

# Strategic Plan 2020-2021



# Central Alberta Economic Partnership

## *Collaborative. Sustainable. Economic Development.*

### 2020 – 2021 Strategic Plan

#### Message from the Board Chair and Executive Director

We are pleased to present the Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP) 2020 – 2021 Strategic Plan: Collaborative. Sustainable. Economic Development.

This is a continuation of CAEP's first four-year strategic plan, which set out a renewed vision, mission, and set of four strategic priorities to guide our Board and members' approach to achieving collaborative, community economic development.

The path to develop and share our plan reflects and aligns with our partnership approach. We actively reached out and sought input to identify our most valued and high priority offerings from our members. We then engaged our Board to review and update our vision, mission, and strategic priorities to reflect the collective views of our region and membership.

As you familiarize yourself with CAEP's 2020 – 2021 Strategic Plan, we want to point to some valuable context. First, both our Board and membership see advancing regional prosperity as the role and primary benefit of CAEP. Second, in a region that represents more than 40 municipalities, it is clear that there are highly varied needs to support economic development and community priorities. Third, despite these varied needs and priorities, CAEP plays a valuable role in providing expertise, building relationships, creating and sharing resources, and promoting the interests, learning, and achievements within and around of the region.

For the next year, the role of CAEP's 2020 – 2021 Strategic Plan will be to provide direction and ensure movement toward the future. An annual business plan and operating budget will detail the work that CAEP is doing to implement the Strategic Plan. Both the Strategic Plan and annual business plan will act as roadmaps for the Board and Working Committees.

Since 1998, CAEP has been a progressive, multi-interest partnership and a model for collaborative community development. We are proud to represent 33 urban and rural municipalities, one First Nation, and 21 associate members from industry, education, professional associations, and economic development organizations. We are confident that the implementation of this plan will take important steps to empower our members and continue to advance innovation sharing and activities to enhance the economic interests and prosperity of Central Alberta.



John Vandermeer  
CAEP Chair



Kimberley Worthington  
CAEP Executive Director

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## 1.0 A Picture of the Central Alberta Economic Partnership

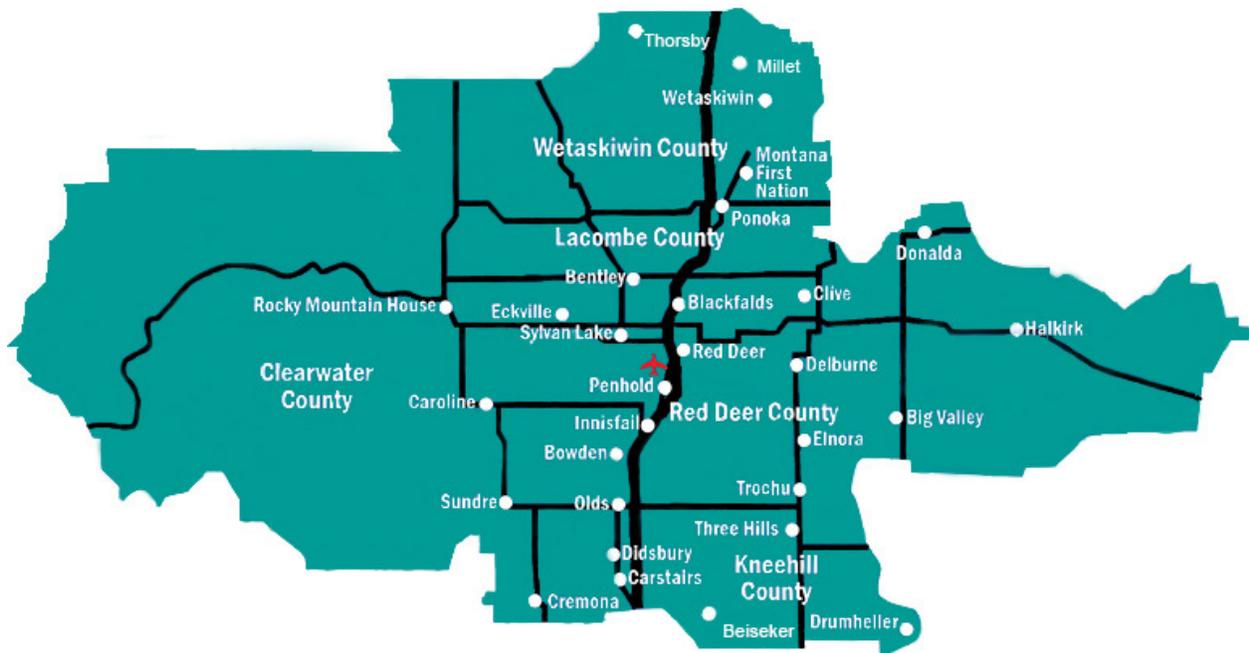
To understand the role and work of the Central Alberta Economic Partnership, it's helpful to get a sense of our region, the municipalities we support, our extensive membership, and how we operate.

