






YEAR IN REVIEW 2023



Lethbridge is...

-  A welcoming & diverse community embracing new opportunities.
-  A collaborative regional hub where innovation inspires investment.
-  A leader in sustainable business, academic excellence, and creative social enterprise.

Our VISION is a future Lethbridge that is recognized nationally and internationally for its many strengths. We are optimistic about what Lethbridge can become.

We leverage our Brighter Together community brand to actively promote Lethbridge as a healthy place to live, learn, invest, experience, and do business.



Image by: Coalbanks Creative

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

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Adriana Mercader
BOARD CHAIR & PRESIDENT

EDL Board Chair

"It has been an honor to serve as the Chair and President of the Economic Development Lethbridge Board over the past year. As a member of our community, having the opportunity to collaborate with so many individuals and organizations dedicated to the economic and social enhancement of Lethbridge and our region, has truly been a highlight for me both personally and professionally. Throughout 2023, we embarked on numerous innovative initiatives and projects that have left a lasting impact on our community. We have accelerated our collaboration with regional partners to promote Canada's Premier Food Corridor and initiated a strategic plan with the City of Lethbridge to attract film, television, and creative industries to our region. We also continued to leverage data from the Brighter Together business survey to introduce new tools and resources for Lethbridge and area businesses and job seekers to help address workforce needs. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated EDL Board members, partners, and stakeholders for their continued dedication to the organization, and extend my genuine appreciation to the EDL staff, whose collective commitment continues to elevate Lethbridge as an exceptional place to live, work, invest, learn, and thrive."



Trevor Lewington
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

EDL CEO

"A significant federal funding contribution enabled us to add two dedicated positions to the EDL team in 2023 to support the continued growth and development of Canada's Premier Food Corridor. Working collaboratively with four municipal partners, we're excited to build on a strong foundation of the region's agriculture sector to grow new opportunities for value-added processing.

We also added a new member to our leadership team as we laid the foundation of a strategy to grow Creative Industries in Lethbridge. Harnessing Alberta's growing global reputation in film and television combined with opportunities in gaming, e-sports, and virtual reality could help further diversify our region's economy.

Key new work for us in 2023 included preparation for the launch of two successful programs in June under the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program. We were pleased with strong interest by new talent seeking to join Lethbridge's workforce through the Rural Renewal Stream and many qualified inquiries from foreign business owners and potential investors through the Rural Entrepreneur Stream.

The risks of drought, persistent inflation, supply chain disruptions from geopolitical unrest are among the concerns on our radar that could distract us from our business plan objectives. While there continues to be many economic uncertainties ahead, I'm fortunate to work with a talented professional team backed by the depth of our community-driven Board of Directors."

Board of Directors

Economic Development Lethbridge is an arm's length organization, supported by the City of Lethbridge, governed by a 31-member volunteer Board of Directors and managed by a team of professionals dedicated to promoting economic prosperity in Lethbridge. Board members are drawn from a diverse cross-section of the community with the intention of best accomplishing the mission and objectives of the organization.

2023 BOARD MEMBERS

Agriculture/Agri-Food

John Ross

Airport

Vacant

Arts, Culture & Entertainment

Mary Ann Crow Healy

Chamber of Commerce

Charlene Scheffelmair

City Mayor

Blaine Hyggen

City Councillor

Ryan Parker / John Middleton-Hope / Mark Campbell

City Manager

Lloyd Brierley

Community & Social Services

Robin James

Construction

Evan Barr

Education

Allison Purcell

Environment

Shannon Frank

Financial & Professional Services

Terry Belisle

Health & Wellness

Dr. Steven Ha

Hospitality & Tourism

Jody Young

Indigenous

Byron Jackson

Industrial & Manufacturing

Adriana Mercader (EDL Board Chair)

