds to enable digital marketing of regional tour routes that are under development or have been developed through previous partnerships.
OUTCOME	A funded digital marketing project is launched by Tourism Lethbridge, enabled by our funding, that promotes regional tours to tourists in the Calgary - Edmonton corridor
MEASURE	Partnership dollars leveraged, ad campaigns created, ad metrics and impact.
TARGET	Double our contribution through partner leveraging Baseline year-1 ad metrics to establish future campaign targets.
WORKPLAN	Participate in ad campaign planning Help secure leveraged dollars from partners Pay contribution Participate on steering committee Collect metrics.
Budget	\$10,000

### Highway 3 Twinning Development Association

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-enabling Infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow supports the Highway 3 Twinning Development Association towards Its goals by providing matching funding, board representation, In-kind support, and by helping to continually secure regional buy-in from our



	membership. SouthGrow ensures that the H3TDA remains a vibrant, active, and impactful organization.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow gives up to \$3000 in matching funding to Highway 3 and the association remains active and achieving its own goals.
MEASURE	Money Spent Annual Report on H3TDA operations (Are they making progress?). Evaluation of retention of Highway 3 Twinning promises
TARGET	H3TDA maintains a slate of work advancing the goal H3TDA appears to be on track to accomplish their strategic goals.
WORKPLAN	Participate In board meetings Contribute funding upon request and review.
Budget	\$3000 available for matching

#### REDA Collaboration

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow collaborates with the other Regional Economic Development Alliances to promote the value of regional partnerships, encourage government interaction with, and leveraging of, the REDAs, and helps to position the REDAs as key players in the provincial Economic Development ecosystem.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow and the REDAs achieve their own internally defined goals on this file with respect to communication, relationship building and advancement of our multi-year efforts.
MEASURE	Collaborative efforts undertaken Extension of Government partnerships Government partnership activities achieved.
TARGET	The REDA Chairs meet with the Minister of JEND to discuss collaboration goals. The REDAs attend both the AB Munis and RMA conferences. The REDAs partner to sponsor the Economic Developers Alberta Conference. The REDAs contribute to the Invest Alberta Magazine.
WORKPLAN	Help arrange REDA chairs meeting and attend. Contribute to both RMA and AB Munis conferences Contribute representatives to one of the RMA or AB Munis conferences



	Contribute funding to EDA sponsorship Have representatives attend all three identified events in some capacity or another.
Budget	\$1500 available for matching

### III. SUSTAIN OR EXPAND MEMBERSHIP

#### Sustain Membership

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow sustains its paying membership within 10% of its current membership income levels (+ or - \$10,000).
OUTCOME	Membership remains relative stable despite rapidly changing fiscal environment.
MEASURE	Municipalities that paid their memberships. Amount of money received vs amount of money invoiced.
TARGET	Retention of membership dollars within 10% of expected income level.
WORKPLAN	Issue Annual Report Issue Invoices Provide council presentations Follow up with any councils seeking to exit and provide value proposition. Leverage board members for Individual conversations.
Budget	Administrative work.

#### Expand Associate Memberships to Industry and Institutions

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow retains at least 4 existing associate members and adds 2 more for a total end of year of no fewer than 6 associate members. (Current 10)
OUTCOME	SouthGrow has a growing number of associate memberships who care about the success of our initiatives and see value in giving of their time and expertise to further regional opportunities.
MEASURE	Numbers of industry or institutional members recruited.



TARGET	Associate memberships are sustained at 6 members for the current year. (current 10)
WORKPLAN	Consult with existing associate members to retain all who can be retained. Brainstorm target prospects in the spring of 2023 Draft recruitment letter and 'sales sheet' Discuss special arrangements with Executive Committee, such as reciprocal memberships, special pricing for institutions, or other issues that arise. Present in person to interested prospects by the fall of 2022. Welcome representatives of these members to the Board as associate members by March 2024 at the latest.
Budget	Administrative work.

