

SUCCEEDING TOGETHER



FLAGSTAFF COUNTY 3-YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by:



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Our Economic Development Plan

Succeeding Together

Today, it is essential for communities and regions to engage in careful and comprehensive strategic planning alongside committed and focused action to preserve and enhance economic circumstances and quality of life. Successful communities recognize that achievement is not merely about reaching a goal, but about reaching the right goal through intentional and well-considered strategic planning and action. An important aspect of this is remaining responsive to the dynamic nature of contextual elements that heavily influence a community's ability to achieve its desired outcomes and vision. Understanding this necessity, the Flagstaff Region Economic Development updated their Economic Development Plan in 2019, providing a detailed guide for regional economic development efforts within Flagstaff County. Despite facing significant challenges like COVID-19, inflationary pressures, and economic downturns, they were successful in implementing much of the plan. The following plan represents a concentrated effort to update the plan once again, aiming to address recent shifts and build on past successes, ensuring a realistic and forward-looking path for the region, its businesses, and citizens.



The County Vision

To be a strong, vibrant, and sustainable regional Community of communities contributing to a rural essence and quality of life.

Economic Development Vision

As a rural “community of communities” we will collaborate uniquely and innovatively to grow and retain our existing businesses, seek to attract new companies, develop and support entrepreneurs, and attract and retain our citizens.

Our Guiding Principles

Development principles are inherently specific to each region and are aligned with broader regional development goals. In the case of Flagstaff County's economic development effort, the following principles were established in previous plans and remain relevant today.



Collaboration

The region has prioritized sustainable development practices and requires economic initiatives to adhere to environmental regulations and minimize negative impacts on the ecosystem.



Environment

Promote the value of a healthy, sustainable, natural environment and encourage its effective stewardship to ensure its preservation for current and future generations.



Social

Support and promote a strong, vibrant, resilient, healthy, inclusive, and safe “Community of Communities” that addresses local values, social issues, and wellbeing of its citizens.



Programs and Services Delivery

Provide citizens with effective, appropriate, and financially responsible levels of service.



Economic

Pursue economic initiatives that promote sustainability, diversification, and growth within the County and its member municipalities.

Economic Development Priorities

Priorities and goals are outcome statements flowing logically from the community's desired outcomes. Flagstaff County has identified five goals derived from a consensus of ideas, opinions, and inputs from key stakeholders. These goals, with their objectives and actions, are logical and supportable, setting out broad themes for the next three years, up to 2027. They were formed by considering what is possible, desirable, and realistically achievable within the region's economic development efforts.



Tactics

Specifically in the past four years, Flagstaff Region Economic Development has achieved remarkable progress by building significant momentum and laying a strong foundation for future prosperity in their region. Through the creation and implementation of several programs, they have garnered widespread support from businesses, entrepreneurs, and social organizations alike. Hence, the strategies outlined below advocate for the economic development function to persist in their primary programming efforts, leveraging existing momentum to drive further success. These activities also include a description to enhance the reader's understanding of each initiative, providing clarity on their purpose and expected impact within the broader economic development strategy.

Economic Development Priority One: Succeeding Through Strong Businesses - Business Retention & Expansion

Objective#1: Enhance local procurement opportunities (both from the supply and demand sides)

- **Inventory and promote procurement opportunities of major employers in the County (public and private).**
 - » **Description:** This program involves creating a comprehensive inventory of procurement needs of major employers, both public institutions and private businesses, within the County. By actively promoting these opportunities to local suppliers, the aim is to ensure that regional businesses are aware and able to bid on these contracts. This could involve a centralized online platform, workshops, or newsletters that connect local enterprises with procurement opportunities, thereby strengthening the local economy by keeping contracts within the community.
- **Assist local businesses in their capacities to access procurement opportunities (procurement guide).**
 - » **Description:** Develop and distribute a procurement guide that outlines the processes involved in bidding for contracts with major employers in the County. This guide would provide local businesses with key information on eligibility requirements, tips on preparing competitive bids, and resources for additional support. Workshops or one-on-one consulting could also be offered to help business owners understand the procurement landscape and navigate any challenges they face in accessing these opportunities.

