

# Business Vitality Initiative (BVI)

## Phase Two Focus and Action Report Olds, Alberta

October 2011



Town of Olds



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## The Business Vitality Initiative

The Business Vitality Initiative (BVI) helps communities to assess their capacity to work with and support entrepreneurs, and to foster small business growth. The BVI measures the perceptions of community leaders, business people and citizens about the current business environment in their community and compares the results to an average of other communities to determine possible short and long-term actions the community can undertake to improve its business friendliness.

The Olds BVI was initiated by a partnership between the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and CIEL. The Rural Community Adaptation Program (RCAP) of Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development (ARD) funded it. The community sponsors were the Town of Olds and the Olds Institute for Community & Regional Development, which selected the participants. The local project coordinators have been Gail Scott, the Community Economic Development Officer for Olds, and Mitch Thomson of the Business Retention & Expansion Committee.

Olds is the twenty-sixth community in Canada to take part in the BVI, in addition to five communities in Australia.

### Olds Phase 1 Assessment Results

On April 14, 2011, 29 people attended the BVI session held at the Bell e-Learning Centre at Olds College where a questionnaire and focus groups assessed the community's small business resources and potential. CIEL wrote a 70-page report on that session.

In that Assessment Session, participants were asked to give three words to describe their community. The majority of responses were positive. According to many respondents, Olds is a *progressive, busy, and friendly* community. When participants were asked to identify key strengths not used to potential in the community, the top responses were *natural areas, location, and Olds College*.

When participants were asked to name their predicted top economic drivers for the community in the next five years, the most common responses were *oil and gas, fibre optic network, and agriculture*. When asked about untapped business opportunities in the community, *quality internet, value-added agriculture, and central location* were the top three responses.

When asked for suggestions on how to improve Olds, the top response were *hospitality and conference facility, local business networking, and affordable housing*.

More detail can be found in the Olds *Phase 1 Assessment Report*.

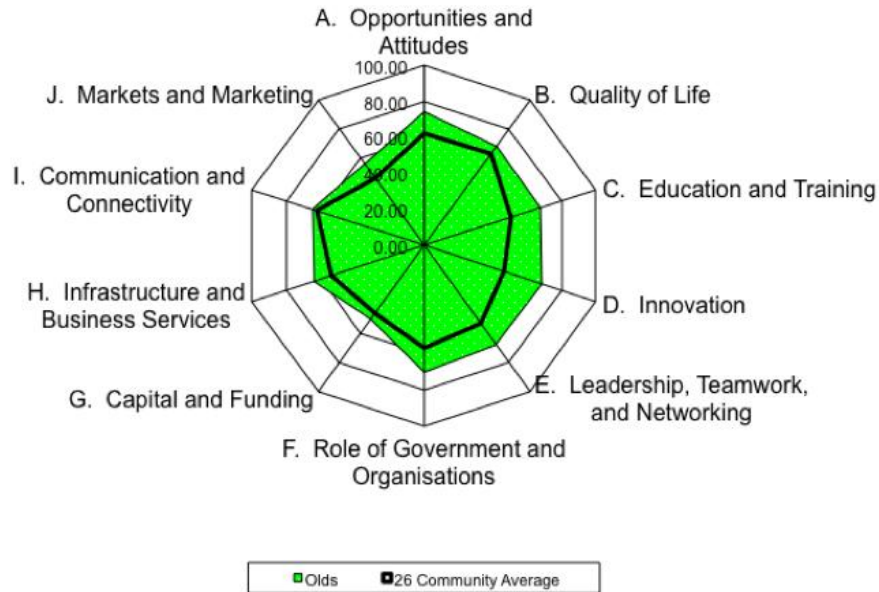
## Phase 1 Section Scores

From highest to lowest, section scores reported in the *Phase 1 Assessment Report* were as follows:

Section	Score out of 100
A. Opportunities & Attitudes	74
I. Communication & Connectivity	70
C. Education and Training	69
E. Leadership, Teamwork, Networking	68
B. Quality of Life	68
F. Role of Government & Organizations	68
H. Infrastructure & Business Services	65
D. Innovation	64
G. Capital & Funding	56
J. Markets & Marketing	50

Overall, Olds had a full survey score of **66 out of 100**. The average for the 26 communities that have undertaken the BVI is 54.

The radial graph below contrasts the Olds section scores with the average score for other communities that have done the BVI in Canada. The closer the shaded section is to the outside ring, the higher the Olds score, and the greater the business friendliness.