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## PILLAR II: MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

### I. REGIONAL PROMOTION

#### Website Improvements

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow updates its website toolkit with additional resources for our communities and enhances the content on our website to host information for site selectors looking at the region. This site selector information is also plugged into our other core websites (SAITI, SAAEP) and is provided to our partner brands or municipalities for their use.
OUTCOME	The SouthGrow website is kept fresh and current, with functioning links, more resources, and is a useful tool for the region and beyond. The website has content specific to providing site selectors with the information they need for the region to fill out their decision matrix'. Our other websites and partner websites have access to this information.
MEASURE	Website traffic Links clicked. Websites supported.
TARGET	Website is refreshed by end of August 2023 with opportunities for additional improvements throughout the year.
WORKPLAN	Allocate staff resources, review toolkits and update with new content, remove out of date content, review full site for updates and functionality, secure Local Intel tools, set up plugins and arrange on southgrow.com, saaep.ca, saiti.ca, and others. Ensure partners have access.
Budget	\$4000 for local intel plus administrative work.

#### Global Marketing Project

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow project manages a global digital marketing campaign to promote the agrifood opportunities in southern Alberta. This is based on content created in 2021 and run as a global campaign in 2022. Content is refreshed in early 2023, youtube ads are created and added to our stable of ads in early 2023. Global marketing is continued through 2023 with these ads. In addition, SouthGrow supports the attendance of a regional representative at the Site Selectors Guild conference in Texas in the spring of 2023 (grant dependent).



OUTCOME	The region continues its unified digital campaign and has increased global awareness as measured by digital metrics. The region continues to build partnerships with global site selectors.
MEASURE	Campaign spend vs. metrics Contacts developed.
TARGET	SouthGrow has the campaign running by February of 2023 with refreshed content and funded by ads. SouthGrow applies for \$10,000 in non-profit ad spend from Google and ads it to our advertising pot for running our youtube ads. Campaign runs for a full 12 months (February to February). Collect meaningful data on penetration and conversions from this pilot for base metric in future campaigns. A representative attends the Global site selectors guild conference in Texas.
WORKPLAN	Sign Canexport grant when it arrives. Apply for Google ad funding Refresh ad content Set up advertising campaign Run and administer campaign for 12 months. Sponsor SAITI representative to attend Site Selectors Guild Conference in Texas. Report to grant funder.
Budget	\$10,000 (\$41,850 total project value from partners and grants)

## II. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

### Newsletters

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow keeps its internal members and stakeholders well-advised of trends, opportunities, threats, and events that impact community and regional economic development. We also keep them well informed of Provincial Government initiatives.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow members are well-advised on these topics through our newsletters
MEASURE	Numbers of newsletters issued. Number of subscribers Open rate vs. past





TARGET	Newsletters are issued bi-weekly to a distribution list of anyone who wants it. Board members receive a daily Government Relations newsletter forwarded from the SouthGrow office.
WORKPLAN	Maintain production and distribution of newsletters.
Budget	\$2400 for newsletters

## Regional Sponsorships

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow supports stakeholder or partner initiatives with sponsorships to help enable their success. Sponsorships are selected on a case by case basis. Requests that provide benefits in the economic sphere to as many of our member communities as possible are prioritized. The sponsorships will not go any organizations that exist outside of member communities.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow sponsors important stakeholder or partner events to help them succeed.
MEASURE	Number of sponsorships given reported outcomes of those initiatives.
TARGET	SouthGrow spends its entire sponsorship budget on appropriate initiatives.
WORKPLAN	Inform stakeholders of existence of sponsorship budget. Bring requests before the Board as they arrive.
Budget	\$2000

