



# REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL

---

Council Chambers, Irricana Centennial Centre, 222 2 Street

Date: July 20, 2026 Time: 7:00PM

---

**A. ATTENDANCE**

**B. CALL TO ORDER**

**C. AGENDA**

**D. PRESENTATIONS**

**E. MINUTES**

Item E1: Minutes from June 15, 2026 Regular Meeting

**F. CORRESPONDENCE FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

**G. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Item G1: 2025-2026 Community Futures Impact Report

**H. OLD BUSINESS**

**I. NEW BUSINESS**

Item I1: 2026 Education Property Tax – Implementation Update

Item I2: Chief Administrative Officer Report

**J. COMMUNICATION / INFORMATION**

**K. COUNCILLOR UPDATE**

**L. CLOSED SESSION**

**M. ADJOURN**

---

**Item E1**

Minutes from June 15, 2026 Regular Meeting of Council

---



# MEETING MINUTES

---

## REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL

Council Chambers, Irricana Centennial Centre, 222 2 Street

Date: June 15, 2026 Time: 7:00PM

---

### A. ATTENDANCE

Mayor: Colleen MacLeod (Absent with Notice)  
Deputy Mayor: Julie Sim  
Councillors: Nathaniel Fleming, Megan Hoefnagels, Dawna Polson  
CAO: Doug Hafichuk  
Staff: Patty Malthouse

### B. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Deputy Mayor Sim at 7:01 pm.

### C. AGENDA

- (i) Item C1: Adopt Agenda  
81:26 Moved by Councillor Polson to adopt the Agenda, as presented.  
CARRIED

### D. PRESENTATIONS

- (i) None

### E. MINUTES

- (i) Item E1: Minutes of the Regular Meeting of Council for June 1, 2026  
82:26 Moved by Councillor Fleming to accept the Minutes from the Regular Meeting of Council for June 1, 2026, as presented.  
CARRIED

### F. CORRESPONDENCE FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- (i) None

### G. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- (i) None

## **H. OLD BUSINESS**

- (i) None

## **I. NEW BUSINESS**

- (i) Item I1: Draft Correspondence regarding AISH to ADAP Transition

83:26 Moved by Councillor Hoefnagels that Council approve the draft correspondence attached as Attachment 'A' and authorize the Mayor to execute the letter on behalf of Council.

CARRIED

- (ii) Item I2: Land Use Bylaw Amendment (R-MH District)

84:26 Moved by Councillor Polson that Council give First Reading to Bylaw 004:2026, being a Bylaw to amend Land Use Bylaw 007:2023 by restoring "Dwelling, Single Detached" as a Discretionary Use within the Residential – Manufactured Home District (R-MH) and establishing associated development standards.

CARRIED

- (iii) Item I3: Chief Administrative Officer Report

85:26 Moved by Councillor Fleming that the Chief Administrative Officer Report be received for information.

CARRIED

## **J. COMMUNICATION / INFORMATION**

- (i) None

## **K. COUNCILLOR UPDATE**

- (i) Roundtable Discussion

### Deputy Mayor Sim

#### 1) Community Futures: Walking Tour

Deputy Mayor Sim advised that the recent Community Futures walking tour of local businesses was cut short due to inclement weather and has been postponed to a later date. Participants then gathered at a local business on 2nd Street, where they continued discussions and networking.

### Councillor Hoefnagels

- 1) Library Board: Councillor Hoefnagels announced her appointment as Deputy Chair of the Library Board. She also provided a brief update on children's and teen programming initiatives at the Irricana Library.

Councillor Fleming

- 1) Beiseker Lions Country Fair: Councillor Fleming reported attending the annual Beiseker Lions Country Fair and Parade on June 13, noting it was a well-attended community event. He also participated in the car show by entering a vehicle. The event featured a variety of activities, including Meadowlark Trail's booth, food trucks, and vendors.

Councillor Polson

- 1) Irricana Library: Councillor Polson provided information from a recent Library Board meeting in conjunction with the Irricanarama event, including Library participation through storytelling activities, distribution of freebies, and setting up outdoor tables with free books for the public.

She further noted that the Library's local contest for a new logo has received three submissions to date and will be re-advertised with a revised deadline in mid to late July.

**L. CLOSED SESSION**

- (i) Item L1: Legislative and Administrative Matter, Closed per Sections 28(1) and 29(1) of the Access to Information Act.

86:26 Moved by Deputy Mayor Sim that Council go into Closed Session at 7:36 pm to discuss Item L1, Legislative and Administrative Matter, as per Sections 28(1) and 29(1) of the Access to Information Act.

87:26 Moved by Deputy Mayor Sim that Council reconvene to the public portion of the meeting at 8:30 pm.

88:26 Moved by Councillor Fleming that Council direct Administration to implement the corrective measures, *Option B*, as outlined in Report L1.

CARRIED

89:26 Moved by Councillor Hoefnagels that Council direct Administration to present a public report regarding the corrective measures outlined in Report L1, including an update on implementation activities, at the July 13, 2026 Regular Meeting of Council.