### 1.1 Our Region

Central Alberta is one of the world's most attractive regions to own, operate, or invest in business. But don't just take our word for it!

We often say that our welcoming and resourceful west-central section of the province offers everything except the ocean.

Small, mid-sized, and large companies across every industry find great success and exceptional living in Central Alberta. Made up of 33 member municipalities, we offer low provincial taxes, property taxes, and fuel taxes. We provide unbeatable access to regional, national, and international markets through road, rail, and air. We have a stable regulatory environment, low cost housing, and communities that welcome, support, and rally for the success of newcomers and new opportunities.



### 1.2 Our Membership

We are proud to be one of Alberta's 9 Regional Economic Development Alliances. Founded in 1998, we have taken our place as a model for collaborative community economic development. More than this, we demonstrate the advantages of engaging diverse communities and bringing together people with diverse interests to support one another for the greater benefit of the region and province. Our Central Alberta

Economic Partnership serves a central population of nearly 311,815 people and represents urban and rural municipalities, Indian Bands, and associate members from industry, education, professional associations, and economic development organizations.

As of September 2020, the Central Alberta Economic Partnership has 33 member communities, 1 first nations community, and 21 associate members representing industry, education, professional associations, and economic development organizations.

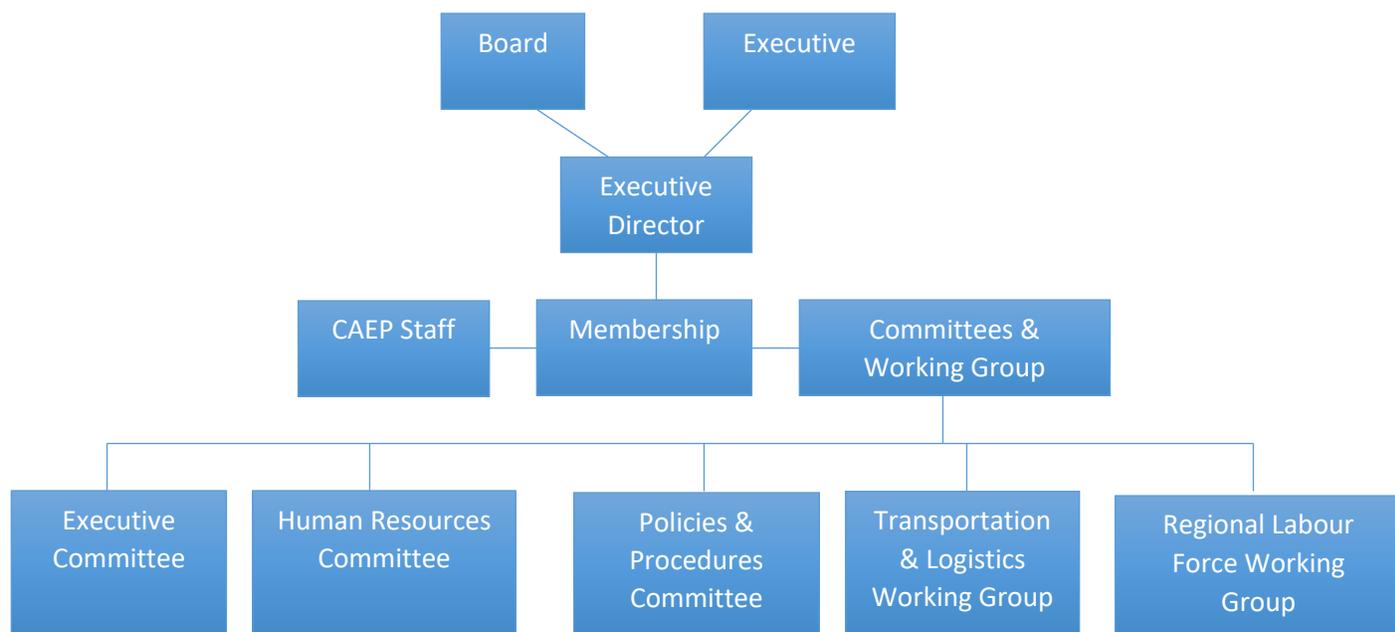
**Member Communities – September 2020**

<b>Villages</b>	<b>Towns</b>	<b>Counties</b>	<b>First Nation</b>
Village of Beiseker	Town of Bentley	Clearwater County	Montana First Nation
Village of Big Valley	Town of Blackfalds	Kneehill County	
Village of Caroline	Town of Bowden	Lacombe County	<b>Cities</b>
Village of Clive	Town of Carstairs	Red Deer County	City of Red Deer
Village of Cremona	Town of Didsbury	County of Wetaskiwin	City of Wetaskiwin
Village of Delburne	Town of Drumheller		
Village of Donalda	Town of Eckville		
Village of Elnora	Town of Innisfail		
Village of Halkirk	Town of Olds		
	Town of Millet		
	Town of Penhold		