Lethbridge College

Jason Donkersgoed

Lethbridge County

Tory Campbell

Multicultural

Jan Gong

Non-Profit

Sandra Mintz

Past President

Kevin Brees

Real Estate & Development

Ken Harvie

Regional Economic Development

Bev Thornton

Retail

Jeremy Roden

Sector-At-Large

Vacant

Seniors

Keith Sumner

Sports & Recreation

Susan Eymann

Supply Chain & Logistics

Brent Peterson

Technology

Ed Limon

University of Lethbridge

Dr. Kerry Godfrey

Young Entrepreneur

Timothy Hachowski

Young Professional

Ian Andrews

**Yellow indicates City of Lethbridge appointed positions*

EDL Mission/Values/Outcomes

OUR MISSION

To strengthen and diversify the Lethbridge regional economy.

OUR VALUES

As ambassadors of the community and the Lethbridge brand, we will be:

Innovative - We think ahead, always with imagination, creativity, and a drive to be part of the next big thing.

Approachable - We are connected to our business community. We listen, understand and offer support for the next steps forward.

Collaborative - We are stronger together and unite under the same cause.

Leaders - We are pioneers for the future prosperity and evolution of Lethbridge.





Strong - We work to bring strength and stability to the local economy and within our organization.

Engaged - We are committed to this community and the work that we do.

OUR WORK

Economic Development is the process of developing and maintaining suitable economic, social, cultural, learning, environmental, and political environments in which balanced growth may be realized, increasing the prosperity of the community.

We are focused on 4 key outcomes:

-  Lethbridge as an agrifood and manufacturing hub.
-  Lethbridge as a transportation and logistics hub.
-  Lethbridge as a centre of excellence for innovation in many sectors including: health, education, technology, and alternative energy.
-  Lethbridge as a regional driver of the visitor and cultural economy.



Business Retention & Expansion

In 2023, Economic Development Lethbridge (EDL) played a pivotal role in bolstering local and regional businesses through a period brimming with challenges and opportunities. Despite facing a complex landscape marked by near-record inflation, rising interest rates, tight labour markets, and global supply chain disruptions, our community showed resilience and adaptability, moving towards a new normal with determination.

EDL proudly continued its partnership with Calgary-based Energy Associates International, delivering an energy management program that has successfully helped local businesses secure more affordable electricity and natural gas options. This initiative stands as a testament to our commitment to supporting the economic sustainability of our region.

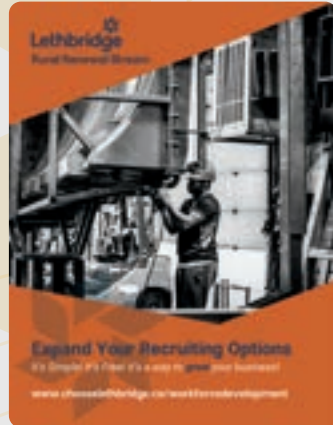
The Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP) is an economic immigration program that nominates people for permanent residence in Alberta. Economic Development Lethbridge is pleased to be able to administer two of multiple streams within the AAIP on behalf of the City of Lethbridge.

1) The Rural Renewal Stream supports the attraction and retention of newcomers to rural Alberta through a community-driven approach that supports local economic development

needs and contributes to the growth of the community. This program stream provides employers access to a wider labour pool, while offering eligible workers a pathway to employment and permanent residency. Through the parameters of this program we are able to help reduce labour shortages by endorsing employers and job seekers to fast track immigration for eligible candidates. The initial launch of the rural renewal stream in Lethbridge was restricted to 3 sectors facing the greatest challenges in attracting talent including manufacturing, construction and engineering. Based on the initial success of the launch, two additional sectors were added to support health care and social assistance as well as automotive repair and maintenance. By year end, a total of 23 employers had been approved in the program in our first six months of operation. We have issued 15 candidate endorsement letters in that time. Our focus on high priority sectors has meant that average wages for the candidates approved through the program is \$27 to \$28 per hour. We work as part of a Community Partnership Council that provides oversight to the program. We appreciate the ongoing engagement and support of our partners from the Flexibility Learning Systems, Lethbridge Construction

Association, Lethbridge Family Services and the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce.