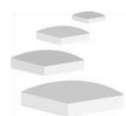


## PILLAR III: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION

### I. AG-TECH MARKET DEVELOPMENT

#### A. Ag-Tech Scholarship/Incentive Program

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow actively supports youth engagement in the Hi-Tech Ag sector by partnering with educational organizations in the region to deliver up to 4 scholarships to students attending Lethbridge College or the University of Lethbridge who plan to build a career in agri-food in southern Alberta.
OUTCOME	Young people in the region have a growing awareness of hi-tech ag as a viable industry in which to pursue a profession.
MEASURE	Numbers of applications to the scholarship program measured against previous years. Amount of money provided to students. Stretch Goal: Number of scholarships, or number of scholarships increased by member or partner donations.
TARGET	Up to 4 scholarships worth \$2500 each are awarded in the fall of 2022. Applicants are within 10% of 2022 numbers. (22)
WORKPLAN	Convene committee to clearly hammer out scholarship details and guidelines. Identify target sponsors to increase scholarship program by early spring of 2023. Draft sponsorship request letter and send to target sponsors with request for partnership. Evaluate results of sponsorship drive in June 2023 and set targets for scholarship program. Send out call for applications by beginning of July 2023. Promote on Social media acknowledging sponsors. Evaluate scholarship applicants with sponsor(s) included. Award scholarships by September 2023.
Budget	Up to \$2500



## B. Agri-food Conference Representation

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow represents southern Alberta at one global agri-food convention or trade show to build relationships and increase awareness of opportunities within the region. Furthermore, we collaborate with our partners to divide up conference attendance so that we have the maximum reach possible.
OUTCOME	There is increased awareness of opportunities in agri-food in southern Alberta by attendees at the conferences or trade shows we visit.
MEASURE	Was an event attended. Number of attendees at convention. Number of conversations developed.
TARGET	One convention attended. 5 conversations started that lead to local introductions.
WORKPLAN	Review conference list provided by contractor in 2022 Review costs and scheduling Consult with partners to avoid overlap Attend conference Process introductions and leads Submit narrative report to Board on conference.
Budget	\$5000

## II. BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT

### POP Site Upgrade Program

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-enabling infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow identifies remaining regional supernet POP sites that require upgrading to 10G, and works with regional ISPs, municipalities, Service Alberta, and Axia-Bell to secure the funding to upgrade as many sites as possible or which make sense. The projects will be identified and funded within the year.
OUTCOME	POP sites in the SouthGrow Region have funded upgrades underway to bring them up to 10 Gigs.
MEASURE	How many sites were identified for upgrades?



	<p>How many sites had a rationale for upgrading?</p> <p>How many municipalities partnered?</p> <p>How many ISP's partnered?</p> <p>Did Service Alberta support the project?</p> <p>How much money was leveraged?</p>
TARGET	POP sites where upgrading is possible have funding in place to do so.
WORKPLAN	Work with Axia-Bell to identify upgrades. Identify ISP's that use those sites. Get quoted costs from Axia-Bell, divide up sites into 'projects', approach partners to secure funding, get further discounts from Axia-Bell if possible, initiate work.
Budget	\$5,000

### III. LABOUR MARKET SOLUTIONS

#### Grad Retention Strategy Project

EDRAP Alignment	Support for labour force and skills development
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow serves as the funding partner for the ongoing regional grad retention strategy project and successfully administers it to completion in May of 2023.
OUTCOME	The regional grad retention strategy is presented to the members and partnering organizations and informs implementation work.
MEASURE	<p>Was the strategy completed?</p> <p>Were grants reported on successfully?</p>
TARGET	<p>Project is completed and wrapped up by May of 2023</p> <p>Afterwork is evaluated in the implementation project.</p>
WORKPLAN	<p>Maintain representation on project steering committee.</p> <p>Pay invoices as received.</p> <p>Complete project reporting to funders and stakeholders</p> <p>Lead planning for strategy implementation.</p>
Budget	\$16,598.33



## Grad Retention Strategy Implementation

EDRAP Alignment	Support for labour force and skills development
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow leads on the implementation of strategies arising out of the regional grad retention study by serving as the lead funding applicant and convener of partners.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow leads on the implementation of strategies arising out of the regional grad retention study. SouthGrow gathers a partnership, applies for funding, and helps to create the conditions upon which afterwork can be built.
MEASURE	How many partnerships were leveraged? How much money was leveraged? Were new projects identified? Was funding secured? What projects were initiated?
TARGET	1 Grant and partner funded project is initiated within the year.
WORKPLAN	Evaluate strategy Select relevant project Assemble partners Identify funding Apply for funding Initiate project.
Budget	Administrative Budget or yet-to-be identified funds.