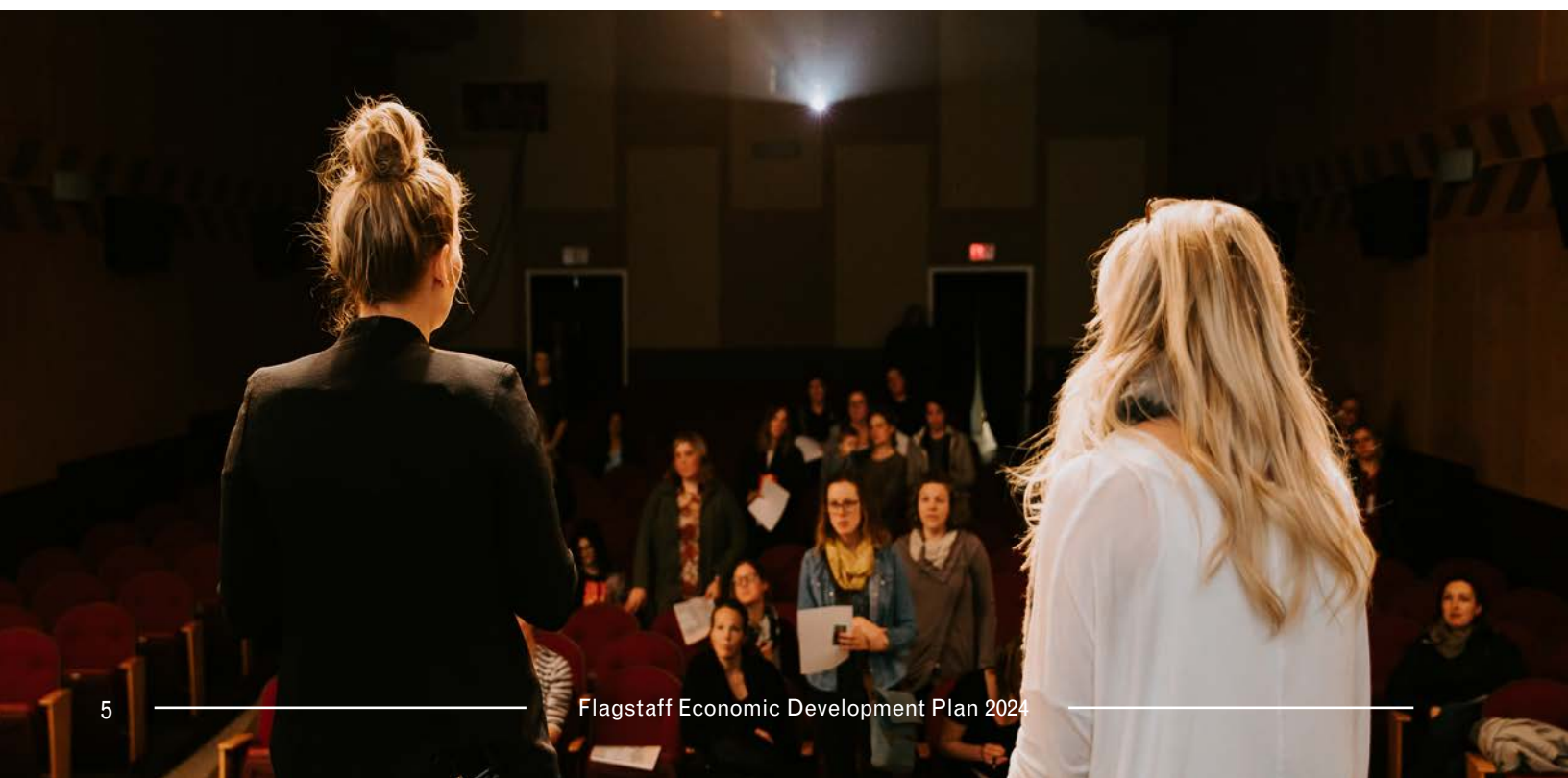
Objective #2: Assist local businesses to increase their capacities to reach their goals