CARRIED

**M. ADJOURN**

(i) Adjournment

90:26 Moved by Councillor Fleming to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 pm.

CARRIED

-----  
Colleen MacLeod  
Mayor

-----  
Doug Hafichuk  
Chief Administrative Officer



# Council Report

---

**To:** Mayor and Council

**From:** Chief Administrative Officer

**Date:** July 20, 2026

**Purpose:** **Provided for Information**

**Subject:** 2026 Education Property Tax – Implementation Update

---

---

## **Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council and the public with an overview of the 2026 Education Property Tax calculation issue, summarize the corrective measures approved by Council, and provide an update on the implementation of those measures in response to Motion 89:26.

---

## **Background and Discussion:**

The integrity of the property tax system depends not only on accurate calculations, but also on responding transparently and decisively when issues are identified.

Following the issuance of the 2026 Property Tax Notices on May 29, 2026, Administration received a small number of inquiries from residents regarding the Provincial Education Property Tax appearing on their tax notices. During those discussions, Administration identified an apparent anomaly that warranted additional review. While the inquiries themselves did not identify the underlying issue, they prompted Administration to revisit the methodology used to establish the education tax rates contained within the 2026 Property Tax Bylaw.

That review ultimately identified 46 affected properties out of 609 taxable properties, representing approximately 7.6% of taxable accounts within the municipality.

The issue resulted from an incorrect interpretation of how the Provincial Education Requisition is translated into local education tax rates. Unlike most municipal property tax calculations, the Provincial Education Property Tax includes a unique aspect to its calculation methodology, requiring a common education tax rate to be established across combined assessment pools within each assessment class. Administration incorrectly interpreted that requirement, resulting in education tax rates that did not reflect the Province's intended methodology.

Importantly, this was not an arithmetic error, data entry error, or an incorrect Provincial Education Requisition. The Provincial Education Requisition itself was correct. Rather, the issue arose from the methodology used to translate that requisition into local education tax rates.

Recognizing the significance of the matter, Administration immediately leveraged its established working relationship with Municipal Affairs Advisory Services to validate its findings, confirm the appropriate interpretation of the Provincial Education Requisition, and identify the legislative options available to Council.

### **Council Direction**

Following confirmation of the issue, Administration undertook a comprehensive property-by-property review to determine the scope and impact of the incorrect methodology before presenting its findings and recommendations to Council.

On June 15, 2026, Council considered the matter and the legislative options available under the *Municipal Government Act*. Following thoughtful consideration of the available approaches, Council provided clear and timely direction to proceed with 'Option B' (Motion 88:26), authorizing targeted tax reductions for the affected properties rather than reissuing all 609 property tax notices.

Council's direction reflected a pragmatic approach that enabled corrective measures to begin immediately, ensured affected property owners would not pay additional taxes as a result of the issue, minimized disruption for the broader community, and allowed the matter to be resolved quickly and transparently.

### **Implementation Update**

At the June 15, 2026 Regular Meeting, Council further resolved that “...*Council direct Administration to present a public report regarding the corrective measures outlined in Report L1, including an update on implementation activities, at the July 13, 2026 Regular Meeting of Council.*”

Following Council's direction, Administration immediately began implementing the approved corrective measures.

Between June 16 and June 18, every affected account was manually reviewed and verified to ensure the appropriate corrective action was applied. This review confirmed the impact to each property, validated the required adjustment, and established the appropriate implementation pathway based on the status of each account.

Implementing Council's direction required four distinct corrective processes:

- Unpaid accounts (26) received revised tax balances reflecting the approved reductions.
- Accounts (6) that had already been paid received refund payments.
- Accounts (9) administered through third-party financial institutions required an alternate approach to ensure property owners received timely reimbursement where property tax payments had already been initiated.
- Tax Instalment Payment Plan (TIPP) accounts (5) received adjustments to their remaining monthly instalments.

Each affected property owner received written correspondence explaining the issue, outlining the corrective action applicable to their account, and providing Administration's contact information should additional questions arise.

Administration also appreciates the residents who raised questions regarding their tax notices. Those discussions prompted the additional review that ultimately led to identification of the issue and its timely resolution.

### **Analysis**

While Administration regrets that this issue occurred, the Town's response reflects its commitment to accountability, transparency, and good governance.

Once the issue was identified, Administration undertook a comprehensive review, validated its findings with Municipal Affairs Advisory Services, developed legislative options for Council's consideration, and implemented Council's direction immediately following the June 15 meeting. Council, in turn, recognized the urgency of the matter, carefully considered the available options, and provided clear direction that enabled a rapid and practical resolution.

Good governance is measured not only by an organization's ability to prevent issues, but also by how it responds when they arise. In this instance, the Town identified the issue, acknowledged it openly, worked collaboratively with Provincial partners to confirm the appropriate course of action, and implemented corrective measures that ensured every affected property received the appropriate adjustment while minimizing disruption to the broader community.