## IV. COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

### Community Opportunity Profiling

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	Through our SAITI partnership SouthGrow will work with Invest Alberta to create a network of connected communities who share information and act as ground-level support for the provincial investment attraction ecosystem. SouthGrow will utilize a template provided by Invest Alberta, hire an appropriate contractor in collaboration with Alberta SouthWest, and get the opportunity identification template filled out for all of our communities. We will then submit these templates to Invest Alberta and utilize the information in our own marketing efforts with SAITI. The project is complete within the operational year.



OUTCOME	Opportunity Profiles have been completed for all 30 SouthGrow communities and shared with Invest Alberta.
MEASURE	How many profiles were completed and shared? Was the information used in investment conversations?
TARGET	30 profiles are completed and shared.
WORKPLAN	Apply for CanExport grant with SAITI Partners. Liaison with Invest Alberta. Identify and hire appropriate subcontractor. Oversee work. Take delivery and pay amounts owing. Share profiles with IA. Route appropriate information into our own marketing efforts, websites, and campaigns.
Budget	\$5000 (out of \$17,600 allocated within CanExport Grant as part of SAITI project. Profiled above, its \$41,850 in total)

## V. SPECIAL PROJECTS

### Zero Emissions Vehicle Infrastructure Project (2-year)

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-enabling infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow manages the disbursement of ZEVIP funding from NRCAN to fund a wide array of charging infrastructure in the region. This project is completed by 2024 and involves an active partnership with the MCCAC allowing many of our member municipalities to get fully subsidized infrastructure, and institutions and businesses to get 46% matching funding for their projects. The full amount is successfully spent by project end in 2024.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow provides members and regional stakeholders with privileged access to significant amounts of money to deploy electric vehicle chargers throughout the region.
MEASURE	Operational plan is on-track by the end of 2022 for completion in 2024.
TARGET	Est 1.7 million dollars in spend on infrastructure in the region. 2022 Target. Funding is secured, Project Manager hired, operational plan is on-schedule for completion.
WORKPLAN	Work Plan finalized with the MCCAC in April 2022. Process core applications between SouthGrow and the MCCAC. Distribute Marketing and push applicants to the funnel. Submit claims and disburse funds as claims are received and processed. Provide oversight to efforts of MCCAC on our behalf.



	Proactively promote the program to businesses in our own region in the 3 month head start period.
Budget	\$150,000 (This is all reimbursement for admin costs and will include an additional flow through of \$1.7 million in reimbursements that pass through out books.)

### EV Bus Pilot Project

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-enabling infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow completes multi-year application process to get EV bus for highway 4 corridor funded, with funding landed within 2022 and bus purchased and operational in-region by Fall of 2022.
OUTCOME	Highway 4 EV bus pilot is funded by the FCM and moves forward to implementation.
MEASURE	Was the bus purchased and delivered? Was the pilot initiated? Is the pilot underway with metrics being tracked?
TARGET	Bus is purchased and delivered by fall of 2022.
WORKPLAN	Secure final buy-in from Handi-bus committee. Edit agreement to adjust for new equipment. Get agreement signed. Order vehicle. Facilitate delivery of vehicle and payment of invoices. Lay out project expectations and tracking for Society and launch program.
Budget	Administrative Work (Large grant funding amounts from FCM and MCCAC that is pass-through. \$417,900)

