



REGIONAL STRATEGY

VOLUME 1

JULY 14, 2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The reform of local governance in New Brunswick, as set out in the Regional Services Delivery Act (RSDA) and accompanying regulations, introduces significant changes redefining the role and responsibilities of Regional Services Commissions (RSCs). Ten years after the creation of the RSCs, six new mandates have been assigned to them, in addition to the two original mandatory services and regional collaborative responsibilities:

INITIAL SERVICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- › Local land use planning
- › Solid waste management
- › Regional planning
- › Police cooperation
- › Emergency planning
- › Regional infrastructure planning for recreation, culture and sports, and the sharing of infrastructure costs.

NEW SERVICES

- › Community development
- › Economic development
- › Tourism
- › Sports, recreational and cultural infrastructure
- › Public safety
- › Regional transportation

Required by the Department of Environment and Local Government, each RSC had to present a regional strategy for the delivery of new pillar services. Produced under the direction of Stantec inc. and Consultation Gagnon Strategix inc. this regional strategy aims to identify the strengths and gaps in service delivery in the region, and to establish priorities and actions, primarily with regard to the new mandates. The document constitutes a frame of reference for the RSC Board of Directors and senior management for the next five years.

The regional strategy was developed in three main stages.

First, a situational analysis and assessment familiarized us with the organization's key issues, and enabled us to understand the trends and problems of recent years. Second, an extensive consultation strategy was carried out with stakeholders, including the Board of Directors, department directors, the management team, municipal Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), community groups, the general public and First Nations. Third, on the basis of the previous steps, the regional strategy was developed and validated.

Discussions with stakeholders and the evaluation of inputs led to an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each of the new services. These are the foundations of the Western Valley Regional Services Commission's (WVRSC) vision to lead collaborative service Delivery and foster regional dialogue and community engagement. WVRSC's mission is to be **the trusted hub for regional collaboration, community engagement and shared service delivery**. It shares the values of honesty, ethical, compassion, creativity, open mind and reputation. The regional strategy unfolds in a set of statements and solutions for each of the services, initial and proposed, to guide the WVRSC management team in the development of an implementation plan.

NEXT STEPS

This document will be followed by volume two (2), which will include the Implementation Plan for the CEO, the performance measures, the accountability framework and the detailed material from our consultations. Following adoption of the regional strategy by the RSC Board as provided for in the Act, the ministries involved will provide their comments and validate the strategies for the various pillars. These comments will be taken into consideration to provide added value to the implementation plan identified above. The RSC will also develop a communications strategy.

FOREWORD

Based on the scope of its geography and population, New Brunswick is comprised of many regions. As a result, the province is fragmented, and levels of services vary widely in both local and regional communities.

With a view to improving regional collaboration, Regional Service Commissions (RSCs) were created in 2012 to offer common services and enhance cross-region collaboration. Initially, the RSCs provided solid waste management, regional land-use planning and building inspection services. Despite establishing the RSCs, the regions of New Brunswick still face major challenges in terms of urban sprawl, ribbon development, protection of natural resources and climate change. Moreover, social issues, such as access to housing, immigration, employment, community support and public safety have been organized independently, according to a regional territory-based rationale.

Against this backdrop, a major reform of local governance was launched in January 2021. The Working together for vibrant and sustainable communities initiative aims to improve the governance structure of Regional Service Commissions to modernize the former regional management system. The purpose of the reform process is to ensure better coordination and collaboration between the regions of the province through a more effective and sustainable system, as a result contributing to improving the quality of life of New Brunswickers. While this reform involves reviewing the administrative boundaries of local territorial units, its primary purpose is to expand the role and mandate of the Regional Service Commissions by entrusting them with regional leadership in the following areas: economic development, tourism promotion, recreational infrastructure cost-sharing, community development, regional/community transportation and public safety.

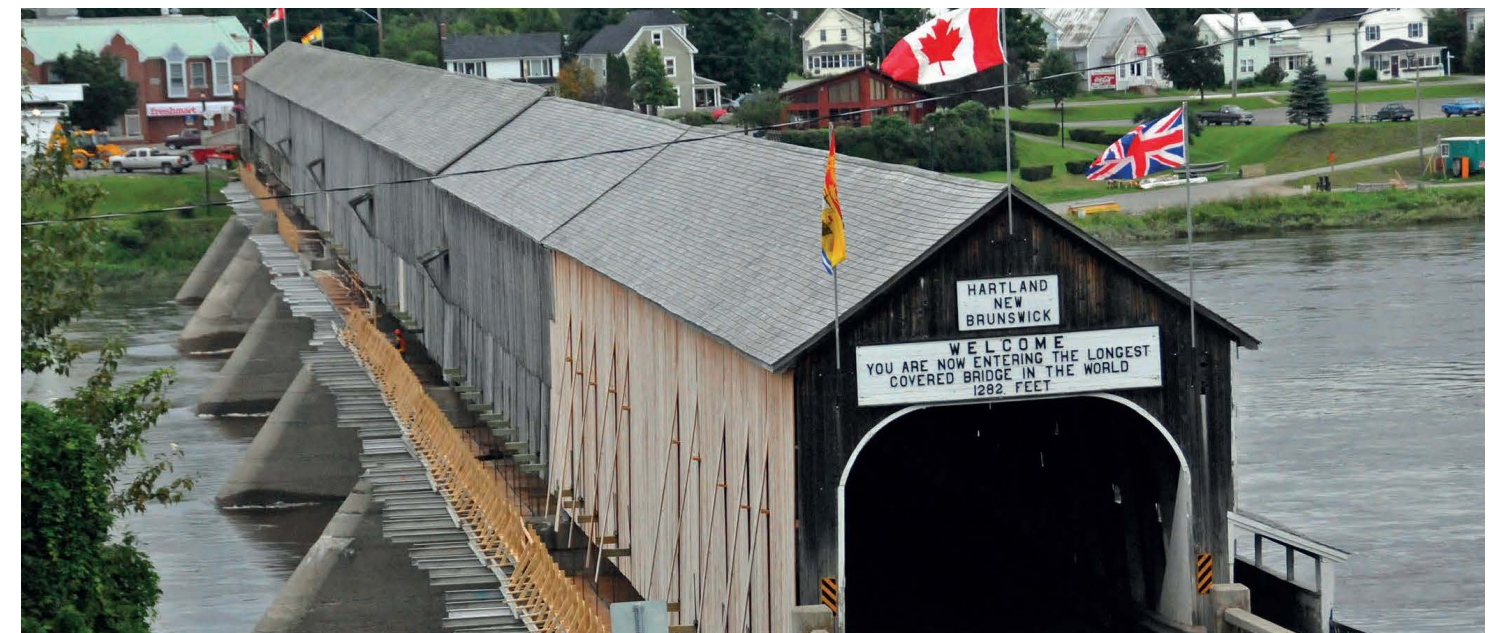
In this capacity, the RSCs are required to develop a comprehensive regional strategy to identify strengths and shortcomings in service provision, in this instance, in the Western Valley and establish priorities and actions regarding the additional functions mandated, to provide direction to the RSCs' Board of Directors for the next five years. Such a strategy was to be approved by the Board of each RSC no later than July 1st, 2023, with some minor flexibility in the approval date, provided an RSC had undertaken or engaged in the planning process. The RSCs' regional strategy provides a key opportunity for local governments and the rural district of each region to work closely with stakeholders on regional priorities regarding the RSCs' mandated services.

