



Centre for Innovative &
Entrepreneurial Leadership

Business Vitality Initiative (BVI)

Phase Two Focus and Action Report Rocky Mountain House, Alberta

April 2011



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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 Rocky Mountain House 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 sponsor was the Town of Rocky Mountain House, which selected the participants. The local project coordinator is Dean Schweder, the Tourism and Economic Development Coordinator for Rocky Mountain House.

Rocky Mountain House is the twenty-fifth community in Canada to take part in the BVI, in addition to five communities in Australia.

Rocky Mountain House Phase 1 Assessment Results

On February 9, 2011, 47 people attended the BVI session held at The Lou Soppitt Community Centre in Rocky Mountain House 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, Rocky Mountain House is a *beautiful, busy, and friendly* community. When participants were asked to identify key strengths not used to potential in the community, the top responses were *tourism, youth, and Main St./downtown*.

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, tourism, and forestry*. When asked about untapped business opportunities in the community, *tourism, light industry and aboriginal tourism and inclusion* were the top three responses.

When asked for suggestions on how to improve Rocky Mountain House, the top response were *community cohesion, revitalize downtown, and activities to attract tourists*.

More detail can be found in the Rocky Mountain House *Phase 1 Assessment Report*.

Phase 1 Section Scores

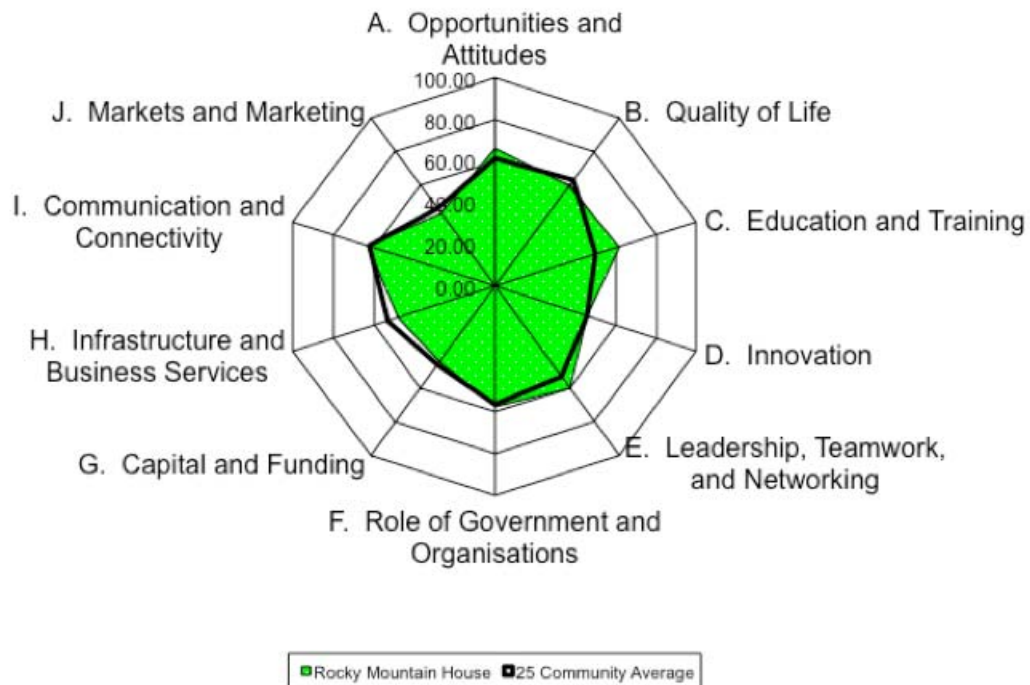
From highest to lowest, section scores reported in the *Phase 1 Assessment Report* were as follows:

Section	Score out of 100
A. Opportunities & Attitudes	66
I. Communication & Connectivity	63
C. Education and Training	62
E. Leadership, Teamwork, Networking	61
B. Quality of Life	59
F. Role of Government & Organizations	58
H. Infrastructure & Business Services	48
D. Innovation	46
G. Capital & Funding	44
J. Markets & Marketing	44

Overall, Rocky Mountain House had a full survey score of **55 out of 100**. The average for the 25 communities that have undertaken the BVI is 54.

The radial graph below contrasts the Rocky Mountain House 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 Rocky Mountain House score, and the greater the business friendliness.

Rocky Mountain House and All-Community Section Scores



Rocky Mountain House Phase 2 Results

The Phase 2, or *Focus and Action Session*, held on April 13, 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 on February 9. The group on April 13 was invited to add further suggestions to that list.

On April 13, 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 3. The point was to identify the suggestions that had the most support in the room.