- **Conduct annual needs determination (on-going)**
 - » **Description:** This tactic involves conducting annual surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder meetings to gather insights on the challenges, gaps, and opportunities facing local businesses. The data collected will guide the County in prioritizing initiatives, targeting support, and refining its programs to better serve the community's needs.
- **Continue to facilitate capacity building workshops**
 - » **Description:** Capacity building workshops will focus on various business needs, such as marketing, financial management, technology adoption, and human resources. These workshops will be designed to help business owners and their employees upskill, improve operational efficiency, and address specific challenges they face. By maintaining a regular schedule of workshops, the Economic Development team ensures that businesses have continual access to learning opportunities.
- **Continue Thought Exchange Program**
 - » **Description:** The Thought Exchange Program is a peer mentorship initiative designed to connect business owners and entrepreneurs within Flagstaff County. Through structured networking sessions, mentorship pairings, and group discussions, participants have the opportunity to share experiences, provide mutual support, and learn best practices from one another. By continuing this program, the County aims to strengthen the local business ecosystem through collaborative problem-solving and peer learning, creating an environment where businesses help each other succeed.

- **Continue Flagstaff Crafted Program**
 - » **Description:** Maintain and enhance the Flagstaff Crafted initiative to support local artisans, entrepreneurs, and businesses. This includes promoting local products, fostering a strong regional brand, and providing resources, marketing support, and networking opportunities to help businesses grow and reach broader markets.
- **Continue to act as a concierge to programming (provide referrals to business assistance programs)**
 - » **Description:** Flagstaff County will continue to act as a central point of contact for business owners looking for assistance. This “concierge” service provides personalized referrals to provincial, federal, and third-party business assistance programs, helping entrepreneurs navigate available resources. This approach simplifies access to funding, training, and advisory services, ensuring that local businesses receive timely support.

Objective #3: Increase the vitality and health of local businesses

- **Continue to run the business support program providing tailored support to local business.**
 - » **Description:** This program offers a thorough assessment of the business in question before providing targeted support based on their unique needs. It may include providing market research, connecting businesses to funding opportunities, offering one-on-one consultations, or facilitating problem-solving sessions to address particular challenges. The goal is to ensure that each business receives the assistance necessary to achieve its objectives and thrive in the local economic landscape.
- **Continue business coaching program**
 - » **Description:** The business coaching program focuses on providing individual coaching sessions to entrepreneurs and small business owners. Through one-on-one meetings, experienced coaches help business owners set clear goals, develop actionable strategies, and address operational, financial, or marketing challenges. This ongoing support helps build the capabilities of local businesses, encourages continuous improvement, and boosts their potential for long-term success.