For RSCs to chart the course forward in the delivery of these new services that complement the existing services, strategic, focused, meaningful and timely engagement involving a roster of stakeholders is required. Moreover, given the many changes to the RSCs' organizational structure and their service delivery model, the regional strategy will need to guide the Commissions in ensuring that future services are of high quality and affordable to the public, boosting investment opportunities for economic development and tourism promotion, and helping regions attract entrepreneurs, newcomers and visitors from outside New Brunswick.

At the end of March 2023, Stantec Inc. and Gagnon Strategix Inc. were hired to help the Western Valley Regional Service Commission (WVRSC) carry out the development of its regional strategy. Together with the RSC's administrative staff, an approach based on a bottom-up consultation process including working sessions with stakeholders was put in place. In addition, each mandated service underwent a strategic evaluation to assess needs and actions to be undertaken in the short, medium and long term. Stakeholder consultation also included reaching out to the local First Nations at the onset of the project.

These first stages in the process supported the WVRSC in the development of a vision statement, regional objectives and potential solutions. An implementation plan, including performance objectives and an accountability framework follow in a separate document. The approach used to develop the objectives was based on the SMART objectives assessment process, which is a statement of measure describing the process required to achieve objectives. The regional strategy will enable the WVRSC to meet its legal obligations under the regional strategy and ensure that it meets minimum service expectations for each new service mandated. Ultimately, the regional strategy will follow the guidelines set out by the Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform. The strategy will provide the foundations for the development of the RSCs' sector-based plans and regional plan, as defined under the Regional Service Delivery Act.

The following pages present the methodology used to develop the regional strategy and mobilize stakeholders, including the local First Nations, background information, the WVRSC's vision, mission and values, a diagnosis, and sector-based objectives with potential solutions that ultimately came into the production of the implementation plan and accountability framework for the WVRSC.



CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Following an action plan unveiled in 2011 for a new system of local governance in New Brunswick, 12 regional service commissions were created in 2013 pursuant to the Regional Service Delivery Act. Owing to the new regional governance model, communities can now work together by sharing certain services and a common vision of regional development. As such, the new entity replaced the land use planning commissions, economic development agencies (“Enterprise” networks) and solid waste commissions across the province.

As of 2020, the Working together for vibrant and sustainable communities’ initiative of the provincial Department of Local Government, including its White Paper and Green Paper brought about a new definition of the RSCs’ accountability. While the changes in this process resulted in a number of legislative amendments, a consolidation of the Regional Service Delivery Act (S.N.B. 2012, c. 37) redefined and specified the legislative framework of the 12 regional service commissions.

Section 3.1(1) defines the commissions’ mandate, which includes developing and implementing a regional strategy.

3.1(1) The mandate of a Commission is:

- a. to provide or facilitate the provision of common services to its members,
- b. to develop and implement a regional strategy,
- c. to undertake activities related to regional economic development, regional community development and regional tourism promotion,
- d. to identify sport, recreational and cultural infrastructure in the region, to apportion the costs attributable to that infrastructure among its members and to ensure the management of any resulting agreements or contracts,
- e. to establish a public safety committee to exchange information and discuss resource sharing and joint planning by its members in relation to policing services, fire protection services and emergency measures planning services, and
- f. to work with its members to facilitate administrative, financial and other service arrangements.

Subsection 3.2(1) sets out the regional strategy requirements relevant to this consulting work.

3.1(2) In addition to the mandate in subsection (1), any Commission prescribed by regulation is mandated to develop a plan for integrating and coordinating services to address homelessness, poverty and mental health and may enter into agreements with the Crown in right of the Province for that purpose.

3.2 (1) A Commission shall develop and implement a regional strategy in accordance with the regulations, which shall establish priority services and actions with respect to:

- a. regional economic development,
- b. regional community development,
- c. regional tourism promotion,
- d. regional transportation,
- e. regional infrastructure, and
- f. any other matter prescribed by regulation.

Other legislation was also updated, albeit to a lesser extent, in order to consolidate the delivery of existing services and provide a framework for new accountability.

REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

The WVRSC is in western New Brunswick and is bordered on the west by the State of Maine. Forming part of the Upper Saint John River Valley, the predominantly rural region is home to a thriving and diverse sequence of communities that follow the meandering Saint John River through rolling hills, rich farmland, and picturesque views. The region has a total population of nearly 36,000 and agricultural production is central to the region's economy, along with food processing and the forestry and value-added wood products, metal fabrication and the transportation sectors.

The WVRSC was established in 2013 and is comprised of six municipalities and two First Nation communities (Tobique First Nation and the Woodstock First Nation). Specifically, the commission includes the following entities:

- › The District of Tobique Valley
- › The Regional Community of Southern Victoria
- › The District of Carleton North
- › Hartland
- › Woodstock
- › The Municipality of Lakeland Ridges
- › The Western Valley Rural District

Following an action plan unveiled in 2011 for a new system of local governance in New Brunswick, 12 regional service commissions have been created in the province. This is a model of governance at the regional level. It was created by the province to help communities work together. They allow communities to work together by sharing certain services and a common vision for regional development.