2) The Rural Entrepreneur Stream allows entrepreneurs who want to start a new business or buy an existing business in a rural Alberta community to submit an Expression of Interest. Successful candidates are then nominated by the province for a pathway to permanent residency. Entrepreneurs play a key role in Alberta's economy, using their skills and initiative to anticipate needs and create jobs for Albertans. Our program has focused on potential investments in key sectors including manufacturing, construction and technology. We have generally not been open to considering new businesses in the retail sector or restaurants. During the first six months of the operation of this stream, we received 79 inquiries from interested non-resident entrepreneurs and have issued 6 community support letters for candidates. These 6 endorsed business plans represent an initial investment of approximately \$750,000 and would create or protect 21 jobs should the candidates move forward. The Canada's Premier Food Corridor (CPFC) initiative has seen remarkable progress, with a dedicated team member driving efforts in business retention and expansion. This year, a comprehensive Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) assessment across corridor communities laid the groundwork for a strategic approach to nurturing the agri-food sector. By collaborating with partner municipalities, economic development organizations, and educational institutions, CPFC has mapped out key challenges and opportunities, setting the stage for a vibrant 2024 BRE and workforce strategy.



Our outreach has expanded, connecting us with influential groups and institutions like the RINSA group, Lethbridge College's CARIE Agriculture research, Food Processing Skills Canada, and the Rural Development Network. These partnerships are creating new pathways for growth, knowledge sharing, and innovation in our agri-food sector.

2023 also saw an increase in Business Retention & Expansion inquiries, with 14 recorded. Of these, two were successfully supported, generating a direct economic impact of \$250,000. This achievement not only retained 5 jobs within our community but also created 3 new positions, showcasing EDL's vital role in fostering economic resilience and prosperity.

As we reflect on the year's achievements and challenges, we are filled with optimism for the future. Our collective efforts have laid a solid foundation for continued growth and success in Lethbridge and the surrounding region. Here's to a future that builds on the resilience, innovation, and community spirit we've demonstrated in 2023.



Investment Attraction

In 2023, Economic Development Lethbridge (EDL) experienced a dynamic year, marked by significant interest from businesses considering Lethbridge as their new home. With a total of 47 inquiries, EDL successfully attracted 2 new businesses to our community, leading to an \$8.5 million boost in our economy and the creation of 15 new jobs. This achievement underscores Lethbridge's growing appeal as a prime location for investment.

While one promising opportunity found a home in a neighboring community, generating a \$200+ million investment and 50 new jobs, it highlights the broader economic impact EDL's efforts have on the region. The challenge of losing nearly half of our promising leads to other markets due to a shortage of brownfield development opportunities has been a call to action. This trend towards redevelopment over new construction has underscored the need for more suitable industrial real estate in Lethbridge. However, with new developments on the horizon, we are optimistic about meeting market demand and attracting

further investment.

The establishment of a full-time position dedicated to investment attraction in the agri-food sector, supported by the Canada's Premier Food Corridor initiative, is a strategic move that will enhance our lead generation efforts. Our collaborations with Invest Alberta, Invest in Canada, and the Investment Attraction Branch of Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation continue to strengthen, broadening our reach and impact.

Participation in the Site Selectors Guild annual conference in San Antonio, Texas, has been invaluable, offering insights into Alberta's investment climate and fostering relationships with North America's leading site selectors. These connections are crucial for keeping Lethbridge in the forefront of site selectors' minds.

In an exciting venture aimed at bolstering our supply chain and logistics sector, EDL took a proactive step by joining forces with the Economic Developers of Alberta on a mission to Kansas City. This strategic move was designed to gather invaluable insights and practices from a region renowned

for its supply chain and logistics prowess, with the goal of adapting and implementing these strategies within Alberta.