---

### **Financial Implication(s):**

---

Implementing Council's direction resulted in a \$37,821 reduction in anticipated 2026 tax revenue. Administration has reviewed the financial implications and confirms that this shortfall can be fully absorbed within the approved 2026 Operating Budget

through a combination of confirmed and anticipated operating savings resulting from staffing changes and operational efficiencies.

As a result, Administration does not anticipate any impact to approved service levels, capital projects, or the Town's overall financial position.

---

**Recommendation:**

---

That Administration's report be received as information.

---

**Recommendation Motion(s):**

---

**Option #1:**

Motion #1:           **THAT** Council receive Administration's report as information.

**Option #2:**

As determined by Council.

Respectfully submitted,

"Doug Hafichuk"

---

Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENTS:**

N/A



# Council Report

---

**To:** Mayor and Council  
**From:** Chief Administrative Officer  
**Date:** July 20, 2026  
**Purpose:** **Provided for Information**  
**Subject:** Chief Administrative Officer Report

---

---

## **Summary:**

---

The reporting period has been characterized by strong execution across a broad range of Council priorities. Strategic initiatives such as the Municipal Development Plan have transitioned into active public engagement, several significant development applications have advanced through the municipal approval process, and seasonal operations continue to be delivered at a high level.

At the same time, Administration has continued investing in organizational capacity, infrastructure management, and community partnerships that will support the Town's long-term success.

Collectively, these activities reflect an organization that is not only delivering day-to-day municipal services, but also intentionally building the relationships, systems, and institutional capacity necessary to support Irricana's continued growth.

---

## **Background and Discussion:**

---

### **Strategic Growth & Community Development**

Council's long-term growth initiatives continue to transition from planning into implementation.

Public engagement associated with the Municipal Development Plan has begun with the first two community "Coffee Chat" sessions hosted by Bluerock Planning. More than 50 community surveys were completed during these initial engagements, providing an excellent early foundation for the project.

Initial observations suggest participation skewed toward an older demographic, which is consistent with similar engagement exercises. Additional opportunities are now

being planned to better engage younger residents and adults under 40. Bluerock is preparing a "What We Heard" report for presentation to Council on August 10, in conjunction with a Council workshop to further explore emerging themes and future policy directions.

Community Futures Wild Rose's second annual 'Business Walk' took place, providing another opportunity to meet directly with local businesses, discuss opportunities and challenges, and strengthen relationships within the local business community.

Combined with the Municipal Development Plan engagement activities, these conversations continue to reinforce the importance of maintaining strong relationships with residents, businesses, and prospective investors as the Town plans for future growth.

Administration has also completed review of two significant development applications for consideration by the Municipal Planning Commission. Together, the proposed redevelopment of the former Hotel Irricana property and a multi-lot light industrial subdivision represent continued private investment in both the community's established commercial areas and its future employment lands.

While each application proceeds through its own approval process, their concurrent consideration reflects continued confidence in Irricana as a place to invest and aligns closely with Council's long-term economic development objectives.

Administration has also initiated appraisals of several municipally-owned properties to better inform future Council discussions regarding redevelopment opportunities, land management, and long-term strategic planning.

Administration continues to engage with landowners, developers, and prospective investors regarding Council's recently adopted Development Incentives Policy. While it remains too early to evaluate long-term outcomes, Administration is beginning to observe the policy *influencing conversations* surrounding redevelopment, land transactions, and investment decisions in a manner generally consistent with policy objectives.

## **Operations & Infrastructure**

Seasonal operations continue to be delivered on schedule while also strengthening the Town's long-term operational capacity.

The transition to Collective Waste as the Town's new Solid Waste and Recycling contractor was completed successfully on July 7. The change included a new Tuesday collection schedule together with a comprehensive communication strategy involving

direct mail, roadside signage, Voyent Alert notifications, website updates, social media messaging, and new educational materials.

A 'first-day operational follow-up' with the contractor was completed to quickly identify and resolve any emerging issues, with additional community messaging to share early findings. Overall, *the transition proceeded exceptionally well*, with minimal disruption to residents and strong collaboration between Administration and the contractor.

The Irricana Campground continues to perform well under direct municipal operation. Following an exceptionally busy Canada Day weekend and increased visitation associated with both the Irricana Junior Rodeo and Out West Truck Fest, campground revenues have now exceeded \$48,000 for the 2026 season. While major community events create unique operational demands, they also continue to demonstrate the campground's value as both a recreational amenity and an economic development asset.

Administration continues to advance a broad range of highly visible seasonal infrastructure and maintenance activities.

Water system line flushing was completed during the week of July 13 in support of system maintenance and water quality. Preparations are also underway for annual line painting, including staff training completed during July with paint application anticipated in August.

In addition to supporting seasonal operations, expanding this expertise internally continues Administration's broader objective of strengthening operational capacity and reducing long-term reliance on contracted services where practical. Road patching and sidewalk repairs are similarly scheduled for August as part of the Town's ongoing asset maintenance program.

Behind the scenes, Administration continues to strengthen long-term infrastructure management through ongoing curb-stop location work. Information collected through these field investigations will ultimately be incorporated into the Town's Geographic Information System (GIS), improving asset records, operational efficiency, and future infrastructure planning.