	Town of Rocky Mountain House		
	Town of Sundre		
	Town of Sylvan Lake		
	Town of Thorsby		
	Town of Three Hills		
	Town of Trochu		

<b>Professional Association</b>	<b>Economic Development Organization</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Education</b>
Building Industry and Land Development Association – Central Alberta	Alberta Global Talent	Chandos	Burman University
Central Alberta Realtors Association	Business Development Bank of Canada	EQUS	Campus Central Alberta
	Central Alberta Access Prosperity	Gemini Fabrication	NorQuest College
	Community Futures – Central Alberta	Lawson Consulting	Olds College
	Joint Economic Development Initiative (JEDI)	Manpower	Red Deer College
	Leduc Regional Chamber of Commerce	MNP	
	Olds Institute for Community and Regional Development	Red Deer Regional Airport	
	Red Deer Chamber of Commerce	RSM	
		Stantec	

### 1.3 Our Organizational Structure

The Central Alberta Economic Partnership is a Board-governed and managed partnership. We deliver our mission, strategic areas of focus, and annual business plan through our Executive Director, contracted administrative support, and three committees and two working groups. The committees and working group are comprised of Board Directors and member and associate member representatives, including economic development professionals.



Our Board of Directors includes 15 representatives. These Directors are elected annually by voting members during the annual Fall General Meeting. Directors serve three-year terms. They reflect the make-up of our membership, including municipal, business, and associate organization representatives, and work together to guide and oversee the Partnership’s strategic direction and operations.

Our Board’s Executive is comprised of four of the 15 Directors – Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and Director-at-large. Members of the Board are also appointed to Chair the three committees and two working groups. The Committees and Working Group were created to align with earlier Board priorities; the Board establishes adhoc and standing committees in response to the needs and priorities of the region.

## 2.0 Our Commitment

### 2.1 Where We Are Going

Through this plan we commit to enable our members, associate membership, and our stakeholders – the communities, organizations, and people who make up Central Alberta.