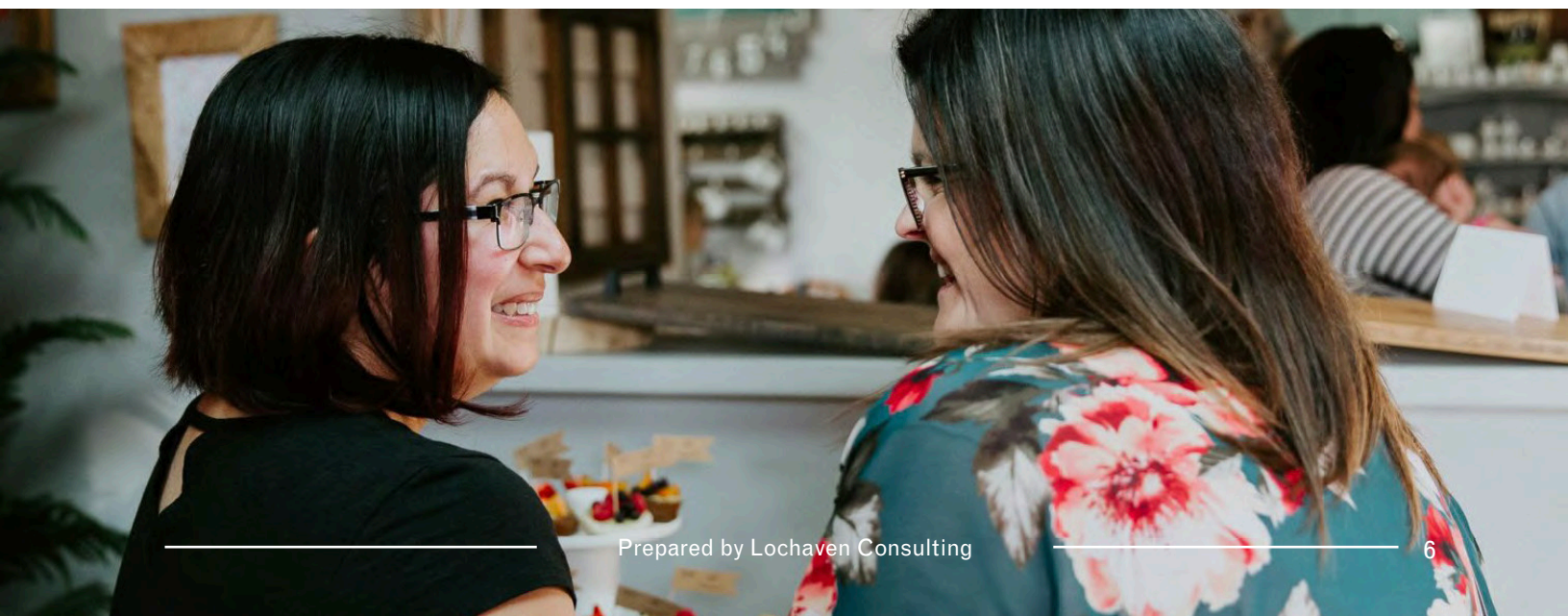
Economic Development Priority Two: Succeeding through Attraction & Retaining Our Citizens

Objective #1: Promote and foster newcomer attraction and retention in the Region

- **Continue Collective Impact Projects that contribute to a more healthy, welcoming, and robust community**
 - » **Description:** The Collective Impact Projects bring together various community groups, organizations, and residents to tackle complex challenges facing Flagstaff County. By continuing these projects, the County aims to build a collaborative environment where stakeholders work towards shared goals, such as improving public health, enhancing inclusivity, and increasing the quality of life for all residents. This approach leverages the combined resources and expertise of multiple partners to create long-lasting community benefits.
- **Continue to integrate citizen attraction and retention with investment attraction and retention efforts**
 - » **Description:** This tactic focuses on blending efforts to attract and retain new residents with initiatives to bring in and keep investments within Flagstaff County. By showcasing the area's quality of life, available amenities, employment opportunities, and supportive community, the County can position itself as an ideal location for both individuals and businesses. Integrated marketing campaigns, community events, and partnership building are tools used to ensure the alignment of these efforts, making the area more attractive for both investors and new citizens.

Objective#2: Ensure newcomers feel welcome and have successfully transitioned into the community

- **Connect strategic partners in the region to increase understanding and connection through comprehensive education and citizen awareness of cultural diversity in the region**
 - » **Description:** This tactic aims to connect key stakeholders—such as schools, community organizations, cultural groups, and local governments—to collaboratively promote cultural awareness and understanding. By organizing educational workshops, community events, and awareness campaigns, the goal is to celebrate the cultural diversity of the region and strengthen relationships among different groups. This initiative enhances community cohesion, encourages inclusivity, and helps residents appreciate the richness of cultural diversity, ultimately leading to a more unified and welcoming environment.