### Demand Side Management Project

EDRAP Alignment	Economic Development-enabling infrastructure
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow partners with Fortis to deliver a Demand Side management program funded by NRCAN's Toward Net Zero Homes program, applied for in Q4 of 2022. This partnership would see SouthGrow serve as money handler for a \$600,000 project to install and monitor demand side management technology in homes and businesses in SouthGrow Communities so that Fortis can measure the impact on demand management



	from these pilots to be able to project to the regulator the impact on grid function that can be achieved from mass implementation. This project specifically focuses on the installation of heat pumps to measure their efficacy year-round and demand side impact on energy use. The program study would be conducted by Dr. Myers from the University of Calgary.
OUTCOME	1) Deploy heat pumps in 40 residential homes that have natural gas-fired furnaces and air conditioning units; 2) Track, monitor and analyze the change in energy consumption, utilization and reductions in GHG emissions for one full calendar year and seasons; 3) Share outcomes with provincial stakeholders to promote the use of heat pumps as a key component of reaching net-zero goals; and 4) At a high level, encourage a cultural acceptance of a changing energy environment in the high carbon environment and a growing awareness of the financial benefits of energy efficiency projects.
MEASURE	Was the grant application successful? Did the project move ahead? Were timelines for implementation met? How many Heat Pumps were installed? Was a research paper produced by the U of C? Was the information shared with stakeholders, regulator, and the GOA?
TARGET	Money is secured in Q1 of 2023. Project is implemented for April of 2023. Internal project metrics as defined elsewhere are met by Fortis and U of C.
WORKPLAN	*SouthGrow only: Sign funding agreement, take care of admin paperwork, help advertise program in SouthGrow Communities, publicise the program, provide steering committee with a representative, support Fortis and U of C towards success, compile reports and grant reporting, work with partners to celebrate and share outcomes of program, use outcomes to inform government and stakeholder education work.
Budget	\$29,500 *This is only admin portion at 5% of a \$628,670 partnership project applied for with Fortis. Grant is Pending. \$560,500.00 in pass-through money.

### Supply Chain Opportunity Identification Project (Import Replacement Project)

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	Together with Economic Development Lethbridge, SouthGrow launches a 2-year Supply Chain Identification project that profiles regional inputs and outputs from our 200 largest industrials, investment opportunities, red flags, and more, and captures that information in a database to begin matchmaking and the sharing of opportunities. This project is underway by summer of





	2022 with a contractor hired and implementing the deliverables. Project moves into phase 2 by summer of 2023 for completion in 2024.
OUTCOME	Supply Chain Identification project is underway with contractor in place. Database is set up and in use. Over 100 stakeholders have been fully profiled, introductions have begun, and investments and red flags have been discussed by project committee.
MEASURE	Number of stakeholders contacted. Number of stakeholders that have shared metrics. Number of connections made. Number of investment opportunities identified. Number of red flags identified.
TARGET	200 stakeholders contacted.  100 share their information 10 introductions made 10 red flags identified 10 business opportunities or investments identified.
WORKPLAN	Sign funding agreements. Develop and issue RFP or job listing. Hire for position, plan program, initialize Monitor consultant/employee progress. Provide support. Manage finances. Report on outcomes.
Budget	\$10,000 (out of \$20,000 two-year contribution for a total project cost of \$162,000)

### Blackfoot Language Signage Deployment

EDRAP Alignment	Marketing and promoting rural tourism
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow, Community Futures Lethbridge Region, and Tourism Lethbridge lead a partnership that includes the Blood Tribe with the intent of leveraging partner contributions against grant funding to assemble a pool of money used to fund the deployment of Blackfoot language place signage across south-western Alberta. This project will pursue the assemblage of a significant funding package for Q4 of 2023 (grant timelines) and a project implementation date in Q1 of 2024. Funding will be given in the form of



	micro-grants to applicants with the Blood Tribe informing the language on the sign. The partners will utilized a common brand for the deployment.
OUTCOME	Blackfoot language signage is deployed for locations across southern Alberta such as municipalities, institutions or tourism locations. Reconciliation is advanced by the inclusion of visual Blackfoot language markers on the landscape. Tourism is advanced by the enrichment of the landscape with signs of its heritage.
MEASURE	How much money was contributed by the partners? How much money was leveraged? Was the program funded in time to implement? If so, how many applications were received? What is the potential for continuation into future years?
TARGET	\$50,000 assembled by Q4 of 2023 and project initiative under the admin of one of the partners in Q1 of 2024
WORKPLAN	Recruit additional partners to achieve \$25,000 in partner money. Locate grant opportunity. Divide responsibilities. Wait on funding. Develop admin apparatus for program. Sign funding. Implement and put out call for applications.
Budget	\$5000 (towards a \$25,000 pot of partnership money to secure \$50k -100k. Being led by Community Futures Lethbridge.)