Possible Short Term Actions <i>Shaded items were chosen as priorities and became the subject of action groups.</i>		Votes
Capacity Building	▪ Youth and young family opportunity identification session - e.g. youth council, etc.	1
	▪ Buy Local project (e.g. poll for consumer and business needs/wants, shopper reward program, education, etc.)	10
	▪ New technology and innovation forums (e.g. guest lecturers, profile innovative businesses, etc.)	0
	▪ Celebrate entrepreneurs through stories and awards (e.g. business, community entrepreneur/builder, innovators)	4
Marketing	▪ Downtown facelift program (e.g. start with vacant building(s))	19
	▪ Focus and improve key tourism assets (to make them excellent) <i>combined with</i>	36
	▪ Review of tourism for ensuring RMH seen as “destination” vs. a “stop”	
	▪ Research RMH brand from outsider’s perspective.	4
	▪ Uniting event(s) that builds networks and markets community – suggested ideas include dance, mosaic, parade, farmers’ markets	8
Networking	▪ Mentorship program involving successful business for new businesses, youth	13
	▪ Project to encourage more FN participation and cross cultural awareness	9
	▪ Rocky Mountain House as a centre of excellence for entrepreneurs	5
	▪ More networking events (e.g. Meet & greet BBQs, Chamber luncheon topics)	10
Research, Admin, & Planning	Business/local government committee to review existing town processes (e.g. development application processes) with view of making more client friendly, facilitating expansion streamlining, etc.	11
	▪ Review ways of getting better turnout and engagement for town planning and development processes	1
	▪ Review of public transportation options (e.g. community van, community action bus)	10
	▪ Ongoing inventory of space for business needs	1

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.

In the usual BVI process, each group would fill out a Reality Check form. This 'Reality Check' exercise determines whether the three initiatives have sufficient energy and resources to proceed. In the case of Rocky Mountain House, participants signed up for the initiatives but have not yet completed the Reality Check because they wish to take the three priorities to town council for discussion and approval.

Those who signed up as possible Action Group members are listed below with the corresponding interest area.

Reality Check	
1. Focus and Improve Tourism Assets to Ensure Rocky Mountain House is Seen as a Destination	
Action Group Members: Lynda Huseby, Leiv Scaalid, Terri Cameron, Greg Joyce, Dawn Dewbury, Gerald Klosse, Larry Cameron, Anil Walji., Doug Glessing, Brenda Klosse	
Question	Answer
Result —Describe what the successful action might look like.	
Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?	
Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	
Leadership – 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?	
Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	
Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	
Your recommendation	
Next Steps	

Reality Check

2. Downtown Facelift

Action Group Members: Bill Symko, Val Clement, Grant Anderson, Todd Becker, Donald Verhesen

Question	Answer
Result —Describe what the successful action might look like.	
Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?	
Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	
Leadership – 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?	
Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	
Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need	

to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	
Your recommendation	
Next Steps	

Reality Check

3. Business Mentorship Program

Action Group Members: Ron Caine, Millie Holmes, Jerry Pratt, Pat Alexander, Ernie Murias

Question	Answer
Result —Describe what the successful action might look like.	
Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?	
Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	
Leadership – 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?	
Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	
Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	
Your recommendation	
Next Steps	

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 Rocky Mountain House 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"> ▪ Innovation strategy (e.g. Town/County lead by example) ▪ Buy Local program ▪ Determine business training needs and the effectiveness of the marketing of those currently offered ▪ Volunteer recruitment, coordination, recognition and retention program (e.g. Beyond the same ten people)
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Downtown beautification program with revitalization strategy (e.g. trolley, access, ramps, review of hours of operation, etc.) ▪ Review of tourism themes for ensuring RMH seen as 'destination' vs. 'a stop' ▪ Research Rocky brand from outsiders perspective ▪ Create a marketing strategy to make Rocky Mountain House an inviting, exciting place to develop and grow business and industry.
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate ways to identify angel investors &/or create invest local program ▪ Strategy to build on vibrant and cultural community theme ▪ Strategy to encourage First Nation and Metis participation and cross-cultural awareness.
Research, Admin. and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research and strategy to address public transportation concerns ▪ Housing affordability best practices, models and strategy

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|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Inventory community needs with respect to business needs (types of stores, businesses – begin targeted recruitment)▪ Town to examine 4 way stops at strategic intersections▪ Determine feasibility of expanded recreation facilities (e.g. fields) and conference centre |
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Appendix 1: Attendance List

- Ernie Murias
- Val Clement
- Marlayne Sorensen
- Lynda Huseby
- Mary Huseby
- Victoria Paterson
- Todd Becker
- Larissa Gilbert
- Dawn Dewbury
- Bill Symko
- Leiv Skaalid
- Doug Glessing
- Jerry Pratt
- Dean Schweder
- Tracy Fillion
- Mike Stolte
- Millie Holmes
- Greg Joyce
- Pat Alexander
- Brenda Klosse
- Anil Walji
- Sandra Kay
- Terri Cameron
- Louise Russell
- Donald Verhesen
- Ron Caine
- Gerald Klosse
- Juli Gilles
- Jeff Gilles
- Grant Anderson
- Larry Cameron
- Bill McEnulty
- Dean Schweder
- Tracy King
- Mike Stolte

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 an organization 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.