



MEDIA RELEASE

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COMMUNITY FUTURES PARTNERSHIP Launches COVID-19 Business Viability and Strategic Business Pivoting Project:

Community Futures Yellowhead East, Community Futures Lesser Slave Lake and the North Central Business Support Network will complete a COVID-19 Business Viability and Strategic Business Pivoting Plan for our regions, thanks in part to an investment of \$61,580 from the Rural Opportunities Fund.

A major component of this project will be to provide a complete and accurate analysis of the impacts to small businesses within our regions, including employer and employee challenges and requirements. This project will explore the challenges, while uncovering the impacts of COVID-19 on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and our labour force, as well as make recommendations for business and labour force retention and recovery strategies moving forward.

Local Consulting firm Ballard group has been contracted to conduct the assessment and study in order to provide a proactive plan that will address the needs of the business community and its workforce within the context of the pandemic. The Ballard Group Team will be conducting interviews with business owners and managers and municipal leaders directly within the regions beginning in January and continuing thru March 2021.

“Whether you are a business owner, manager, employee, or work with a community organization; the effects of COVID-19 are real and have had a huge impact on our businesses, organizations and our communities . The CFYE Board, staff and partners want to better understand the depth of these challenges and what will be required moving forward into recovery.

Our world is changing rapidly, and we are all learning how to change along with it. CFYE will be a part of the future recovery of our business communities and wants to ensure we are with you every step of the way as we work toward recovery for our communities, clients and businesses, together we will face and be prepared for what is to come,” stated CFYE, Board Chair Carol Webster.

The project has been made possible by the Rural Opportunities Fund, which is supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD). Through the Rural Opportunities Fund, the Community Futures Pan West Network supports community resiliency projects and business retention initiatives, such as encouraging population growth or helping succession planning for small business owners.

Components of the project include:

- Conducting a COVID-19 Business Viability Assessment for the CFYE, CFLSL and North Central Business Support Network Regions, based on interviews with employers, employees, municipal leaders, various

other organizations throughout the regions regarding the direct impacts to business due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

- Determining immediate and future business needs and challenges, and making recommendations on short-term strategies and programs that will support businesses recovery and sustainability
- Identify long-term challenges anticipated due to COVID-19, as well as provide strategies and initiatives that will support employees and employers into the future.

Additional Project Components:

- Utilizing ReevesGibbs Coaching and Consulting to facilitate a series of free virtual workshops designed to assist SME's in Building Resilience, Create Action focused Lean Business Models, and Recruitment, Selection & Hiring processes.

This business analysis, surveys and workshops will be conducted starting January 2021 thru March 2021. To learn more about the project and how you can be part of the interview process, please contact Michelle Jones, Executive Director of Community Futures Yellowhead East at 780-706-3500 or at mjones@albertacf.com