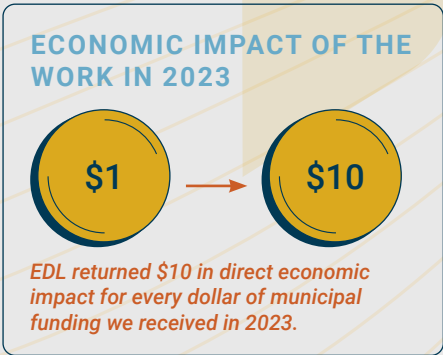
During this insightful trip, EDL had the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions with representatives from Canadian Pacific Kansas City rail. These conversations centered around exploring development opportunities within Southern Alberta, in line with the company's ambitions to expand its Canadian footprint. This engagement marks a significant step towards fostering growth and enhancing the efficiency of our local supply chain and logistics sector, demonstrating EDL's commitment to driving economic development and fostering strategic partnerships that will propel our region forward.

The Brighter Together Food Journey, a collaborative effort with Tourism Lethbridge and Lethbridge & District Exhibition, showcased the potential within Canada's Premier Food Corridor to a diverse group of stakeholders. Our targeted lead generation efforts, including partnerships with SouthGrow and a boutique site selection firm, have opened doors to meaningful conversations and potential future investments.

Looking ahead to 2024, EDL will harness artificial intelligence to further refine our approach to identifying and engaging companies poised for growth. This technological advancement will bolster our targeted communication and

outreach strategies.

Reflecting on the combined impact of our investment attraction and business retention efforts, EDL delivered a direct economic impact of \$8.75 million in 2023. This achievement not only generated 18 new jobs and retained 5 but also demonstrated exceptional value for our municipal funding, translating to a \$10 return for every \$1 received.



As we move into 2024, EDL is poised to build on the momentum within Canada's Premier Food Corridor and Canada's Western Gateway. These initiatives, integral to our four-year business plan, will guide our efforts in sectors like Advanced Manufacturing and Commercial Development. With a solid foundation and a clear vision, Lethbridge is well-positioned for growth, and EDL is committed to seizing the opportunities ahead, reinforcing our community's strength and potential.

Market Intelligence & Advisory

EDL is committed to researching and delivering timely, relevant data across various sectors, supporting the growth of existing businesses in Lethbridge while also attracting potential investors to consider the city and region for their ventures. These numbers continue to be shared with partners and stakeholders in the region.

Data is benchmarked in multiple ways. It's locally compared to previous years' figures to identify trends and applied to ongoing or potential projects and initiatives. Additionally, local data is compared to other municipalities and national statistics, providing EDL with a comprehensive understanding of findings, whether they are localized or occurring on a larger scale nationwide.

Feedback from site selectors and investors indicates a growing preference for brownfield over greenfield opportunities among executives and businesses considering business expansion or relocation. The shift towards favoring existing buildings over new construction makes EDL's collaboration with commercial realtors more important than ever.

The organization will continue providing data such as cost per square foot, available properties, and lease and sale information to assist local businesses, potential investors, and stakeholders, ensuring the availability of the most relevant data possible.

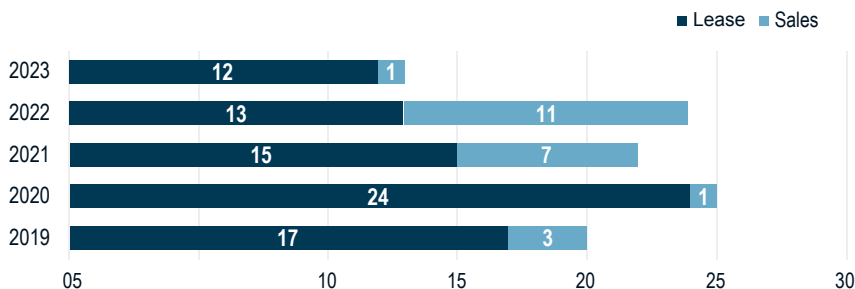
In 2023, the organization explored innovative ways to display and

visualize data. EDL utilized Local Intel to showcase key economic indicators for Lethbridge and engaged in discussions with providers like CityViz and Connect4Commerce regarding the integration of these tools into the upcoming Choose Lethbridge Website, slated for launch in mid-2024.