### **Organizational Excellence & Service Delivery**

Alongside day-to-day municipal operations, Administration continues to strengthen organizational capacity and maintain continuity across several municipal services.

Following notification that the current Community Peace Officer will not be renewing his contract, Administration has been working collaboratively with its regional partners to determine an appropriate path forward. Given the timing of that decision, together with temporary administrative capacity constraints within one of the partner municipalities, the participating municipalities have agreed that it is prudent to address immediate service needs locally while revisiting the longer-term future of the regional service model later this fall.

To ensure continuity of service, Administration is proceeding with the temporary engagement of a contracted Bylaw Enforcement Officer dedicated exclusively to the Town of Irricana.

While this interim approach will focus primarily on municipal bylaw enforcement rather than the full scope of Community Peace Officer authorities, it is expected to maintain the visible local enforcement presence residents have become accustomed to while providing Administration the flexibility to participate in broader regional discussions regarding future service delivery. Administration anticipates this interim model can be implemented within the approved operating budget and with minimal interruption to existing service levels.

Following a similar initiative in 2025, Administration has also begun preparing several enforcement files where voluntary compliance efforts have not achieved the desired outcome. While education and cooperation remain the preferred approach, formal enforcement tools will continue to be utilized where necessary to maintain neighbourhood quality and community standards. Together, these initiatives help ensure continuity of service while supporting Council's ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe, attractive, and well-managed community.

Administration has also begun working with 211 Alberta to strengthen alignment between municipal and provincial support services. While opportunities for immediate collaboration are expected to be modest, establishing these relationships now positions the Town to better connect residents with available services while supporting future partnerships and improving access to community resources.

### **Community Partnerships**

Strong community organizations continue to play an essential role in Irricana's success.

Administration extends its sincere congratulations to both the Irricana Lions Club and the Irricana Ladies Club as they celebrate their 50th Anniversary this month. Reaching such a remarkable milestone reflects decades of volunteerism, community

leadership, and unwavering commitment to making Irricana a stronger and more vibrant place to live.

The July 18 community celebration provides an opportunity not only to recognize these organizations, but also to acknowledge the countless volunteers whose efforts continue to enrich community life. The longstanding partnerships these organizations have fostered with the community are incredibly valuable and praiseworthy, with continuing that collaboration being incredibly important.

---

**Financial Implication(s):**

---

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

---

**Recommendation:**

---

Administration recommends that the report be received for information.

---

**Recommendation Motion(s):**

---

**Option #1:**

Motion #1:           **THAT** the Chief Administrative Officer Report be received for information.

**Option #2:**

As determined by Council.

Respectfully submitted,

“Doug Hafichuk”

---

Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENTS:**

N/A

---

**Item G1**

2025-2026 Community Futures Impact Report

---

# Community Futures Wild Rose Impact Report 2025 - 2026

Supporting rural businesses, strengthening communities, and building regional resilience.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**03** OPENING MESSAGE

---

**04** OUR MESSAGE, VISION, & VALUES - WHAT WE DO

---

**05** LEADERSHIP THROUGH TRANSITION

---

**07** 2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

---

**08** OUR IMPACT SINCE 1989

---

**09** SUCCESS STORIES - HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY

---

**12** STRENGTHENING BUSINESSES

---

**13** STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

---

**17** WHAT WAS NEW THIS YEAR

---

**19** THANK YOU - CLOSING MESSAGE

---



## A Year of Strong Results and Meaningful Impact

As we reflect on the 2025/26 year, we do so with a deep sense of commitment, gratitude, and purpose. Community Futures Wild Rose exists to support the people, businesses, and communities that make this region strong, and this past year reminded us once again just how important that work is.

Across our region, entrepreneurs continued to face real pressures, from rising costs and labour challenges to uncertainty in the broader economy. At the same time, communities were working to strengthen local capacity, support growth, and respond to changing needs. In that environment, Community Futures Wild Rose remained focused on what matters most: providing practical support, responsive service, and trusted leadership close to home.

This was a year of strong results. CFWR met and exceeded all annual performance targets, with overall KPI performance averaging 448%. We saw significant impact through lending, business advisory services, training participation, and community-based project work. These results speak not only to the dedication of our staff and Board, but also to the continued relevance of Community Futures in rural Alberta.

Just as important as the numbers is what they represent. Behind every loan approved, every business advisory session delivered, every training participant supported, and every community project advanced is a business owner taking a next step, a municipality building capacity, or a community working toward a stronger future.

This report has been prepared as an **Impact Report** because we wanted to share more than activity. We wanted to show the difference this work is making across the region.

This year also brought important transition. CFWR managed the retirement of a long-serving staff member, welcomed significant Board renewal following the 2025 municipal election, and continued planning in the face of uncertainty related to the federal review of the Community Futures program and the move to a one-year funding extension for 2026/27. Through it all, the organization remained stable, forward-looking, and committed to strong stewardship.

