

Action Southwest Releases Strategy to Grow the Southwest

Building on our strengths and creating regional competitive advantages for all is the focus of the Action Southwest Business Networks Coalition (ASBNC), a strategic economic alliance that began in November 2004. Leaders from across the region's communities and industries have agreed that it is time for a new way of thinking and acting and that together we can shape our regions next steps in development now and into the future.

Over 120 community leaders and industry leaders from our regions four key sectors of manufacturing, energy, tourism and agribusiness came together to analyze their individual sectors and develop strategies for growth. Each sector provided a report that identified the challenges and opportunities faced and then used this information to develop over 30 flagship initiatives and action plans as possible solutions. These detailed strategies have been compiled in a final report that is now a living, working document that will serve as a rallying point for continued regional collaboration.

Now armed with the strategies, action must ensue. On Tuesday, June 28, 2005 the ASBNC officially launched this document to the region and asked that the people of the Southwest listen to the needs of industry. ASBNC Chairperson, Anne Weisgerber said, "An opportunity is being presented for business, community, government and education to focus attention and resources towards a common goal that will benefit the entire region. It is up to us to make sure this happens".

The ASBNC is waving the flag on over 30 projects for the Southwest region to begin taking action on and they are as follows:

Manufacturing:

1. Make Manufacturing a Priority in the Region
2. Benchmark Manufacturing Competitiveness
3. Improve Business Services to Manufacturers
4. Improve Access to Financial Capital
5. Improve Knowledge Infrastructure to Develop Skilled Labour
6. Develop a Regional Brand to Improve Image and Build Identity
7. Catalyze Innovation Through Business Networks / Alliances
8. Establish a Lean Manufacturing Consortium
9. Use Government Procurement to Enable Growth

Energy:

1. Address Labour Shortage
2. Develop Pre-Employment Training Programs to Provide Job Skill Development
3. Add Energy Sector to the Work Experience Program in High Schools
4. Improved Utilization of Underdeveloped Gas Wells as Possible Economic Stimulators
5. Improved Access to Materials
6. Refurbishing Used Inventory to Industry Standards

Tourism:

1. Website Linkages Amongst Communities
2. Expand Partnerships Through Packaging
3. Development of Regional Maps
4. Expand Signage – Roadside Pullouts
5. Expand FM Signals – Low Power Transmitters
6. Expand Regional Visitor Centres and Rest Stops
7. Improve Transportation
8. Improve Education Through Awareness Programs
9. Pool Resources
10. Branding the Region

Agribusiness:

1. Increase Value-Added Agriculture Products
2. Diversification Beyond Agriculture
3. Partner up to Brand the Region
4. Link Agriculture / Tourism / Kyoto / Education
5. Find and Develop Markets in the Global Marketplace
6. Address Regional Labour Shortage
7. Work With Governments to Address Issues and Develop A Stronger Agribusiness Sector
8. Work with Governments to Create Certainty in Agribusiness

A number of organizations are also listed in the document as possible sources of leadership that industry and community have identified as necessary to be involved to begin working towards this common goal. Some of the organizations listed include:

- Cypress Hills Regional College
- Canada - Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services
- Human Resources Skills Development Canada
- Southwest School Divisions
- Financial Institutions
- Southwest Community Futures Development Corporation
- Saskatchewan Rural Development
- Cypress Hills and Southwest Regional Economic Development Authorities
- Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization
- Urban and Rural Municipalities
- Southwest Tourism Association
- Nekaneet First Nations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Crown Corporations

Action Swift Current Chairperson and ASBNC Member, Chuck Thomson said, “We have moved full circle from the days when the first health region was set up. Then, as now, we are working together to build on our strengths as a region. We are not in our own little silos trying to protect our own turf. The gain from this type of cooperation is more than just an economic gain for the partners of each project area, it is a gain in capacity for the region.

It is essential that everyone get involved and review this document to see where our regions key stakeholders need you and your organization to help build a foundation for long term sustainability and prosperity in the Southwest. Please visit www.actionsouthwest.com to review the report “Engaging Industry Innovation”.

Once the region has had a chance to review the report a commencement ceremony will be scheduled for the fall, where all 30 plus projects will be highlighted and a select number will be identified for action. If you want to become a part of the solution and / or receive a copy of the report contact the Project Officer, Doug Howorko at 778-8416 or the Project Manager, Sandra Blyth at 778-6445.

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