The 2023 Board of Directors for the Western Valley:

- › Andrew Harvey - Mayor, District of Carleton North
- › Cindy McLaughlin - Mayor, Regional Municipality of Southern Victoria
- › Lynn Hambrook - Representative for Western Valley Rural District
- › Tanya Cloutier - Mayor, Municipality of Lakeland Ridges
- › Tom Eagles - Mayor, Tobique Valley
- › Tracey DeMerchant - Mayor, Hartland
- › Trina Jones - Mayor, Woodstock

+36 000
RESIDENTS

6
MUNICIPALITIES AND RURAL
COMMUNITIES

2
FIRST NATIONS
COMMUNITIES

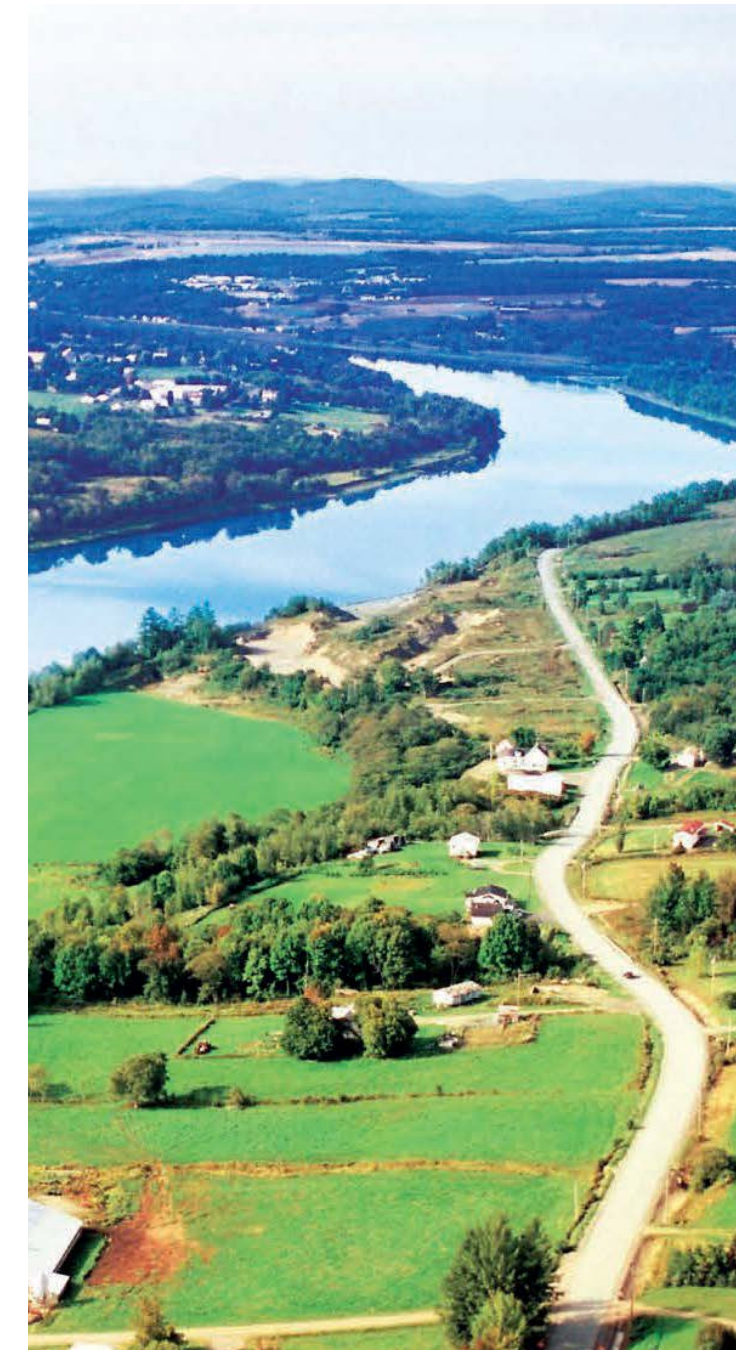
WESTERN VALLEY REGION KEY ASSETS

The presence of the Meduxnekeag river, Tobique river, Saint John Rivers and multiple waterways, as well as wide-open natural spaces, along with the proximity to regional trail networks and destinations such as the Mactaquac and Mount Carleton Provincial Parks, make outdoor recreation adventures and the natural environment significant and very attractive characteristics of the WVRSC. The region offers four season adventures for all ages. Moreover, the communities throughout the region are well-known for their small-town charm, community pride and having friendly and welcoming people.

The combination of outdoor adventures with the presence of the tourism assets such as the world's longest covered bridge and the Potato World Museum, along with weekly farmers' markets and roadside farm stands filled with fresh produce and a variety of festivals provide the Western Valley with many tourism opportunities. The region also has easy access to the U.S. interstate highway 95 via the International Border Crossing to Houlton, Maine, as well as several other secondary crossings, which all help facilitate tourist travel.

Furthermore, the presence of several steady employers and a variety of amenities and quaint modern services provided in the Woodstock, Hartland, Florenceville and

Perth-Andover, and nearby urban settings of Fredericton and Edmundston together with its rural surroundings make the region very marketable and a desirable place for people to live. Changes in immigration patterns, cost of living and an east coast way of life are all fueling interest in the region, which is expected to continue. The \$40 million in funding announced by the Province of New Brunswick on January 31, 2023, for Regional Service Commissions to support their economic development, labour force development and newcomer retention services (provided through WorkingNB as part of the Canada-New Brunswick Labour Market Agreements) certainly supports these expected growth and development trends.



SERVICE FRAMEWORK

The original RSC mandates were defined separately according to the circumstances and contexts of each of the 12 regional service commissions. The following is a brief overview of such services for the WVRSC:

SOLID WASTE

The WVRSC is responsible for waste disposal and recycling. Waste collection is the responsibility of the towns, villages and the Department of Environment and Local Government (ELG) on behalf of the local service districts (LSDs).

The Commission's disposal contract was established by a 1997 ministerial agreement between the Commission (formerly Valley Solid Waste), Northwest Solid Waste Facility in Region 1 and Southwest Solid Waste Facility in Region 10. The agreement sets out a breakdown of 50% +/- 5% to the Northwest and the Southwest facilities. Waste from the Northern communities, is hauled directly to the Northwest site. All other waste is first hauled to the transfer station in Woodstock where it is consolidated and trucked either to the Northwest or the Southwest Solid Waste facility. The Commission retained a private consulting firm in 2014 to study the economics of the waste management process, including trucking distances, and determined that the current flow and use of the transfer station should continue because a direct haul scenario is not a financially feasible option.

Additionally, the Commission owns and maintains 9 recycling collection depots, including 7 of which are centrally located throughout the Region. These depots serve residents that do not have curbside collection.