The organization also introduced a Labour Demand Tool in 2023. It is available on the EDL website and is designed to support both employers and job seekers in the region. Businesses can utilize the tool to benchmark their workforce development campaigns against similar ones and strategically plan recruitment efforts. Additionally, the tool offers insights into the Southern Alberta workforce. Job seekers can also benefit from the tool, which employs AI to aggregate jobs from national job boards and local employers, providing a centralized resource.

EDL continued to utilize their internal expertise with Insights Discovery to advise other organizations throughout Lethbridge. Insights Discovery offers valuable insights and best practices for navigating different archetypes within teams. These sessions equip employees with tools to manage expectations, identify workplace stressors, and optimize collaboration among the four personas in both personal and professional contexts. In 2023, EDL conducted sessions with organizations including Sumus Property Management, Tourism Lethbridge, Avail, and others.

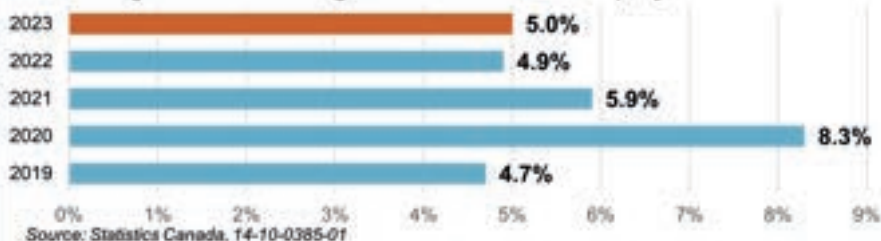
Total Retail Transactions - January - June Comparison



Industrial - Average Lease Price Per Square Foot - January - June Comparison



Figure 1 - Lethbridge CMA - Annual Unemployment Rate



Entrepreneurship & Innovation

RINSA

This year, guided by the leadership of Economic Development Lethbridge (EDL), RINSA has reaffirmed its role as a crucial catalyst for innovation within the Lethbridge region. With a substantial \$1.785 million in funding, allocated over a three-year period ending March 31, 2025, RINSA, in collaboration with an expansive network of 14 partners, has spearheaded efforts to foster a thriving ecosystem for entrepreneurs. These partners encompass a diverse spectrum of EDI organizations representing Indigenous and Black entrepreneurs, alongside provincial and federal funders, rural economic development agencies, and post-secondary institutions, creating a rich tapestry of support and collaboration.

RINSA has created a collaborative network that nurtures and supports a community of entrepreneurs. RINSA's diverse programs, shaped by entrepreneur feedback, offer a tailored approach to support individuals at every point in their entrepreneurial journey, from early inception to advanced growth and scaling phases. This strategy has enabled more than 550 companies at different growth stages to benefit from a wide array of specialized services in 2023. This underscores the network's crucial role in promoting technological innovation and inclusivity across Southern Alberta.

A key to RINSA's success has been the introduction of the "RINSA Bridge", a novel initiative that revitalizes collaboration among network members by tackling the 'wicked problems' entrepreneurs face. Each

RINSA partner provides their unique insights and solutions to entrepreneurs' complex challenges. This collective approach broadens RINSA's impact, sparking new opportunities and tackling difficult issues through diverse expertise and collaborative problem-solving. This strategic effort is complemented by the forging of new partnerships with organizations such as the BIPOC Foundation, the Blackfoot Confederacy Tribal Council, and Canada's Premier Food Corridor, alongside the ElevateIP Alberta program. Each partnership has been instrumental in broadening RINSA's reach and impact, facilitating the creation of new opportunities and the resolution of complex challenges that entrepreneurs encounter.