## Olds Phase 2 Results

The Phase 2, or *Focus and Action Session*, held on October 5, 2011, was open to the entire community with the purpose of setting priorities for improvement and jump-starting the community to action. See Appendix 1 for an attendance list.

During that session, the assessment scores and other results, as described in the *Phase 1 Assessment Report* and summarized above, were presented.

The participants were then given a series of possible courses of action. CIEL had derived these from focus groups and questionnaire responses from the Assessment Session in April. The group on October 5 was invited to add further suggestions to that list.

Those suggested courses of action were placed on the wall and participants voted on them, each person placing a sticker on his or her top 5 priorities. The point was to identify the suggestions that had the most support in the room.

## Possible Short Term Actions

*Shaded items were chosen as priorities and became the subject of action groups.* **Votes**

<b>Possible Short Term Actions</b>		
<i>Shaded items were chosen as priorities and became the subject of action groups.</i>		<b>Votes</b>
<b>Capacity Building</b>	▪ Concerted effort to recruit 25-34 year olds	17
	▪ Community Futures greater presence <i>(added at the Phase 2 session)</i>	4
	▪ Buy local project (e.g. local coupons, identifying customer and business gaps, identifying and recruiting for specific labour needs, etc.)	22
	▪ MSP facilitators to help move economic pieces of MSP forward <i>(added at the Phase 2 session)</i>	5
	▪ Enhancement of New Resident Welcoming Program <i>(added at the Phase 2 session)</i>	0
<b>Marketing</b>	▪ A uniting cultural event(s) that builds networks and markets in community/region – e.g. farmers' markets	18
	▪ Promote list of business opportunities	16
	▪ Review of branding <i>(removed from the list at the Phase 2 session because this initiative is already happening.)</i>	n/a
	▪ What's happening business communication project— explore better ways to improve business to business and community to business communication. The initiative should look at opportunities, education, F/T Chamber storefront, formal and informal means, etc.	8
<b>Networking</b>	▪ Business welcoming program <i>(removed from the list at Phase 2 session because it is already happening)</i>	n/a
	▪ Business succession strategy involving mentorship, education.	7
	▪ Strategy and implementation around ensuring Fibre to the Premises ensures a truly connected community <i>(removed from the list at Phase 2 session because it is already happening)</i>	n/a
<b>Research, Admin, &amp; Planning</b>	▪ Explore bus and public transit options <i>(added at Phase 2 session)</i>	11
	▪ Assess tourism amenities and capacity	10
	▪ Pre-feasibility study of conference facilities and/or opportunities <i>(removed from the list at Phase 2 session because it is already happening)</i>	n/a

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review town business processes with joint business/government team to ensure business friendly processes</li> </ul>	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore affordable and coop housing opportunities</li> </ul>	13

## Short Term Actions and Action Group Summaries

Following the priority setting exercise, BVI participants formed three discussion groups in order to assess the viability of the three courses of action that achieved the most votes. Participants joined the group for the action that most personally motivated them.

Reality Check	
1. Buy Local Project	
<b>Action Group Members:</b> Leon Durand, Mitch Thomson, Candace Klimek, Kelly Eskeland, Wilson Loree, Lance Douglas, Larry Wright	
Question	Answer
<b>Result</b> —Describe what the successful action might look like.	
<b>Purpose</b> – What is the main goal of this action?	We want people to buy local and support the businesses in town. To promote locally including social networking.
<b>Commitment</b> – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	Yes
<b>Leadership</b> – Who has the skills to lead (organizations, individuals)? Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn't in the room right now?	Chamber of Commerce, Uptowne Olds, Students unions, Mothers groups, Connected Community, Olds App, Town of Olds, Ag Society, Olds Institute
<b>Time Frame</b> – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	Continuous program
<b>Finances/ Resources</b> – What, if any, financial resources do we need	Financing needed for an Olds App. Start-up and ongoing support with BRE

to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	management and info, using Bizpal, cloud with Olds Fibre.
<b>Your recommendation</b>	Take action
<b>Next Steps</b>	

## Reality Check

### 2. A Uniting Event

**Action Group Members:** Debbie Bennett, Brian Bull, Erica Sweetman, Gail McDonald, Caitlin Klimek, Pat Ingram, Bev Toews, Kathy Doyle (maybe), Sean Carter