To do this, we have renewed our vision for our Central Alberta Economic Partnership.



Our vision is a future-oriented view of the contributions that we are confident that we can make to our members and our region. Every area of focus that we identify and every action we take will be designed to move us toward our vision.

## 2.2 What Do We Do

Through this plan we commit to aligning our areas of focus and work to ensure that they continue to move our region and member communities toward our vision.

To do this, we have renewed our mission for our Central Alberta Economic Partnership.



Our mission guides what we do as a partnership. It directs the investments we make and the opportunities that we create, accept, and nurture. We believe in our communities and, as a partnership, are well-positioned through our areas of focus to ensure that we are equipped and enabled to effectively and efficiently identify, encourage, act on, and support economic development opportunities. We also believe that by empowering our communities, we are all empowered to work together and contribute in the best way to furthering innovation and prosperity for our region.

## 2.3 How We Work

Underlying everything we do is a steadfast commitment to achieving through strong values. Quite simply, our values guide our actions.

As a Partnership, we choose to:

- Put communities first.
- Provide leadership
- Act with integrity
- Conduct business in an open and inclusive matter.

## 3.0 Our Approach

- Membership Engagement: Survey and Planning Exchanges
- Committee Engagement: Planning Exchanges



### *3.1 The Role of Our Strategic Plan*

Our Strategic Plan was developed by the Central Alberta Economic Partnership's Board of Directors, with planning and logistical support from our Executive Director and administrative team.

Previously, we developed an annual set of key areas of focus and corresponding operational priorities. As part of aligning with the Government of Alberta's approach to supporting and funding the 9 Regional Economic Development Associations across the province, we are adopting a four-year strategic plan. Our plan will be reviewed and updated on annual basis. The four-year outlook will support longer-term planning and ongoing evaluation, as well as allow for adaptive operational strategies to make progress in our key areas of focus.

On an annual basis, our strategic plan will help to define our Business Plan and budget. Our Business Plan and budget will detail the work that we will deliver to implement the four-year Strategic Plan. Our Executive Director develops the Business Plan and budget, and then presents it to the Board Chair. Our Board Chair, with the support and endorsement of our Executive Committee, takes the Business Plan and budget to the Board of Directors for consideration, input, and approval.

### *3.2 Developing Our 2016 – 2019 Strategic Plan*

In November 2015, our Executive Director reached out to our membership through an online survey to understand how they value the work of our partnership, what they are seeking from a regional economic development partnership, and the top challenges they face within their communities.

The information collected through the survey summarized in Appendix A, was supplemented by input collected from the Partnership's Regional Labour Force Working Group and a group of the committee representatives during January 2016 planning exchanges. The Working Group and committee representatives were asked to contribute strategic considerations for the Board. This input is summarized in Appendix B.

Our Board of Directors were presented a report summarizing the survey and planning exchange information. This report was foundational to informing the development of this Plan. The content for the plan, including renewing the vision and mission and identifying the key areas of focus, was developed by the Board as part of a strategic planning session in February 2016.

## **4.0 Our Areas of Focus**

When we take a close look at the needs of our members and our strengths and capabilities as a Partnership, we believe that we are bested positioned to empower Central Alberta communities by:

### *4.1 Influential Relationships*

We are catalysts for collaborative, community-minded relationships focused on advancing sustainable, regional development.

- We seek out and nurture relationships with municipalities, institutions, business, associations, and individuals with a passion for and commitment to economic development.

- We foster relationships around the values of our organization and in the interest of delivering our mission and working toward our vision.
- We create networking opportunities that cultivate connections and enable collaboration between municipalities, institutions, associations, and businesses.

#### *4.2 Knowledge-sharing and Resources*

We create, share, and foster knowledge-sharing and the use of economic development tools to ensure communities are enabled and supported to advance innovative practices and prosperity.