## VI. FLAGSHIP PROJECT

### SouthGrow Power Project

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow advances the implementation of a < 5MW solar installation that will be owned and operated by SouthGrow the intent of funding the organization. Within the operational year, we will attempt to Identify eligible land, purchasers for the power, and a viable grid connection while completing a feasibility study. By the end of the operational year, we will reach the point where the Board will need to decide on a go-no-go for the project.
OUTCOME	SouthGrow has the information it needs to decide on whether or not to move the project forward to the funding stage and grid connection application.
MEASURE	Can appropriate land be identified? Is there capacity in the grid at the connection point?



	<p>Can a customer be secured?</p> <p>Has a feasibility study been conducted?</p> <p>Does the board have the information it needs to make an Informed decision?</p>
TARGET	All the information is available for the Board to make a fully informed go-no-go decision.
WORKPLAN	<p>Identify high quality land for the project.</p> <p>Identify a connection point with capacity.</p> <p>Identify possible customers.</p> <p>Identify consultants to build the feasibility study.</p> <p>Find funding for feasibility study</p> <p>Write grants (if needed).</p> <p>Confirm legal structure required for operation.</p> <p>Confirm partnership interest from Lethbridge College for OM.</p> <p>Put information in front of Board for Decision</p>
Budget	\$42,500

## VII. SHELVED WISH LIST PROJECTS

### Local / Regional Waste Solutions Feasibility Study

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	SouthGrow delivers an investigative report into new regional /municipal waste solutions with the intent of informing the local conversation in a rapidly developing market segment. The study is commissioned and delivered within the operational year.
OUTCOME	A report is delivered to our stakeholders which evaluates the current state of the waste industry, profiles various solutions (with user cases where possible) and makes case-study recommendations for potential implementations in southern Alberta.
MEASURE	Was the study commissioned? Was the study complete? Was the study shared with stakeholders?
TARGET	Completion by Q4 of 2023
WORKPLAN	Define the research question, pursue conversations with qualified researchers, set price point, solicit quotes, select contractor and tender, oversee project, evaluate deliverables, finalize, release to stakeholders.



Budget	\$? (Likely would cost \$15 - \$20k to implement)
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### Solar Rural Land Use Study

EDRAP Alignment	Rural Economic Development Capacity Building
SMARTER GOAL	Within the operational year, SouthGrow will commission a study from an appropriate expert on the impact of solar developments on farmland supply with a specific focus on evaluating the amount of marginal land available in Southern Alberta for solar development, the impact of solar development on farmland fertility beyond after reclamation, and recommendations for municipal and provincial policies related to land-use bylaws. The study will be complete within the operational year.
OUTCOME	The impacts on rural land use from the continued development of utility scale solar arrays are better understood and inform government policy decisions related to land use bylaws and/or legislation.
MEASURE	Was the study complete? Was it shared with stakeholders?
TARGET	Completion by Q4 of 2023
WORKPLAN	Research possible contractors. Discuss price-points. Assemble partnership / funding package, commission work, review and evaluate, finalize, report, share.
Budget	\$? (Likely would cost \$15 - \$20k to implement)