Each year, approximately 19,000 metric tons of waste are taken to the Northwest and Southwest facilities.

LAND USE PLANNING

Entrusted with managing the orderly development of land throughout the region, the RSC's planning department provides expertise to the public, developers and municipalities in matters of land use planning. The Commission currently has agreements with the District of Carlton-North, Tobique Valley, Lakeland Ridges and Hartland to provide building and land use planning permits, approving subdivision plans, inspecting new constructions, and drafting and managing municipal and rural plans for municipalities.

The Department of Local Government has established a specific framework for the new services to ensure that they are in line with government policies. Several discussion papers have set out the mandates for developing sector-based processes. The following pages present the new service mandates. The infographics are summary interpretations of the provincial guides presenting the new regionalized services.

NEW MANDATED SERVICES





COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MANDATE

Community Inclusion Networks (CINs) will be integrated into Regional Service Commissions (RSCs).

The RSCs will identify actions to make improvements in the areas of focus for the CINs under three pillars focused on achieving economic and social inclusion impact :

- › **Income Security;**
- › **Coordination of Programs and Services;**
- › **Inclusion and Healthy Communities.**

RSCs must develop goals that address the following priorities :

- **Make investments through a new social finance to increase the capacity and sustainability of social enterprises within non-profit organizations in New Brunswick**
- **Develop or expand existing school food programs at all schools in the region**
- **Improve access and reduce wait times for mental health and additions services**
 - › RSCs can work with regional health authorities and the Department of Health to help identify community support services and be a partner in planning for service delivery.
- **Develop additional goals focused on making improvements in the four high impact areas of the Community Capacity and Resiliency Framework :**
 - › Economic security and employment;
 - › Stable housing and a healthy built environment;
 - › Health, social service, justice, and education systems, and
 - › Environmental sustainability.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MANDATE

The role of regional service commissions (RSCs) in economic development falls into three broad categories of mandates :

- 1. Supporting Investment Readiness;**
- 2. Supporting workforce development and workforce growth;**
- 3. Supporting a healthy business community.**

RSCs must develop goals that address the following priorities :

- **Develop an action plan**
 - › Define a shared vision.
 - › Create profiles of regional assets.
 - › Create regional value propositions.
 - › Serve as a liaison for new investors.
- **Develop regional marketing activities**
 - › Consider synergies with tourism related activities.

→ **Develop a regional labour market partnership (LMP) forum or participate in the existing forum**

- › Develop a regional labour market development and labour force growth strategy :
 - Population growth;
 - Labour force participation;
 - Labour force growth;
 - Employment growth;
 - Retention rate for newcomers.

› Map out newcomer retention services in the region.

→ **Support a healthy business community**

- › Map out existing business to support services in the region without duplicate existing services.

→ **Collect data indicators on the regional economy**

- › Support investment readiness and workforce development :
 - Lands and buildings for development;
 - Regional labour market data;
 - Major training programs;
 - Industrial parks;
 - Other assets.



SPORT, RECREATION, AND CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

MANDATE

Regional Services Commissions (RSCs) provide a forum for local governments to **share the costs of major sport, recreation, and cultural infrastructure projects.**

RSCs must develop goals that address the following priorities :

- **Identify and assess existing infrastructure**
 - › Including school facilities and with consideration for post-secondary education and privately owned facilities.
- **Detail plans for the development of potential future cost-sharing agreements**
- **Conduct a strategic assessment to identify challenges, gaps, and opportunities in the region**
 - › Identify potential incentives to encourage communities to collaborate on infrastructure development addressing the issues identified in the strategic assessment.
- **Work with partners to provide inclusive opportunities**
 - › CINable.
- **Develop regional priorities with respect to new, renovated, or expanded regional or sub-regional infrastructure**
 - › Infrastructures relating to sport, recreation and culture.



PUBLIC SAFETY

MANDATE

Regional Services Commissions (RSCs) are required to establish a Public Safety Committee to coordinate **police, fire protection and emergency services.**

ROLES

POLICE

- › Improve communication and build relationships between communities, regions, and police authorities, and help identify key issues and priorities.

FIRE PROTECTION

- › Exchange information on fire prevention and suppression service issues and explore ways to improve sustainability and efficiency.

EMERGENCY

- › Share information, identify issues and consider possible actions with provincial officials.



TOURISM

MANDATE

RSCs must develop goals that address the following priorities :

- **Establish Regional Destination Marketing Organization (RDMO)**
 - › Represent all the region's stakeholders.
- **Create and execute regional marketing initiatives, programs, partnerships, and digital channels**
 - › May include :
 - Bilingual website or social media channels to promote the region and increase awareness.
- **Develop a regional tourism strategy**
 - › Must be aligned with the **provincial tourism strategy.**
 - › Must include :
 - A tourism marketing plan with a bilingual digital presence;
 - An implementation plan;
 - A dedicated budget.
- **Participate in and contribute to co-operative marketing**
 - › Must be established by the Department of Tourism, Heritage, and Culture.
 - › May include :
 - Advertising campaigns;
 - Provincial owned digital marketing channels (tourism website).



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

MANDATE

Regional Services Commission (RSC) regional transportation services must be consistent with the New Brunswick Inclusive and Sustainable Transportation Framework (under development).

RSCs must develop goals that address the following priorities :

- **Conduct a regional scan of existing transportation services in the region**
- **Develop and implement regional transportation goals to increase accessibility, affordability, and availability of transportation services**
- **Develop a regional integrated transportation strategy**
 - › Consider inter-municipal, inter-regional, and inter-provincial transit connections.
- **Develop a regional transportation service by leveraging existing transit services and/or develop new ones**
 - › Leverage, and support volunteer-based transportation initiatives (if they exist in the region).
 - ›

CHAPTER 2

STRATEGIC THINKING PROCESS

STRATEGIC THINKING

METHODOLOGY

The recommended approach for developing the WVRSC’s regional strategy was a straightforward, structured process, which would enable the Board of Directors to provide the WVRSC senior management team with a frame of reference for the next five years. The approach is defined through a coaching and facilitation process conducive to the joint development of a vision and mission statement, the identification of fundamental values, the definition of strategic objectives in line with the pillars (the regional services provided by the WVRSC) and potential solutions, all leading to the development of the implementation plan.