We are proud of what was accomplished this year. From strong lending performance and expanded training opportunities to municipal collaboration, community engagement, and new service innovation, CFWR continues to evolve in ways that reflect the real needs of our region.

To our Board, staff, shareholders, funding partners, and community collaborators, thank you for the trust you place in Community Futures Wild Rose. We are pleased to share this report with you and grateful for the work it represents. Together, we are helping build stronger businesses, stronger communities, and a stronger future for rural Alberta.

**Dennis Hazelton**, Board Chair  
**Chantale Sangster**, Executive Director



## Our Message

Community-owned and committed to building resilient businesses, vibrant communities, and strong futures.

## Our Vision

Community Futures Wild Rose creates thriving communities one business idea at a time.

## Our Values

Accountability & Transparency  
Innovation & Vision  
Integrity & Trust  
Inclusion  
Empathy & Hope

## What We Do

Community Futures Wild Rose is a community-owned organization committed to building resilient businesses, vibrant communities, and strong futures. We provide business loans, advisory services, training, and community economic development support across our region.

Our work is grounded in the belief that strong rural businesses contribute to strong rural communities. Whether we are helping an entrepreneur access capital, supporting a municipality through local economic development work, or delivering practical training to employers and business owners, our role is to provide responsive, practical support that helps local people and places thrive.

# Leadership Through Transition

Community Futures Wild Rose is governed by a Board of Directors made up entirely of municipally elected officials appointed by our shareholder municipalities. This governance structure keeps our organization closely connected to the communities we serve and ensures that our decisions are grounded in local knowledge, regional priorities, and a shared commitment to rural economic development.

The 2025 municipal election brought significant change to our Board. As municipal appointments changed across the region, nine of our fifteen Directors concluded their service with Community Futures Wild Rose midway through our fiscal year.

We extend our sincere appreciation to these outgoing Directors for their leadership, stewardship, and commitment to the organization during their time on the Board:

- Amber Link, Chair
- Wade Christie, Vice Chair
- Jason Montgomery, Treasurer
- Les Spurgeon
- Rose Jimmo
- Mike Wetzstein
- Les Schultz
- Flo Robinson
- Leah Smith

Their contributions helped guide Community Futures Wild Rose through an important period of growth, strong lending activity, expanded business supports, and regional impact. We are grateful for the time, perspective, and community leadership they brought to the Board table.

We also recognize the Directors who remained on the Board through this transition and helped provide steady leadership during a period of significant governance change:

- Dennis Hazelton, Chair
- Chris Armstrong, Vice Chair
- Rhonda Laking, Treasurer
- Janelle Sandboe
- Julie Sim
- Richard Bryan

Their experience and regional perspective supported Board continuity as the organization moved into its next chapter of municipal representation.

Following the election, Community Futures Wild Rose welcomed nine new Directors to the Board:

- Matthew Loewen
- Neil Young
- Stacey McKenna
- Michelle Plante
- Laura Lee Machell-Cunningham
- Trish McConnell
- Darcy Burke
- Claude Brown
- Donna Biggar

This transition represents both a significant change and an important opportunity. With returning Directors providing continuity and new Directors bringing fresh perspectives from across the region, the Board is well positioned to continue advancing Community Futures Wild Rose's mandate: supporting entrepreneurs, strengthening local economies, and investing in the long-term vitality of our communities.

## 2025/2026 Board of Directors



Dennis Hazelton  
Board Chair, Three Hills



Chris Armstrong  
Vice Chair, Trochu



Rhonda Laking  
Board Treasurer, Acme



Matthew Loewen  
Bassano



Neil Young  
Beiseker



Stacey McKenna  
Carbon



Janelle Sandboe  
Chestermere



Michelle Plante  
Hussar



Julie Sim  
Irricana



Laura Lee Machell-Cunningham  
Kneehill County



Trish McConnell  
Linden



Darcy Burke  
Rockyford



Richard Bryan  
Standard



Claude Brown  
Strathmore



Donna Biggar  
Wheatland County

# 2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

This year, CFWR exceeded targets across business services, lending, leveraged investment, and community-based project work.

**448%**

average KPI  
Performance

**242%**

of loan value  
target achieved

**167%**

of loan volume  
target achieved

**260%**

of businesses  
supported target  
achieved

**2096%**

of leveraged  
lending target  
achieved

**243%**

of training  
participation  
target achieved

**109%**

of advisory  
services target  
achieved

**850%**

of new community-  
based project  
target achieved

**632%**

of community  
investment target  
achieved



**333%**

of WD/GOC  
priority-aligned  
project target  
achieved

# WE'VE HIT 40 MILLION

## OUR IMPACT SINCE 1989

**35,273**

Jobs Created  
or Maintained

**\$40,306,044**

in Loans

**51,115**

Business Coaching  
Sessions

**102,687**

Client Services  
Delivered

**\$54,798,765**

Leveraged Funds  
into our Communities

**28,442**

Business Training  
Participants

## More Than \$40 Million Invested Back Into Our Communities

Since 1989, Community Futures Wild Rose has supported rural businesses and communities through lending, business coaching, training, and economic development initiatives.