- We engage thought leaders to share their knowledge, experience, and stories with our members.
- We foster a community of practice for economic development professionals to engage and learn from one another.
- We work with Alberta's community of Regional Economic Development Alliances to identify, test, and adopt effective tools, technologies, and practices that support economic development.
- We deliver a Community Economic Indicators Report and a Community Investment Readiness evaluation process to strengthen Central Alberta communities' economic development opportunities.

#### *4.3 Capacity Building*

We create learning and training opportunities, lead research, and identify regional trends that enable communities, including their economic development professionals, to identify, pursue, and achieve economic development opportunities.

- We develop, identify, and deliver training opportunities, with a focus on business attraction, retention, and expansion, as well as succession planning.
- We coordinate research that has the potential to inform and enable our communities to identify and pursue economic development opportunities.
- We create opportunities to identify regional trends and challenges to inform decision-making.

#### *4.4 Reflecting Regional Interests*

We work to understand and reflect the collective and unique interests of our region and communities, sharing, promoting, and actively representing our opportunities, successes, and desired outcomes.

- We share a common purpose and work together to accurately and actively position our region for its strengths, merits, and opportunities.
- We are the go-to source and authority for information and advice, to share challenges, successes, and best practices, and to work in pursuit of innovative and rewarding opportunities.
- We are an active conduit to share and showcase opportunities, innovation, and achievements between all levels of government, institutions, businesses, and professional associations
- We are a regional voice and actively reflect and advocate for the interests of our region with provincial and federal representatives and decision-makers.

## Appendix A: An overview of the Survey Results from community membership

### Question one:

40 unique CAEP members ranked 10 areas of focus in order of priority (with the option to contribute “other” content to supplement the 10 areas). The results indicate fairly diverse interest across the 10 areas.

Broadband	Commercial land mapping/listing program	Community statistics	Community well-being indicators	Economic development training	Howe's Pass	Investment opportunity notification	Labour attraction and retention	Regional business retention and expansion	Tourism
9	8	5	7	6	0	2	3	1	4
0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	2
9	6	7	8	5	10	4	3	1	2
7	6	5	8	9	10	3	2	1	4
9	6	5	10	7	8	4	2	1	3
9	7	8	5	4	10	3	2	1	6
2	6	7	8	10	9	3	5	4	1
1	5	4	2	9	10	7	3	8	6
8	3	2	6	7	10	4	9	1	5
10	5	7	6	8	9	2	4	1	3
8	3	4	7	2	10	1	6	5	9
1	5	0	0	0	0	4	2	3	6
4	6	7	8	10	9	1	2	3	5
0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	2
10	1	5	6	2	7	4	9	8	3
2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
6	8	9	7	3	10	1	5	4	2
1	8	5	6	7	10	9	2	4	3
4	8	7	1	2	10	5	9	3	6
1	8	7	9	10	3	2	5	6	4
7	9	8	3	4	1	10	6	5	3
1	7	8	9	6	10	2	3	5	4
4	2	7	8	9	10	1	5	3	6
1	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	4	5
6	8	7	9	2	10	1	5	3	4
9	5	1	6	7	8	3	0	4	2
0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	4	7	8	9	2	1	6	10	5
2	3	5	1	0	0	4	0	6	7
10	5	7	6	8	9	4	3	1	2
0	2	3	0	5	1	7	4	8	6
9	1	4	5	6	10	2	8	3	7
2	9	3	4	7	6	8	10	5	1
3	4	7	8	9	10	1	6	2	5
11	4	5	6	7	9	1	10	8	2
2	5	4	6	7	3	8	9	10	1
8	5	6	9	7	10	1	3	4	2
0	0	0	5	6	0	3	4	1	2
10	5	3	6	2	9	4	8	7	1
7	6	4	3	5	10	2	8	1	9
0	6	0	1	0	0	3	2	5	4
5	10	7	9	4	3	1	6	2	8
4	5	7	8	6	9	3	10	1	2