RINSA's collective efforts this year have not only contributed to the vibrant tapestry of Southern Alberta's entrepreneurial ecosystem but have also set a benchmark for innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity. By championing technology and partnerships, RINSA is not just addressing immediate needs but is also laying the groundwork for a future where every entrepreneur, regardless of background or stage of development, has the support and resources necessary to thrive.



ELEVATEIP ALBERTA PROGRAM: BRIDGING THE IP KNOWLEDGE GAP



The ElevateIP Alberta program, a groundbreaking initiative funded by a \$9.9M grant from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), represents a significant step towards democratizing access to intellectual property (IP) resources across Alberta's startup ecosystem. Spearheaded by the collaborative efforts of Economic Development Lethbridge (EDL), the University of Calgary, and Innovate Calgary, the program is poised to transform the landscape of IP education, strategy, and support for the province's innovators, especially those in rural areas and from under-represented groups.

With \$1.184 million under its management, EDL plays a crucial role in supporting entrepreneurs in areas often underserved by mainstream resources. This funding, available until March 31, 2026, is specifically targeted at breaking down barriers to IP resources for communities frequently marginalized, including those in rural locales, Indigenous groups, and new Canadians. This initiative goes beyond mere funding; it is a strategic effort to ensure universal access to IP benefits, promoting equity in the innovation sector.

Central to this endeavor are the Ecosystem Navigators, professionals with niche expertise and an intimate understanding of the unique challenges faced by underrepresented groups in the entrepreneurial world. Their role is critical in bridging the gap between these communities and the complex world of IP, offering guidance, support, and insights tailored to

the specific needs of each entrepreneur.

EDL's collaboration with the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) further amplifies the program's commitment to inclusivity. This partnership is instrumental in engaging with Indigenous stakeholders, not just in a consultative capacity but in a deeper, more meaningful dialogue aimed at understanding and addressing the unique IP needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs. By validating these needs, the ElevateIP Alberta program ensures that its offerings are not only comprehensive but also culturally sensitive and respectful of Indigenous knowledge and innovation.

In its inaugural year, the ElevateIP Alberta program has laid a solid foundation for change. By focusing on IP awareness, strategic development, and customized support, the program has significantly enhanced the IP capabilities of startups across Alberta. This has not only bolstered the province's position as a hub of innovation but has also fostered a more inclusive and diverse ecosystem where every entrepreneur has the tools and knowledge to protect and leverage their intellectual property effectively.

The success of the ElevateIP Alberta program in its foundational year is a testament to the power of collaboration, targeted support, and a deep-seated commitment to inclusivity. As the program continues to evolve, it promises to further enrich Alberta's innovation landscape, ensuring that entrepreneurs from all walks of life have the opportunity to thrive in an increasingly competitive global market.

TECCONNECT INCUBATOR: A BEACON OF INNOVATION AND INCLUSIVITY

For over a decade, Tecconnect has been at the forefront of supporting technology innovation, playing a critical role in the economic diversification of the Lethbridge region. This year, the incubator has continued to excel, making significant strides in supporting emerging technologies and fostering deep community connections.

The establishment of Tecconnect and the catalyst for the formation of RINSA in 2011 have been cornerstone developments in the regional entrepreneurial landscape, collectively securing nearly \$10M in entrepreneur related support funding to date. These achievements highlight the success of Tecconnect and RINSA in driving innovation, leveraging strategic partnerships, and providing targeted support across the entrepreneurial spectrum. Tecconnect's approach, offering a comprehensive mix of physical and virtual resources, has proven essential in attracting, incubating, and developing technology companies. This year, a heightened focus on rural, Indigenous, and New Canadians, alongside other under-represented entrepreneurs, has underscored the incubator's commitment to inclusivity and diversity. By providing tailored support and fostering an environment where varied voices and ideas flourish, Tecconnect has not only contributed to the regional economy but has also enriched the entrepreneurial culture with a wide array of perspectives and innovations.