In 2025–2026, we are proud to celebrate a major milestone: more than **\$40 million loaned to local businesses since our inception**. Beginning with a \$1 million federal investment, those funds have been continually reinvested into our region through the Community Futures model, helping entrepreneurs start, grow, and sustain their businesses.

This milestone is more than a financial achievement. It reflects the strength of rural business owners who borrow, build, repay, and make it possible for those dollars to support the next entrepreneur, the next job, and the next community success story. It is a powerful example of local investment staying local, and of responsible stewardship creating lasting impact across the region.

# SUCCESS STORIES



## Heart of Our Community

The Heart of Our Community campaign was created to celebrate the small businesses that do far more than sell products or provide services. Across the Community Futures Wild Rose region, local businesses sponsor minor sports teams, donate to community fundraisers, support local events, volunteer their time, create places to gather, and quietly step forward when their communities need them. Through this campaign, residents were invited to nominate businesses that make a meaningful difference in the places they call home.



In 2025/26, the response confirmed what we already know: small businesses are deeply woven into the fabric of our communities. The campaign received **192 nominations** from across the region and resulted in **53 business stories** being shared online. Four regional winners were selected, each receiving a **\$1,000 cash prize** in recognition of their contribution. The following success stories highlight the businesses chosen as Heart of Our Community winners and the local impact they continue to make every day.

## WINNERS

**Joker Bicycle Co.**, owned by Jake Gelderblom, was the **Q1 winner** of our Heart of Our Community Business Award.

Jake has spent the past three years making cycling accessible for all, donating, repairing, and giving away bikes in partnership with Lil' Hoots, Carseland School, the local church thrift store, and even a martial arts raffle. He also volunteers with the Strathmore Kiwanis Bicycle Rodeo, teaching kids bike safety and doing on-the-spot repairs.

With 80% of his earnings reinvested into donation bikes, Jake's passion, generosity, and community spirit shine through in everything he does. Joker Bicycle Co. goes above and beyond to support the community.



# WINNERS



**Sweet P's** was the **Q2 winner** of our Heart of Our Community Business Award.

Sweet P'S functions are more than just a cozy café and gift shop. From supporting school sports, local playschools, and minor hockey, to contributing to town events, fundraisers, and senior services, their generosity touches every corner of the community. They even offer bulk flower discounts to support groups, such as the Trochu Dance Troupe and local schools.

Nominators praised Brenda and her daughters for consistently giving back and continually growing with the community, including building a brand-new space to serve Trochu even better.

**LUFF Industries** was the **Q3 winner** of our Heart of Our Community Business Award.

Founded in 1979, LUFF Industries has grown into a global manufacturer with strong local roots. For decades, the LUFF family and team have supported countless community initiatives, including the Irricana and Beiseker Fire Departments, STARS, 4-H clubs, local food banks, minor hockey, agricultural societies, and events like the Beiseker Country Fair and Irricanarama.

Nominators praised LUFF as the “go-to” supporters of community life, from hosting the beloved Country Fair Breakfast to staging “Cars and Country Stars,” donating equipment, funds, and time to make local events thrive.



# WINNERS



**Langdon Community Pet Co.**, was the **Q4 winner** of our Heart of Our Community Business Award.



Connie has created a welcoming, compassionate community hub through supporting local rescues, the food bank, youth programs, and countless fundraisers, while always putting people (and pets!) first.

Nominators shared how Langdon Community Pet Co. is far more than a pet supply shop. It's a safe, welcoming space where people and pets feel cared for, supported, and truly at home. From sourcing special items for customers to supporting youth sports, local fundraisers, and the South East Rocky View Food Bank, Connie's commitment runs deep. Children even stop by during lunch because they know it's a place of kindness and connection.

# Strengthening Businesses

## Access to Capital Paired with Practical Support

Supporting business growth remained central to Community Futures Wild Rose’s work in 2025/26. Through a combination of lending, advisory services, coaching, training, and relationship-based support, CFWR helped businesses start, stabilize, adapt, and grow across the region.

This work supported CFWR’s strategic priorities by ensuring entrepreneurs had access to capital and the practical tools, guidance, and confidence they needed to make informed business decisions. In a year marked by continued demand for financing and business support, CFWR exceeded several of its key performance targets.

### 2025/26 Lending and Business Impact Results

| <u>Measure</u>                             | <u>Result</u>  |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Loan value.....                            | \$1,552,000.00 |
| Number of loans.....                       | 21             |
| Jobs created, maintained, or expanded..... | 54             |
| Leveraged capital through lending.....     | \$1,922,241.00 |

These results reflect both the level of demand from entrepreneurs and CFWR’s ability to use capital strategically to unlock further investment in the region. Strong lending activity is not simply a measure of dollars disbursed; it represents businesses moving forward, projects being completed, jobs being created or maintained, and local economies being strengthened.

A key part of CFWR’s impact is its integrated support model. Lending is paired with one-to-one advisory services, financial review, business diagnostics, training, and practical coaching. This approach helps entrepreneurs better understand their numbers, assess risk, identify opportunities, and make stronger decisions before, during, and after financing.