- › The method used to develop the regional strategy is a well-known strategic planning method and consists of the following:
- › Develop a draft vision and mission; review the context using the SWOT analysis method (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)
- › Review and revise the vision and mission based on the history and a strategic assessment of each mandated service
- › Identify values in line with the vision and mission
- › Identify strategic objectives using the SMART methodology to meet the WVRSCs mission and achieve the vision inspired by the WVRSCs Board of Directors, senior management, stakeholders and key community members

The following stages were involved in developing WVRSC’s regional strategy:

1

STAGE 1 : ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

DATA COLLECTION AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS

This first activity provided an overview of the WVRSC’s current situation through an analysis of previous strategic plans and annual reports. This exercise afforded valuable insights to gain a better understanding of the organization’s key issues and the trends and problems of recent years.

TARGETED INTERVIEWS

This activity included targeted meetings, during which strategic discussions were held with the WVRSC’s Board of Directors and top management. Those meetings helped in identifying the regional strategy to adopt based on the governance in place.

ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGNOSIS

This activity involved outlining the WVRSC’s history and preparing a summary of certain relevant master plans, by-laws and administrative regulations.

IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

This activity served to identify stakeholders and other parties involved likely to contribute to validating the regional strategy and defining the approach to use based on their feedback. Following an initial planning session with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Director of Operations, the draft approach was agreed to, and the public participation program was validated. The focus group technique was selected, and a stakeholder register was developed by the senior management team to make sure that everyone and every group likely to provide added value to the process were identified during the consultation process. Stakeholders were selected according to their level of influence and their interest in the strategic process.

A SMART goal is an action statement that describes what you need to do to achieve your objective.



Specific - Describes a specific action, behavior, achievement or result that is observable.



Measurable - Quantifiable, with indicators to measure it.



Audience-specific - Appropriate and tailored to your target audience.



Realistic - Achievable with available resources.



Time-based - Specifies a timeframe within which the objective will be achieved.

2

STAGE 2: CONSULTATION PROCESS

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSIONS WITH THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This activity involved a day-long workshop meeting with the RSC's Board of Directors. The purpose of the meeting was to develop the RSC's vision, mission and fundamental values. To develop such statements, we conducted a SWOT analysis. The result of that activity was the definition of the WVRSC's mission, values and vision found in Chapter 4 of this report.

PLANNING SESSIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The purpose of those meetings was to develop the main strategic orientations and areas of action, particularly with regard to current and new mandates (regional transportation, tourism, economic development, regional sports and cultural facilities, public safety and community development). A SWOT analysis was used to gather feedback from some 80 participants. A total of five planning sessions were held with approximately 50 people. The small groups kept discussions focused on the mandate and proved to be very effective. Given the interrelationships, regional transportation and community development were combined in one session.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE WVRSC DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS

At this stage, a questionnaire was submitted to each department director to capture their respective needs and priorities over the next five years.

ENGAGEMENT WITH FIRST NATIONS

To ensure that the obligation to engage with First Nations is adequately exercised and to follow the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, contacts with First Nations chiefs were facilitated at the onset of the project. Given the limited time available, a dialogue was established on an ongoing basis. The mobilization of First Nations is not a mere oneoff event for the regional strategy, but a demonstration of a sustained, ongoing process through service delivery and community sharing, as integrated in the RSC. It should be noted that the WVRSC has already extended an invitation to the First Nation communities to provide representation on several working committees. This strategy will be shared with the First Nations and they will be part of the overall implementation strategy in the next five years.

3

STAGE 3: STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

DRAFT REGIONAL STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

At this stage, the draft regional strategy and implementation plan were completed with the Chief Executive Officer and the regional strategy committee and later submitted to the Board of Directors for approval. The implementation plan included performance indicators, targets and timelines, along with the resources needed to carry out the strategies proposed.

FINAL REPORT

Once the feedback had been integrated, the final version of the regional strategy was presented to the Board of Directors and regional strategy committee members at a public meeting for review and approval. The report includes the WVRSC's vision, mission and values, along with a summary of recommendations for the next stages to implement the actions and an executive summary.

CHAPTER 3

DIAGNOSIS

DIAGNOSIS

To cut a clear path leading to the suggested objectives and solutions, this report presents an overview of the services with a view to highlighting the changes brought about by their regionalization and identifying how the services will connect with the other services. This section sets out for each pillar of service, both existing and new, the diagnosis established for each service following its analyses and assessments.



PLANNING SERVICES

The Commission currently provides planning services to the District of Carlton-North, Tobique Valley, Lakeland Ridge, Hartland and the Western Valley Rural District. This includes planning and building inspection services including the issuance of building permits, performance of inspections to ensure compliance with the National Building Code of Canada, and administration of all by-laws created under the Community Planning Act. Workforce attraction and retention is a challenge, so a hybrid formula is applied. The team in place is competent, dedicated and has the expertise to provide quality service, but succession planning and coverage was identified as an issue, particularly with the capacity to undertake long-range policy planning. A well thought out HR strategy will be critical to the Commission's resiliency. Some concerns were noted following the ability for the commission to provide adequate services should other communities request planning support. An efficient and robust permitting software was highlighted as a need, as was communicating consistency of the regulatory environment throughout the region.



SOLID WASTE

The vast distances of the communities within the Western Valley region create inherent challenges for waste management. However, the region is fortunate to have a most of the area covered by curbside pick-up and a transfer station, which provides a better economic picture of the overall program. While the commission has seen growing recycling trends, there are significant opportunities for additional diversion through a combination of innovation and education and awareness, such as refrigeration stewardship, moving to a cart based system for waste. There are also opportunities to reduce costs through the electrification of the fleet, routing efficiencies and exploring shared services. Similar to other regions, combating the impacts of climate change (mainly from fuel costs) and enforcement continue to be challenges. There is also a need to formalize relationships with service providers.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Increased collaboration and sharing knowledge and information at the regional level is a key priority. The passion among volunteers and community pride for the Western Valley region are essential components for the continued health of the region. While the region is large, its small population makes it easier to form strategic partnerships and establish connections. While knowledge and information sharing are wide-ranging, the pandemic has left some groups and individuals feeling isolated and unaware other groups and their mandates and there is no formal opportunity for groups to come together to distribute information. Although housing options were never seen as an issue, there now appears to be a shortage of housing options, mainly affordable housing, which poses a challenge in many regions. The region requires a housing study and aims at attracting new residents to help energize the area as it struggles with an aging population and a loss of local knowledge. To ensure it remains resilient, the RSC will benefit from its competent personnel to identify winning solutions for the future of the region in establishing a healthy community.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The WVRSC has taken a proactive approach to the new economic development mandate. The commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ignite (Fredericton) for a five-year period effective January 1, 2023. The MOU establishes annual operational funding and information will be shared back to the commission via written and verbal quarterly reports, along with an Annual Report (2024). Business planning will be approached with collaboration, and local business expertise will be included on Ignite’s Board of Directors. The establishment of a WVRSC Advisory Committee on Regional Economic Development will greatly assist with identifying regional issues and opportunities for future growth and prosperity. While the key economic activities in this region include agriculture and food processing, forestry and value-added wood products, metal fabrication and transportation, others regional economic development opportunities will also be explored through this five-year partnership.