Economic Development Priority Three: Succeeding Through New Business Start-Ups

Objective #1: Celebrating the Successes of the Region

- **Continue promotions of all available programs**
 - » **Description:** This tactic involves promoting support programs, grants, and initiatives available to businesses in Flagstaff County. Using digital channels, social media, newsletters, and in-person outreach, the County ensures businesses stay informed and can leverage these programs. The goal is to boost program utilization and enhance regional economic vitality.
- **Continue profiles to promote MSME success and diversity**
 - » **Description:** This tactic highlights MSMEs that show success, resilience, or innovation, sharing their stories with the community. By showcasing diverse businesses and entrepreneurs, the County inspires others, fosters pride, and underscores diversity's role in economic development. Profiles will be shared via social media, newsletters, and local media to celebrate achievements and motivate others.
- **Celebrate Small Business Week**
 - » **Description:** Small Business Week celebrates the value of small businesses in Flagstaff County. This tactic involves planning events like workshops, networking sessions, and promotional activities. By hosting community events and encouraging local shopping, the County builds awareness of small business contributions and strengthens business-resident connections.

Objective#2 Create support for entrepreneurship endeavours

- **Continue to foster partnerships with business service providers in the region and identify new ones to explore**
 - » **Description:** This tactic focuses on maintaining and enhancing relationships with existing business service providers, such as financial institutions and training organizations. The County will also seek new partners to meet emerging business needs. These partnerships expand access to support services, enabling regional businesses to thrive.

Objective #3 Create a culture of entrepreneurship in the region

- **Develop youth entrepreneurship programming.**
 - » **Description:** This tactic aims to engage youth in entrepreneurship through workshops, mentorships, competitions, and hands-on learning. Collaborating with schools, youth groups, and mentors, the program develops skills, sparks interest in entrepreneurship, and lays a foundation for future ventures.
- **Build and foster partnerships with business service providers (capacity building, financing, technical expertise) to maximize entrepreneurial development in the County.**
 - » **Description:** This tactic seeks collaborations with banks, training groups, industry experts, and government agencies. The goal is to build a support network providing entrepreneurs access to financing, training, and expertise. These partnerships strengthen new business development and foster sustainable local economic growth.

Economic Development Priority Four: Succeeding Through New Business Investment

Objective #1: Retain investment through effective succession

- **Continue to host succession workshops to promote the importance and proper process of succession planning**
 - » **Description:** This tactic involves continuing to hold workshops focused on succession planning, covering essential topics such as business valuation, legal considerations, and preparing for a successful ownership transition. By hosting these workshops, Flagstaff County aims to raise awareness of the need for proactive planning and guide business owners through the complex process of passing their businesses to the next generation or preparing for sale. These sessions help ensure the long-term sustainability of local businesses and reduce the risk of closure due to poor succession planning.
- **Continue 1-on-1 succession programming to assist businesses in the process**
 - » **Description:** The 1-on-1 succession programming offers tailored support to business owners who are ready to start planning their transition. This includes working with business advisors to assess the current state of the business, identify suitable successors, and develop an actionable succession plan. By continuing this personalized assistance, Flagstaff County ensures that business owners receive the individualized support they need to successfully transition ownership and secure the future of their enterprises.
- **Add to the team that has been created to support businesses for succession (create relationships with business valuers, lawyers, accountants, financial planners, realtors, and others)**
 - » **Description:** This tactic focuses on strengthening the succession support network by establishing partnerships with experts such as business valuers, lawyers, accountants, financial planners, realtors, and other professionals. By building these relationships, the County can provide local businesses with access to specialized expertise, ensuring that all aspects of succession planning—from valuation to legal agreements—are handled effectively. This expanded team will be instrumental in helping business owners navigate the complexities of succession and achieve smooth transitions.