### Noteworthy is:

- Regional Business Retention and Expansion was the most frequently #1 ranked area of focus with 13 of 40 (32.5 per cent) first place rankings.
- Investment Opportunity Notification was most frequently cited top three rankings with 27 (67.5 per cent) of 40 instances of being identified as a first, second, or third ranking.
- Tourism was not far behind with 20 of 40 (50 per cent) instances appearing in the top three rankings.
- Broadband and Howe’s Pass had high levels of variance. They were frequently ranked as either a top (#1) area of focus or a low (#7 or lower, and frequently #10) area of focus.
- The Economic Development Training and Labour and Development Attraction and Retention also had the highest variance in rankings. They were, at times, ranked a second or third area of focus but also often as a bottom three. Neither area received a first place ranking.

- The middle of the pack – very frequently ranked between four and eight – was dominated by information areas - Community Well-being Indicators, Community Statistics, and Commercial Land Mapping/List Program.

*Question two:*

Survey respondents were asked to provide input on where CAEP adds the most value. There were three dominant themes within the data.

1. Generating meaningful information that accurately reflects the region and helps members to understand regional challenges, opportunities, and strengths.

Within this theme, the valued deliverables are statistics, market indicators, and labour indicators.

2. Identifying, profiling, and building support around the most beneficial business opportunities in Central Alberta.

Within this theme, the valued deliverables are facilitating and supporting connections in the area, working with connections to understand the opportunities (with a strong emphasis on investment opportunities), and promoting the region.

3. Working on behalf of the region to advance specific interests.

Within this theme, the valued deliverables are working on behalf of the region to advance economic interests (e.g. rural broadband, connections through the GIS ZOOM Prospector) and advocating on behalf of the region's interests to all levels of government.

*Question three:*

Survey respondents were asked to provide input on the top three challenges they face as communities. There were three dominant themes within the data.

(See Appendix B: Raw data – Top Three Challenges)

1. Funding

Costs/funding came up across the board, whether it was for promotion, advocacy, investments in tools (e.g. rural broadband), or training.

2. Access to expertise, specialized resources, and training

While there is an importance placed on advancing community interests, there was significant input that highlighted communities' feeling that they lack knowledge, expertise, and competencies/capabilities to effectively plan, market, and advocate on their own behalf.

3. Gaining support and "buy-in" from other communities and government

There is a connection between gaining support and "buy-in" and the earlier two themes. It was

noted that funding and access are barriers to effectively building relationships, gaining access to the right influencers and decision-makers, and building strong enough support to move ahead community interests. Despite the importance of these connections, gaining support and “buy –in” still stood out unto itself.

## Appendix B: Planning Exchange input to the Board of Directors

In reviewing planning exchange reports from the Regional Labour Force Working Group (January 7, 2016) and a group of the committee representatives (January 8, 2016), there were four themes to consider during the Board of Director's strategic planning conversation on February 3:

1. Focus

Participants feel the focus of CAEP is too broad for it to be a high-impact and effective entity. Participants want a clear idea of what impact CAEP can make and what it can focus on and do to make that impact.
2. Resourcing

In alignment with focus, participants noted that CAEP's breadth of focus requires it to spread its resources too thinly. There are limits to funding, staff time, and member involvement, and it is important to the participants that CAEP is clear on its role, priorities, and how to most effectively fund its activities to make a difference to its membership.
3. Identity and clarity of purpose

The most frequently referenced theme from participants related to CAEP's identity. They want CAEP to be a known, valued, and leading entity. Participants want to be able to be explicit about who CAEP is, who its target audiences are, what work it does, and how it makes a difference to its membership. Participants want to be able to build its name recognition, brand identity, market position, and profile.
4. Communications

Closely linked to identity is communication. If CAEP is able to enhance its identity then it is in a position where it can step into effectively communicating on behalf of, marketing, promoting, and telling the stories of its membership. It will be able to invest in tools and practices that move forward the work of CAEP, as well as ensure ongoing and effective communications between its membership and with its key audiences.