Question	Answer
<b>Result</b> —Describe what the successful action might look like.	Well attended, intergenerational, memorable, team building
<b>Purpose</b> – What is the main goal of this action?	Build on Multi-cultural, Heritage Days. Build on local food, entertainment. Folkarama – Aug. 4th Feasibility study for public market.
<b>Commitment</b> – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	Welcoming Communities, Ag Society, schools, vendors, multi-faceted, Uptowne Olds, Chamber, media approach
<b>Leadership</b> – Who has the skills to lead (organizations, individuals)? Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn't in the room right now?	Uptowne Olds, Chamber, Ad Society, Welcoming Communities, Town Council, Art Society, service groups, Olds Institute and its committees, Wellspring, schools
<b>Time Frame</b> – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	Second week of August 2012?
<b>Finances/ Resources</b> – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	Unknown until a plan is developed.
<b>Your recommendation</b>	Get more information before starting.
<b>Next Steps</b>	

## Reality Check

### 3. Attract 25-34 year olds

**Action Group Members:** Kristin Allan, Caroline Bodmer, Harvey Walsh, Paul Gustafson, Norm McInnis, Karol Jorgensen

Question	Answer
<b>Result</b> —Describe what the successful action might look like.	
<b>Purpose</b> – What is the main goal of this action?	Retain youth in Olds, provide atmosphere that attracts this age demographic. *Build awareness of business opportunities, to communities outside Olds.
<b>Commitment</b> – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	We need to share what we have. We need to “like” Olds ourselves so we can attract others.
<b>Leadership</b> – Who has the skills to lead (organizations, individuals)? Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn’t in the room right now?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Marketing to people who grew up here.</li> <li>2. Marketing to people outside Olds</li> <li>3. Grow our present youth</li> </ol>
<b>Time Frame</b> – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	Long time frame, ongoing.
<b>Finances/ Resources</b> – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	Marketing and communications costs
<b>Your recommendation</b>	
<b>Next Steps</b>	

## Next Steps

The most important element of successfully completing an action is the presence of strong community leadership and energy. The community must identify human resources to champion and lead each action. The facilitator asked that those in attendance identify working group members. The Community Sponsors will also continue to work with the working groups in order to follow through on the identified courses of action. Most working groups made a commitment at the meeting to schedule and attend a follow-up meeting.

## Long-Term Actions

The following long-term actions were proposed for Olds in the *Phase 1 Assessment Report*. Long-term actions are not normally voted on in the Focus and Action session.

Possible Long Term Actions (actions taking more than 12 months to complete)	
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cultural event strategy working with Didsbury, Sundre, etc.</li> <li>▪ Create and promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship possibly starting with a conference</li> <li>▪ Buy local program</li> <li>▪ Research local lending/equity fund (e.g. local coop, investors club, etc.)</li> </ul>
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Uptown beautification program including theme</li> <li>▪ Rebrand using strengths identified through BVI and other processes (FTTP, entrepreneurial nature of community (BVI Poster Child), etc.)</li> </ul>
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Business succession plan</li> <li>▪ Explore SME incubator in conjunction with CIRE</li> <li>▪ Business peer mentorship breakfast program</li> </ul>
Research, Admin. and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tourism development plan and yearly evaluation</li> <li>▪ Explore small bus and transportation routes and options</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Exploration of eco-industrial park</li><li>▪ Feasibility study of conference facilities and/or opportunities</li><li>▪ Affordable and coop housing plan</li></ul>
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## Appendix 1: Attendance List

Debbie Bennett  
Paul Gustafson  
Wilson Loree  
Natalie Gibson  
Mark Fournier  
Brian Bull  
Barbara Hill  
Candice Klimek  
Caitlin Klimek  
Jim Prizeman  
Rita Thompson  
Erica Sweetman  
Mitch Thomson  
Kristin Allan  
Pat Ingram

Leon Durand  
Roxanne Latour  
Gail McDonald  
Karol Jorgensen  
Sean Carter  
Kathy Doyle  
Terry Steward  
Barb Babiak  
Hugh Bodmer  
Caroline Bodmer  
Lance Douglas  
Harvey Walsh  
Norm McInnis  
Bev Toews  
Larry Wright  
Kelly Eskeland

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## **Appendix 2: Examples of How BVI Communities Have Taken Action**

### *Community 1*

- Marketing Coordinator for the whole valley (to find emphasis/strengths, facilitate cooperation & networking)
- Make community “Horticultural Centre of B.C.”
- Clean up and develop the downtown area and community core
- “Buy Local” program
- Develop recreational potential (facilities, bike paths)

### *Community 2*

- Formation of a community business group to look at possibilities
- Use community watershed story to create a community “brand”. (Market the story)
- Renovate community hall(s)
- Plan around ideal set-up of community art(isan’s) gallery
- Accommodation and camping facility development