SPORTS, RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Western Valley has a large range of sports, recreational and cultural infrastructure. Continued investment in major trail connections is considered essential. With an aging population and the arrival of many newcomers to the territory, the region would benefit from preparing an inventory of all these facilities to carry out long-term planning. The infrastructure in place must be part of attracting new workers to the region. Coordination of the entire sports, recreational and cultural services would ensure a good level of services for all citizens. Identifying needs through studies to define trends will allow better preparation for the future. Communication across stakeholders will also be key. While cost-sharing was not identified as an immediate need, because there are currently no regional or sub-regional facilities in the region, facilitating a dialogue to identify future cost-sharing opportunities and to enable different municipalities to better plan their future investments will be part of RSC discussions.



PUBLIC SAFETY

The Western Valley region is served by one municipal police force and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Municipal amalgamation brought its share of challenges to this sector given that certain segments of the population within the new municipalities are served by a federal force while other citizens by a municipal force. Escalating policing costs have compounded this issue, particularly around level of service and visibility. Despite these challenges, there is recognition that the service is reasonable for the resources available (RCMP specifically). At the fire services level, there are a range of fire stations that offer quality service for all citizens. Emergency measures planning exists in the Western Valley but needs to be pursued more strategically regionally. There is a real need to properly map the scope of services of each responder to be able to coordinate efforts in emergency situations. There is potential to coordinate group training and equipment in the region to support different responders. Strategic communication and relationship building are important to allow stakeholders to get to know each other well and to build regional capacity. Raising awareness of the services available to its residents, such as the benefits of the Valley Family Resource Centre, and providing safe spaces for the region’s youth, must be a priority to maintain the region’s safe reputation.



TOURISM

The WVRSC has retained Floor 13 to provide a Tourism Strategy for the region. The community has deep roots in agriculture and food processing and has retained the small town, friendly charm that visitors are looking for. It offers four season offerings, an abundance of natural beauty, soft adventures, such as snowmobiling, ATV, biking and hiking, and some well-recognized tourism assets, like covered bridges. Despite these benefits, the region lacks a compelling anchor product or experience and as a result, is one of the main reasons why the region is seen a pass-through. The region also lacks quality accommodation options. While most of the communities in the region have made reasonable efforts to promote tourism, they have been working independently rather than as a cohesive group promoting the entire region. Without a major anchor attraction, packaging and aligning several smaller experiences to create a reason to stay should be the focus of the region’s tourism efforts, along with increasing the products and experiences that are available, refining market readiness and year-round development.



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

Public transit is available in the region for specific needs via Urban Rural Rides, but only by appointment and with a 48 hours' notice. There is a desperate need for drivers to meet demand, and the service is only available from Monday to Friday, between 9 am and 5 pm. This poses major challenges for some users, such as young people, newcomers and workers without a vehicle. Some community groups and schools have small buses that might be used to improve the service. Furthermore, some of those vehicles are accessible, enabling more people to use this adapted means of transportation. A regional review is required to identify needs, partnerships, develop an integrated regional strategy and define a sustainable model for residents.



HEALTH AND REGIONAL ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

> Voluntary collaboration

Although not a mandated service, health care recruitment and retention will undoubtedly be a fundamental area that the WVRSC responds to. Doctor and nurse recruitment is a challenge in rural areas of the province, and it has become clear that innovation is needed to successfully recruit and retain essential healthcare workers. These efforts will continue to be the cornerstones of the commission's efforts in partnership with Horizon Health. Strategic investments in all the mandated services will be essential to help bolster the recruitment approach.

CHAPTER 4

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

The following section presents the vision, mission and values of WVRSC. The vision is focused on sustainable regional growth for each of the communities included in WVRSC. The vision, mission and values reflect the aspirations of the region, taking into account the realities of each of the territorial entities that make it up.

These are the values that inform our ethical decision-making processes:



VISION

We lead collaborative service delivery and foster regional dialogue and community engagement.



MISSION

Your trusted hub for regional collaboration, community engagement and shared service delivery.



VALUES

- > Honesty;
- > Ethical;
- > Compassion;
- > Creativity;
- > Open mind;
- > Reputation.

| HONEST | ETHICAL | COMPASSIONATE | CREATIVE | OPEN MINDED | REPUTABLE |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| <i>We recognize the importance of having trust and respect, which creates a positive atmosphere for all. This key value drives relationships with employees, customers, and stakeholders.</i> | <i>We value and understand clearly what is considered acceptable or a desirable behaviour, above and beyond compliance with laws and regulations.</i> | <i>We treat our employees, our municipalities, and all citizens with concern for their well-being.</i> | <i>We value creativity in the workplace by enabling our staff and partners to develop new and imaginative ideas regarding processes, services, and products.</i> | <i>We are receptive to new ideas for continuous improvement. We value the diversity of experiences, skills, and ideas. We listen to our customers, employees, partners, and stakeholders to explore new opportunities.</i> | <i>We value the reputation of our staff and our member municipalities and communities. We understand that having a good reputation represents public trust.</i> |

CHAPTER 5

REGIONAL STRATEGY

REGIONAL STRATEGY

Regional Service Commissions (RSCs) were entrusted with a range of new services under the Local Governance Reform. To exercise leadership and provide a constructive strategic governance framework, the Board of Directors of each RSC must develop its regional strategies meant to provide the RSC’s senior management team with guidance in developing an implementation plan. Strategic planning is one of the most important responsibilities of a Board of Directors and a tool Board members can use to monitor closely the activities of the RSC’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and senior management team. Regional strategies are developed at the onset of new mandates and must be reviewed at the end of the first year of implementation, as the level of organizational maturity will be higher when all the RSC directors have at least one year’s experience within the organization. The Board members acknowledge the limitations of the strategies, including the importance of not duplicating existing provincial services and considering obligations and requirements that are part of funding or service agreements with provincial departments or other organizations.