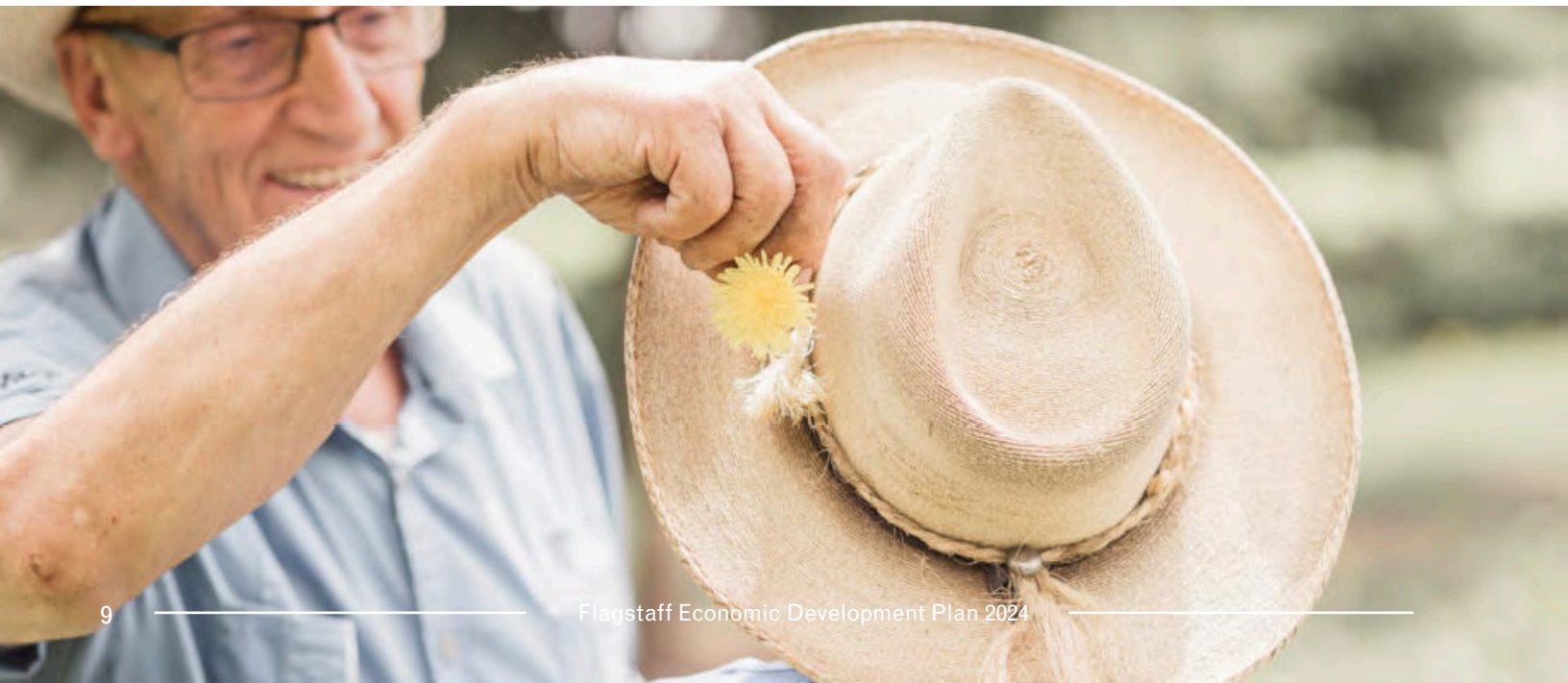
Objective#2: Build capacity to promote investment attraction within the Region (Investment Promotion Organization – IPO)

- **Promote Regional Tourism.**
 - » **Description:** This tactic focuses on highlighting Flagstaff County as an appealing tourism destination. By utilizing a combination of digital marketing, promotional campaigns, and partnerships with regional tourism boards, the County aims to showcase its unique attractions, cultural heritage, and outdoor activities. Specific strategies may include social media promotions, creating tourism brochures, organizing events, and building collaborations with local businesses to enhance the visitor experience. Ultimately, promoting regional tourism will help draw more visitors, boost local spending, and contribute to economic growth.
- **Continue to develop and update tools that are accessible and practical for promoting the region. This includes creating compelling marketing materials that present the unique value propositions of Flagstaff County to potential investors.**