# BUDGET

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## INCOME

Income	Amount	
Membership Fees	92,136.00	Per-Capita
Associate Member fees	1,000.00	Fixed Rate
JEI Operational Grant	125,000.00	Grant
Registrations, Sponsorships, Other Fees	20,000.00	Miscellaneous
Highway 3 Admin Support	2,275.00	For services
Interest	0	Bank
CanExport Grant	21,850.00	Secured
CanExport Partner Contributions	10,000	Contribution
GST Recovered	14,000.00	Estimate
ZEVIP Admin	150,000.00	Admin/Contractor
ZEVIP Passthrough for Program	1,500,000.00	Reimbursements
Grad Retention Project - liability	16,598.33	Carried Forward
Supply Chain liability carried forward	30,000.00	Carried Forward
EDL - Supply Chain	5,000.00	Contribution
Prairies Can - Supply Chain	51,000.00	Recoverable
NRED Budget Matching Carry-forward	15,000.00	Confirmed
NRED Grant (Unconfirmed)	21,250.00	Confirmed
FCM Rural EV Handibus Grant	417,900.00	Confirmed
Toward Net Zero Homes	590,000.00	*Unconfirmed
<b>Projected Income</b>		
<b>3,082,009.00</b>		



## EXPENSES

<b>Strategic Collaboration</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Description</b>
Develop and Build Partnerships	2,500.00	Relationship building
Board Development	4,000.00	Executive Committee training
Econ Development Summit	5,000.00	Annual Event
Regional Tourism Collaboration	10,000.00	Regional Tourism Marketing
H3TDA Support	3,000.00	Matching fund Transportation
REDA Collaboration	1,500.00	REDA Collaboration
Councillor Training Event	3,000.00	Annual Training
Sponsorships	2,000.00	Annual Sponsorship fund
Government Relations	2,000.00	Relationship Building and Education

Total	<b>33,000.00</b>
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<b>Marketing and Communication</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Description</b>
Advertising/Subscriptions	1,500.00	Admin Expense
Travel - Regional	3,000.00	Driving around region
Newsletters	2,400.00	Bi-weekly newsletters
Websites	600.00	Admin Expense
AGM / Other Events & Meetings	5,000.00	Hosting AGM and other
SAETI Marketing Project and Regional Work	41,850.00	Global Marketing Project
Local Intel Subscription	4,000.00	Investment Tools Websites
Agri-food Conference Attendance	5,000.00	To Attend Conference(s)

Total	<b>63,350.00</b>
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<b>Economic Development</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Description</b>
Scholarships	2,500.00	Scholarship Program seed money
Broadband	5,000.00	POP Site ID and Upgrade
Supply Chain Identification	96,000.00	Owed to contractors
ZEVIP Program Admin	150,000.00	NRCAN Project
ZEVIP Reimbursement Pass-through	1,500,000.00	Passthrough to recipients
Blackfoot Language Signage	5,000.00	Contribution to project
SouthGrow Power Project	99,540.00	For feasibility, permitting
Grad Retention Project	16,598.33	Carry forward owing
FCM Rural EV Handibus Grant	417,900.00	*Pass-through to partners
Towards Net Zero Homes	560,500.00	*pass-through budget line

Total	<b>2,863,038.00</b>
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**Administration**

Staffing Costs (2x FTEs)	110,000.00	Retained contractors
Annual Operational Reserve	3,000.00	For targets of Opportunity
Administration Support	2,000.00	Manger support work
Executive Honorarium/Mileage	2,000.00	Executive or other Board members as claimed
Bookkeeping	1,500.00	QuickBooks and Bookkeeping advice
Professional Fees	4,800.00	Annual Audit
Insurance	2,600.00	RMA Insurance Annual
Telephone and Internet	1,800.00	Rogers, Google
Office Supplies	1,000.00	Misc. supplies
Postage Courier Freight	800.00	Post office box, mailings
Meetings and Hosting	2,000.00	Executive meetings, Misc. meetings
Miscellaneous	0	
GST	15,000.00	GST spend - recoverable.

<b>Total</b>	<b>146,500.00</b>
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<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>3,150,888.00</b>
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<b>*Income vs Expense</b>	<b>-23,879</b>
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[Economic Development](#) | [Government Relations](#)

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[About SouthGrow Regional Initiative](#)

SouthGrow is an economic development alliance of twenty-eight south central Alberta communities committed to working together to achieve prosperity for the region. Representing over 180,000 people, SouthGrow is committed to assisting communities, organizations, businesses, and people in the region to further their economic development goals and to maintain the high quality of life.