The following pages provide a summary of all the WVRSC’s regional strategies and a brief description of each service, including the major solutions that will be incorporated into its implementation plan. The plan will include measurable actions, timelines, a financial framework and an accountability framework and will be overseen by the WVRSC’s Chief Executive Officer.



LAND USE PLANNING

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

To make a commitment to workforce succession planning by establishing a human resources program aimed at employee retention and

attraction. To investigate system improvements to find efficiencies and optimize existing and new resources and technologies to

streamline operations. To undertake system mapping through communications and public awareness to help educate residents on the land use planning benefits, including risk management, to help diffuse misunderstandings of the planning

ACTIONS

- › Explore options for providing short-term (construction season) and long-term support and service coverage;
- › Revisit and map out core services to prioritize staff resources;
- › In coordination with the Labour Market Partnership Forum, develop a program with local schools for staff to visit and highlight future opportunities and build awareness of the trades, as well as planning and building inspection professions;
- › Allocate resources to undertake proactive long-range planning throughout the region.
- › Create hybrid meeting guidelines ;
- › Continue to deliver efficient and streamlined planning and building inspection services;
- › Explore an optimal online permitting software system for the commission, residents and development community;
- › Update internal guidelines for sensitive planning issues such as flag lots and private roads;
- › Evaluate a regional approach for By-law Enforcement;
- › Review municipal plans, rural plans, zoning and subdivision and building by-laws.
- › Develop marketing and public education materials aimed at communicating major regulatory differences throughout the region;
- › Develop a new website.



SOLID WASTE

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

To continue investigating innovative programs and services to increase diversion rates.

To evaluate the waste management cycle to find efficiencies in the system, including opportunities for shared services with other RSCs where appropriate.

To enhance public engagement across all sectors, to build awareness and understanding of the solid waste services and help build community buy-in for compliance and participation.

ACTIONS

- › Successfully and strategically rollout the Provincial Solid Waste Management Action Plan;
 - › Support rollout of the packaging and paper products program;
 - › Investigate the feasibility of an organic strategy;
 - › Investigate the feasibility of implementing a cart-based collection system;
 - › Pilot a refrigeration stewardship program in partisanship with third-party contractor;
 - › Undertake a review of the depot locations and capacities to determine where new depots should be located and/or if existing facilities should be expanded;
 - › Continue working with the transfer station owner to evaluate potential efficiencies.
- › Support and assist in the review of route journeys relative to municipal reform and determine if more efficient options are available.
 - › Develop an inventory of shared services opportunities with municipal and RSC partners;
 - › Assist municipal partners in formalizing contracts with solid waste partners to ensure stability and certainty to the solid waste collection program for the future.
- › Develop a uniform waste By-law for the entire region to help modernize and standardize the solid waste collection program;
 - › Develop a hazardous waste recycling information guide for residential distribution;
 - › Develop a marketing and communications strategy aimed at increasing overall awareness of the solid waste process and its importance for the Western Valley Region;
 - › Explore a bulk items collections program to help deter illegal dumping.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Build on the success and capacity of the Urban Rural Rides model to explore innovative options for enhanced and new rural transportation systems.

Identify specific needs and support major regional initiatives related to, among others, affordable housing, newcomer settlement services and diversity promotion, social inclusion and poverty reduction, and healthy communities.

To undertake a regional diagnosis of the housing landscape and develop an inventory of community development related services offered in the Western Valley to close gaps and increase collaboration.

ACTIONS

- › Continue to develop the existing alliance with Urban Rural Rides to strengthen and expand services;
 - › Improve synergies and industry alliances among regional stakeholders to leverage existing providers and/or developing new ones where gaps exist;
 - › Launch campaign to recruit volunteer drivers;
 - › Explore options to link the Urban Rural Rides program with food bank pick-up/drop offs.
- › Develop the service and explore options for new employees (i.e. project coordination position(s) for food resilience and youth engagement);
 - › Create a regional food security network (viable and self-sufficient community gardens, supply of local food in schools and food banks);
 - › Organize intergenerational activities to transmit knowledge in food preparation, production, conservation and storage;
 - › Build on the strengths and work of Food for All NB/Food Depot Alimentaire to explore new programs;
 - › Explore the possibility of establishing community kitchens and community fridges/pantries in strategic areas of the region by forming key partnerships with community groups;
 - › Expand programming opportunities aimed at newcomers' settlement, combating social isolation and promote mental wellness.
- › Undertake a Housing Needs Assessment;
 - › Create a community development asset map of the Western Valley to identify shortfalls and gaps and establish partnerships to help newcomer settlement and address poverty reduction and increase social inclusion;
 - › Explore ways to link organizations with volunteers.
 - › Develop and implement regional volunteer recognition/promotion/recruitment activities;
 - › Host an annual symposium to bring stakeholders together, showcase services and continuously look for gaps in the Western Valley support services network;
 - › Support ongoing professional development opportunities for staff to remain current on best practices, new initiatives and to network with other community developers outside of the region and province.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Support business growth and retention (includes job creation) in all sectors.

Focus on workforce attraction and retention to create pathways for labour force connections through skilled worker/newcomer attraction.

Create investment ready opportunities to champion growth priorities to develop economic development in urban and rural areas of the regions.

ACTIONS

- › Provide tailored mentoring, skills development opportunities, networking opportunities and access to a network of support tools for business success.
- › Assist with workforce attraction efforts, including global recruitment events and investment ready programs;
- › Connect residents and newcomers with employers with job fairs and tailored recruitment offerings;
- › Provide programming focused on the non-primary applicant (partners and families) to help with newcomer integration success;
- › Work with community stakeholders and settlement agencies to ensure newcomers have the support they need to stay.
- › Develop a value proposition statement for the region;
- › Facilitate a single point of contact to enhance investment readiness opportunities.



SPORTS, RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Undertake a review of regional and subregional facilities to prepare an asset inventory to help identify, develop, and optimize cost-sharing opportunities.

Diversify active living, cultural and non-competitive programming opportunities for all ages and newcomers, to help promote overall wellness in the Western Valley region.

Undertake strategic community engagement to develop an inventory of existing and future needs, with a lens to attract and engage newcomers.