- » **Description:** This tactic involves continually updating marketing tools and resources that are used to promote the County to potential investors. These tools include investment guides, brochures, websites, and other digital or physical marketing materials. By emphasizing the County's unique value propositions—such as its quality of life, business-friendly environment, available land, and skilled workforce—these materials are designed to attract and inform potential investors. Accessible and visually compelling resources will make it easier for investors to understand the benefits of investing in Flagstaff County.
- **Review and update previous investment readiness assessment.**
 - » **Description:** This tactic focuses on revisiting and updating the previous investment readiness assessment to ensure that Flagstaff County remains an attractive destination for investors. This includes evaluating current infrastructure, available services, labor force, and regulatory environment to identify any gaps or improvements needed. By keeping the assessment up to date, the County can take proactive steps to address challenges, improve the investment climate, and provide accurate information to potential investors, thus increasing the likelihood of successful investment attraction.

Objective #3: Ensure there are local financial mechanisms to support investment opportunities

- **Work/coordinate with local financial institutions as an advocate for the needs and interests of local businesses.**
 - » **Description:** This tactic involves collaborating with banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions to advocate for the interests of local businesses. By coordinating with these institutions, Flagstaff County can help improve access to capital, identify barriers to financing, and work to develop financial products that meet the unique needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The goal is to ensure that financial services are accessible and supportive of local business growth and development.
- **Explore the development and implementation of program(s) that provide financial support to businesses looking to expand or new businesses looking to establish themselves in the region.**
 - » **Description:** This tactic involves researching and designing financial programs that provide direct support to businesses interested in expanding or establishing operations in the County. Potential options include grants, low-interest loans, or matching funds to support growth initiatives. By providing financial support, Flagstaff County aims to reduce barriers for business owners, stimulate entrepreneurship, and attract new enterprises to the region. These programs



Foundations of Economic Development Success

Intentional Action:

This Economic Development Plan defines clear goals and objectives and outlines specific actions needed to achieve them, acknowledging that the path will be challenging and not all development is beneficial.

Strong Local Leadership:

The success of this plan depends on the adequacy and commitment of local leadership, as momentum and opportunities in Flagstaff County are meaningless without it.

Partnering and Partnerships:

Effective economic development requires collaboration with all levels of government, the private sector, public institutions, and other stakeholders to leverage resources and manage growth demands.

Creativity:

Rapid changes demand innovative and forward-looking approaches, and this plan emphasizes creativity and responsiveness, building on proven best practices.

Attention to the Needs of Local Businesses:

The plan focuses on understanding and supporting local businesses to enhance the business environment, recognizing their critical role in regional growth.

Community Engagement/Participation:

Stakeholder engagement and community participation are crucial for positive change, and the plan aims to enhance this through transparent and empowering processes.

Action Oriented:

The plan emphasizes practical, flexible, and responsive actions to align with the dynamic socio-economic environment and achieve long-term success shaped by decisions over time, best realized when communities address their unique circumstances with strategic, pragmatic, and holistic approaches, guided by strong local leadership and inclusive, transparent efforts.

Concluding Thoughts

The success of this plan relies on the capacities, capabilities, and commitment of those responsible for its implementation and those who influence its execution, such as leaders and strategic partners, for which, we aim to offer logical, relevant, and feasible recommendations. The primary goal of the Succeeding Together Plan is to establish a framework for the County of Flagstaff to strategically implement tactics for regional prosperity. The plan includes core programming aligned with available resources and actions to consider if additional resources become available. It acknowledges challenges and highlights the importance of forming partnerships with shared agendas. Success in economic development requires ongoing efforts, with the plan and tactics regularly reviewed to adapt to changing opportunities. Prosperity is an ongoing journey shaped by decisions over time, best realized when communities address their unique circumstances with strategic, pragmatic, and holistic approaches, guided by strong local leadership and inclusive, transparent efforts.



Prepared by: Lochaven Consulting
Lead by: Flagstaff County Economic Development
Supported by: Flagstaff County Council



For more opportunities about opportunities in the Flagstaff Region contact:

Flagstaff Economic Development Department
12345 Twp Rd. 442, Box 358
Sedgewick, AB, T0B4C0

email: ecdev@flagstaff.ab.ca
Phone: 1.780.384.4100