### *Community 3*

- Local economic development organization to offer more business courses in the area around needs of community business
- Opportunity identification session with young people (under 40)
- Customer service training

### *Community 4*

- Create community foundation
- Increase cooperation between business, government, and citizens by working together on a project
- Opportunity Identification Sessions (one for youth and one for broader community)
- Buy local campaign or program

### *Community 5*

- Buy local campaign
- Networking sessions more regularly among community groups and businesses
- “Did you know” citizen ambassador program
- Joint marketing session – best practices - with Chamber as catalyst

### *Community 6*

- Improve cooperation and communication between stakeholders (business, council, residents)
- Promote tourism and cultural assets
- Buy local program

### *Community 7*

- Joint marketing of products and services by business
- Education of community on benefits of new business
- Develop community brand / market the community
- Build community spirit through festivals / projects

### *Community 8*

- Draft some short-term tourism actions & striking a tourism action group specifically around addressing high quality recreational opportunities
- Develop strategy to attract more capital / possibility of cooperative financing for services community identifies as needing / community identifies potential sources of equity in the community/ Meetings between area lenders and businesses to raise awareness of lending options
- Improve telecommunications / develop telecommunications plan (look at cooperative structure for bringing in high speed (fibre optics))
- Develop brand around beauty / work ethic / independent attitude / creativity / seclusion ('find us if you can' where arts & a pioneer spirit meet the mountains)
- Coordinated or cooperative marketing effort for local products or services (i.e. tourism operators, artisans)

### *Community 9*

- Use landfill/methane/waste management as a catalyst for innovation, education & economic development
- Increase presence of night policing
- Work on a beautification/pride project that increases cooperation among business, residents and government
- Create volunteer attraction/retention/recognition and leadership identification program for community to combat burnout
- Improve customer service (training for front-line employees)

### *Community 10*

- Improve the image of the town by revitalizing main areas and entrances starting with beautification and cleanliness.
- Develop a regional event to promote and unify the town.
- Buy local program.

### *Community 11*

- Review and revise promotional strategy and identify local attractions, to increase tourism and population growth.
- Beautify main street (including public toilet improvements), to make the main town centre more attractive to visitors, travellers, and the community.
- Form a committee to consult with major industries to assess what those industries require of the community.

### *Community 12*

- Develop a youth retention and engagement strategy to give youth a reason to return to the community.
- Targeted outreach marketing strategy to attract more people.
- Make the community a commercial hub for the arts, including a dual/multi facility for historical arts precinct and museum and a working space for artists and craftspeople.
- Buy local campaign.

### *Community 13*

- Develop a loyalty shopping program to give consumers a reason and incentive to shop locally.
- Improve town entrance, to encourage highway travellers to visit the community and to create a pride in the town by local residents.
- Develop a marketing package to attract new residents and businesses.
- Revive “heritage river” and “gateway” concepts and provide recreation to the town i.e. fishing, camping, swimming, to get people talking about the town.

### *Community 14*

- Buy local program
- Develop festivals and events, e.g. Italian festival, power boat competition

- Improve streetscape and capital works including parking/roundabout and bridge treatment.

### **Appendix 3: About CIEL**

The Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership (CIEL) strengthens communities by helping them become more business-friendly, more culturally vibrant, and more sustainable. We also assist them in improving leadership and enhancing community involvement.

CIEL is located in Nelson, British Columbia, in a region featuring many communities that are quickly having to make transitions to survive in a fast-changing global economy.

Our early work assisted small communities in the neighbouring mountain valleys. We developed innovative assessments coupled with strategic processes that helped communities focus, leverage assets and energy and, most importantly, jumpstart action. Then our ideas attracted the attention of communities farther afield, and we began working with communities across the rest of B.C. More recently we have been invited into communities across Canada, the U.S, New Zealand and Australia.

Our Communities Matrix – a one-page tool for assessing stages of community readiness – has now been used in many countries across the globe. The Government of Canada contracted CIEL to research, develop and build a collaborative leadership program as an effective means of building capacity for rural communities in Canada.

CIEL continues to develop practical, engaging and innovative tools and processes that strengthen communities. In 2008, CIEL won the award for the region's most innovative organization from the Kootenay Association for Science & Technology.

Our network of facilitators and trainers allows us to be responsive to the needs of communities across the world. CIEL's conference presentations have inspired at the local, regional, state/province and international level. Our work has been featured on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Living Magazine and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Contact us to help build a custom solution to engage your community and move it to action.