ACTIONS

- › Assume mandatory responsibilities related to infrastructure cost sharing;
- › Collaborate and support regional leisure initiatives in collaboration with municipalities;
- › Carry out a needs assessment in terms of sports, recreational and cultural activities;
- › Develop a financing plan to ensure continuous service.
- › Complete a Recreation Master Plan;
- › Complete a regional trail strategy to ensure that all municipalities share the same vision and are working towards the development of a connected trail system.
- › Map cultural assets to determine opportunities and gaps;
- › Explore innovative ways to counter early sport specialization and promote the benefits of a recreation variety;
- › Continue to support the Western Valley Recreation Association;
- › Support and accompany organizations in the delivery of recreational activities;
- › Offer a range of services that meet the needs of all residents, and encourage partner communities to participate;
- › Carry out monitoring and evaluations of new activities.
- › Work with the Multicultural Association to help determine gaps and barrier in current sport, recreation and cultural facilities and programming;
- › Catalog regional support programs and opportunities to promote access to facilities for newcomers and those who are less fortunate.



PUBLIC SAFETY

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Undertake a mapping exercise of all existing public safety services and stakeholders to properly communicate and coordinate protective services efforts and resources, as well as identifying gaps in the system.

Help ensure that the consultation of public safety stakeholders is structured to better define the fields of jurisdiction and intervention opportunities.

Clearly define geographic boundaries so that regional emergency management planning is improved and well-coordinated with municipal partners.

ACTIONS

- › Identify bottlenecks and roadblocks in existing communication protocols and suggest improvements in the way information is disseminated across the region;
- › Work with the Provincial Emergency Management Organization to organize and host simulation exercises to test, familiarize, and improve emergency preparedness planning and activation;
- › Facilitate discussions with public security officials from other Commissions to share knowledge and learn from their best practices;
- › Explore meaningful engagement opportunities, between youth and public safety officials to build and improve relations;
- › Encourage the sharing of training opportunities for responders responsible for public security for the entire region;
- › Find approaches to encourage volunteerism in fire departments to recruit additional firefighters.
- › Distribute provincial information and communications to municipalities to ensure all stakeholders are updated on changes and new regulations;
- › Organize an information day on public security in the communities.
- › Explore developing a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan;
- › Utilize emergency preparedness partners to develop a household emergency package that is specific to regions and individual communities for residential distribution;
- › Organize information sessions and target engagement with stakeholders responsible for the implementation of emergency measures plans in regional public institutions (schools, hospitals, nursing homes, sports facilities).



TOURISM

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Western Valley region is a destination promoted by all communities and tourism stakeholders.

Develop regional initiatives that encourage the growth of the number of tourism products with industry stakeholders to contribute to regional economic development.

Active participation in promotional campaigns and partnerships to accentuate strategic communications and regional marketing aimed at visitors and tourists.

ACTIONS

- › Complete a brand review and communications strategy;
- › Establish a Western Valley Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) as the primary tourism agency for the region.
- › Assist partner communities in the development and approval of a Tourism Levy By-law
- › Identify strategic infrastructure renewal opportunities/needs in support of tourism and economic development;
- › Assist additional accommodations inventory;
- › Develop an anchor attraction for the Western Valley region.
- › Alignment of key products leading to experience creation;
- › Implement a business community and resident outreach program.



HEALTH AND REGIONAL ATTRACTION AND RETENTION









STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Undertake a review of how best to promote the region in an effort to attract health care workers to practice and reside and consider strategies for retention.

ACTIONS

- › Identify partnership opportunities and facilitate the development of programs to support recruitment and retention initiatives for healthcare professionals;
- › Help champion the importance of healthcare to the entire Western Valley region and the need to maintain and invest in local services.

OVERVIEW TABLE

| COMMON SERVICES | | NEW SERVICES | | | | | VOLUNTARY COLLABORATION | |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| LAND USE PLANNING  | SOLID WASTE  | COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION  | ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  | SPORTS, RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE  | PUBLIC SAFETY  | TOURISM  | HEALTH AND REGIONAL ATTRACTION AND RETENTION  | |
| STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES | To make a commitment to workforce succession planning by establishing a human resources program aimed at employee retention and attraction. | To continue investigating innovative programs and services to increase diversion rates. | Build on the success and capacity of the Urban Rural Rides model to explore innovative options for enhanced and new rural transportation systems. | Support business growth and retention (includes job creation) in all sectors. | Undertake a review of regional and subregional facilities to prepare an asset inventory to help identify, develop, and optimize cost-sharing opportunities. | Undertake a mapping exercise of all existing public safety services and stakeholders to properly communicate and coordinate protective services efforts and resources, as well as identifying gaps in the system. | The Western Valley region is a destination promoted by all communities and tourism stakeholders. | Undertake a review of how best to promote the region in an effort to attract health care workers to practice and reside and consider strategies for retention. |
| | To investigate system improvements to find efficiencies and optimize existing and new resources and technologies to streamline operations. | To evaluate the waste management cycle to find efficiencies in the system, including opportunities for shared services with other RSCs where appropriate. | Identify specific needs and support major regional initiatives related to, among others, affordable housing, newcomer settlement services and diversity promotion, social inclusion and poverty reduction, and healthy communities. | Focus on employees attraction and retention to create pathways for labour force connections through skilled worker/newcomer attraction. | Diversify active living, cultural and non-competitive programming opportunities for all ages and newcomers, to help promote overall wellness in the Western Valley region. | Help ensure that the consultation of public safety stakeholders is structured to better define the fields of jurisdiction and intervention opportunities. | Develop regional initiatives that encourage the growth of the number of tourism products with industry stakeholders to contribute to regional economic development. | |
| | To undertake system mapping through communications and public awareness to help educate residents on the land use planning benefits, including risk management, to help diffuse misunderstandings of the planning system. | To enhance public engagement across all sectors, to build awareness and understanding of the solid waste services and help build community buy-in for compliance and participation. | To undertake a regional diagnosis of the social housing landscape and develop an inventory of community development related services offered in the Western Valley to close gaps and increase collaboration. | Create investment ready opportunities to champion economic development in urban and rural areas of the regions. | Undertake strategic community engagement to develop an inventory of existing and future needs, with a lens to attract and engage newcomers. | Clearly define geographic boundaries so that regional emergency management planning is improved and well-coordinated with municipal partners. | Active participation in promotional campaigns and partnerships to accentuate strategic communications and regional marketing aimed at visitors and tourists. | |

CHAPTER 6

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