Throughout the year, CFWR’s strategic plan remained an active tool for accountability. Monthly reporting to the Board aligned organizational activity with the plan’s key priorities, while the annual strategic plan review provided an opportunity to assess progress, identify emerging needs, and ensure that programs and services remained responsive to businesses across the region.

The results achieved in 2025/26 demonstrate that CFWR’s work is both targeted and practical. By combining access to capital with hands-on business support, CFWR continues to strengthen the entrepreneurs, small businesses, and local economies that drive regional vitality.

# Strengthening Communities

## Strengthening Communities Through Local Action

New community-based projects:

**850%**  
of target

Community investment:

**630%**  
of target

Partners engaged:

**233%**  
of target

## Community Heroes: Bringing Nonprofits to the Forefront

Community Futures Wild Rose launched Community Heroes to help non-profits raise awareness, strengthen their visibility, and connect more effectively with the people who need their services. The project goes beyond advertising alone by also helping organizations improve their online presence and strengthen their 211 Alberta listings, making it easier for residents to discover and access local supports. This matters in rural communities, where important services may exist yet remain under-recognized or difficult to find.

The project is off to a strong start. To date, 41 organizations have been featured across the first three cohorts, with 13 organizations in Cohort 1, 14 in Cohort 2, and 14 in Cohort 3. Collaboration has been a key strength of the initiative, with participation from seven FCSS offices — Beiseker, Irricana, Strathmore, Wheatland, Chestermere, Kneehill, and Bassano — along with 211 Alberta. The project has also surpassed its collaboration targets through partnerships with nine regional media outlets and three Chambers, expanding reach across the region.



Early results show meaningful momentum. From Cohort 1 alone, featured organizations reached a combined audience of 699,077 through a mix of print, radio, and digital media. Reporting from Cohorts 2 and 3 is still pending, meaning total reach will continue to grow. Feedback from participating organizations has been very positive, with many sharing that they feel more seen and supported in the work they do. Overall, Community Heroes is delivering on its purpose: increasing awareness of non-profit services, strengthening community connections, and helping more residents find the supports available in their communities.

# Strengthening Communities

## Advancing Workforce Development through Apprenticeship / Trades & Engagement

In 2025, the Advancing Workforce Development through Apprenticeship/Trades & Engagement project continued to build awareness, strengthen workforce connections, and support both employers and job seekers across the region. Through a combination of hands-on events, employer training, and direct engagement, the project is focused on increasing interest in skilled trades (including healthcare trades) and reducing barriers to entering these career pathways. To date, we have delivered multiple HR-focused sessions, supporting **47 businesses** with practical tools and resources related to recruitment, retention, and workforce management, while reaching a total of **348 participants across all project activities**.

A key highlight has been the **Try a Trade Day**, which brought in **just over 300 attendees** last year, including high school students, job seekers, and adults exploring career changes. The event created a highly engaging environment where participants were able to try hands-on skills, interact with trades professionals, and connect with post-secondary institutions and resource providers.



As a direct outcome, 2 RAP student placements were secured, and many attendees reported learning about new career opportunities they had not previously considered. Strong connections were built between local trades professionals and high school students, and many of the tradespeople expressed how much they enjoyed the experience and are excited to return this year to participate again. The strong engagement, particularly at interactive demonstration tables, reinforced the value of experiential learning in career exploration.



Building on this success, **two Try a Trade Days are scheduled for this year**—one in Strathmore and one in Kneehill County—to expand reach and maintain momentum. The project continues to adapt based on feedback to ensure programming remains relevant and impactful, with a continued focus on strengthening workforce pathways, supporting employers, and increasing participation in high-demand trades across the region.

# Strengthening Communities

## ExitNavigator Program – Business Succession



The ExitNavigator project has strengthened business transition support across rural Alberta by bringing together 26 Community Futures offices into a coordinated, province-wide delivery model. The program generated strong engagement, with 140 contacts, 63 consultations, over 250 workshop registrations (127+ attendees), and 137 resource downloads, equipping business owners and buyers with practical tools to move forward.

A province-wide digital campaign drove significant awareness, reaching over 2.4 million impressions, 60,000+ clicks, and nearly 58,000 website visits, resulting in 922 conversions. From an economic development perspective, the project supported 272 businesses created, maintained, or expanded—exceeding targets—and is contributing to a growing pipeline of business transitions, strengthening long-term economic resilience in rural communities.

## Hire for Talent

The Hire for Talent initiative (2024–2026), led by CBDC Restigouche in partnership with the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, is a national research and training project focused on helping rural SMEs better support employees experiencing mental health challenges and disabilities. Engaging over 500 SMEs per phase across Canada, the project identified key training priorities including workplace mental health awareness, employer responsibilities, flexible work arrangements, and navigating difficult conversations—reinforcing the need for practical, rural-focused supports.



In the Community Futures Wild Rose region, **56 entrepreneurs were directly engaged**, including **9 participants in the in-person case study**, **31 across three national surveys**, and **16 in the Inclusive by Design webinar**. Regional participants gained practical tools to support employee wellbeing, improve retention, and build more inclusive workplaces. This work has strengthened local business capacity while ensuring rural Alberta perspectives are reflected in national workforce strategies.

# Strengthening Communities

## Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program (EDP)

In 2025–26, Community Futures Wild Rose (CFWR) supported six participants through the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program (EDP), helping individuals turn personal challenges into meaningful economic opportunities. Among them was a military veteran who served in Afghanistan and now lives with PTSD.



After relocating his family to Kneehill County, he began building a hobby farm with the support of two CFWR loans—one to purchase a tractor and a small herd of alpaca, and another to acquire a hay baler attachment—creating both therapeutic value and a new tourist destination spot in the region.

The program also supported a woman living with chronic pain and depression who launched a specialized massage therapy business for horses and dogs, and another participant who, following a late diagnosis of adult ADHD, is developing a coaching practice to support others navigating similar experiences. These stories reflect the EDP program's role in fostering resilience, self-employment, and improved quality of life for individuals facing barriers, while contributing to the vibrancy of rural communities.

## Young Entrepreneurs Training Initiative (YETI)

In 2025, Community Futures Wild Rose (CFWR) supported local youth through the **Young Entrepreneurs Training Initiative (YETI)**, a summer program that helps high school students start or expand their own businesses through hands-on training, mentorship, and one-on-one coaching.



Participants gained practical experience in business planning, marketing, and financial management while building confidence and real-world skills. One student described the program as “truly transformational,” sharing that it not only developed their entrepreneurial abilities but also connected them with an inspiring and supportive community.

These experiences reflect YETI's role in fostering confidence, independence, and entrepreneurial thinking in youth, while contributing to the growth of future business leaders in rural communities.

# Strengthening Communities

## Capital Growth Initiative (CGI)

Through the Capital Growth Initiative (CGI) program in 2025–26, Community Futures Wild Rose (CFWR) continued to strengthen women-owned rural businesses by providing targeted capital that enables female entrepreneurs to grow, diversify, and become more sustainable.

During this year, CFWR completed two CGI loans that demonstrate the program's impact. One supported an Indigenous woman in expanding her custom creative design studio—specializing in logo design, branding, website development, social media marketing, and branded apparel—from her home into a small retail space in Three Hills, increasing her visibility and capacity for growth.

The second loan was provided to a Black female entrepreneur who launched a trauma-informed virtual counselling practice serving individuals and couples across Canada from her home, addressing a critical and growing need for accessible mental health support. Both businesses are performing well and thriving as a result of the CGI program, highlighting how strategic investment can empower diverse entrepreneurs, foster inclusive economic development, and strengthen the resilience of rural communities.

## What Was New This Year

### What Was New This Year

Several important service and process improvements were advanced in 2025/26, reflecting CFWR's commitment to practical, responsive, and entrepreneur-focused support. These improvements were designed to make CFWR's services easier to access, better aligned with business needs, and more effective in helping entrepreneurs move from idea to action.

# What Was New This Year

## **Builder's Bridge Line of Credit**

The Builder's Bridge product was refined from a term loan model into a Builder's Bridge Line of Credit, providing greater flexibility for builders managing cash flow between project stages. This change better reflects how construction projects actually operate, where costs often occur before draws or payments are received.

The redesigned product allows CFWR to support qualified builders with flexible working capital while still maintaining strong risk management. A senior lender must be in place, which means CFWR is able to work alongside the checks and balances already built into the bank's construction financing process, including permitting, inspections, staged draws, and asset review. This structure helps protect both the builder and CFWR while addressing a real financing gap in the region.

## **Scale-Up Lending Product**

CFWR also developed a new Scale-Up lending product to better support established businesses preparing for growth. This product recognizes that many growth-stage businesses need access to larger, more flexible financing than traditional small business start-up loans, but may not always see Community Futures as a lending partner for expansion.

The Scale-Up product is intended for businesses with traction, experience, and a clear growth opportunity. It is supported by enhanced due diligence, including a practical cash flow review to help business owners understand timing, working capital needs, and the financial realities of scaling. This approach ensures that growth capital is paired with thoughtful planning and stronger decision-making.

## **Launch Pad Online Learning System**

The Launch Pad online learning system expanded access to training and business resources by offering entrepreneurs a self-directed learning option they can complete at their own pace. This is especially valuable in a region made up of many smaller communities, where travel, scheduling, seasonal demands, and day-to-day business operations can make it difficult for entrepreneurs to attend live training sessions.

Launch Pad allows business owners to access practical learning when it works best for them. They can move through content on their own schedule, revisit material as needed, and build their skills in a way that fits around the realities of running a business. Combined with CFWR's workshops, coaching, and one-on-one advisory support, Launch Pad helps extend access to business development resources across the region.

# Thank You

CFWR's work is made possible through the support of its Board of Directors, municipal shareholders, funding partners, program collaborators, and the many businesses and communities that continue to place their trust in the organization. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve this region and to work alongside those who are committed to building strong businesses and vibrant communities.