Challenges and Forward Momentum

The journey, however, has not been without its challenges. The termination of the

Rural Women Entrepreneurs In Technology (RWEIT) program has been a significant setback, especially for rural women entrepreneurs who relied on its resources and support. This loss highlights the ongoing challenge of securing sustainable funding and support mechanisms necessary for the continued growth and diversity of our entrepreneurial community.

Despite these challenges, the future holds promise. The rise of the gig economy and the rapid advancement of emerging technologies present new opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. The principles of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) remain at the heart of our mission, guiding us towards a future where every entrepreneur, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to succeed. This commitment to EDI is more than a moral imperative; it's a strategic advantage that enriches our ecosystem with diverse ideas, solutions, and innovations.

Conclusion: A Vision for the Future

As we reflect on the past year, the Lethbridge entrepreneurial ecosystem continues to evolve to embrace innovation, collaboration, and resilience. Serving over 550 entrepreneurs, achieving significant funding milestones, and delivering impactful programs, we are poised to face future challenges and seize emerging opportunities. Our dedication to fostering a nurturing environment for entrepreneurs is unwavering, driven by the belief that diversity of thought and inclusivity are the bedrocks of innovation and success.

As we continue to evolve, our goal is not merely to navigate the challenges presented by the rapid evolution of technologies like AI but to lead and excel in this transforming landscape. Our focus is on empowering the entrepreneurial spirit within Tecconnect and the wider Lethbridge region to not only adapt but to set the pace for innovation. We are committed to steering our community through these advancements, aiming to surpass our current achievements and emerge as leaders in embracing and shaping the future of technology.

SUCCESS STORIES

Daniola Corporation

The founders of Daniola Corporation chose Lethbridge as the headquarters for their digital exchange platform!

Sinmi & Clement Esene, innovators in secure and traceable trading for minerals, metals, and gemstones, established their operations in Lethbridge after connecting with the RINSA network and Economic Development Lethbridge (EDL), becoming part of the Tecconnect incubator community. It's exciting to see these dedicated founders' hard work and tenacity come together as they continue to scale up and grow their unique platform! To give back to the supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem that enabled their success, they initiated the BIPOC Foundation serving entrepreneurs across the prairies, further enriching the very environment that facilitated their growth.



Blue Sky Analytical Lab

Ross Tisdale and his team are based out of SYNBRIDGE at the University of Lethbridge in the new Science Commons building. RINSA supports innovative businesses in the network, such as Blue Sky, because they continuously put in the effort to grow their opportunity and expertise. Blue Sky Analytical Labs boasts an innovative approach to lab testing, specifically in the cannabis space but continue to expand their offerings to contribute to commercializing research in southern Alberta.



Marketing & Advocacy

Marketing efforts in 2023 shifted somewhat, a direct result of data in the 2022 Brighter Together Business Survey conducted by Economic Development Lethbridge and partners. Workforce availability and development continued to be a pressing issue for local businesses and EDL undertook initiatives to offer new tools and resources for local employers and job seekers.

The launch of the Lethbridge Rural Renewal Stream and Lethbridge Rural Entrepreneur Stream were announced in the spring of 2023 and kicked off with an in-person event at Tecconnect. Marketing the process of each initiative was paramount for the organization as demand and interest in these opportunities from both employers and individuals was extremely high. Messaging through the Choose Lethbridge website and social media channels needed to be both precise and engaging and did take some massaging to ultimately explain the process of each of these Workforce Development initiatives.

Economic Development
Lethbridge
Workforce Development Programs

Lethbridge Rural Renewal/Entrepreneur Stream
www.chooselethbridge.ca/immigration



Rural Renewal Stream

- Employer needs to be approved.
- Pathway to permanent residency for qualified candidates that have received a job offer from an approved employer.
- Open to employers in Construction, Manufacturing, Engineering, Health Care & Social Assistance (some restrictions apply).
- Approved jobs posted on Rural Renewal Job Board.

Rural Entrepreneur Stream

- Open to immigrants who can start new ventures or assist with succession planning.
- Must meet Government of Alberta eligibility requirements.



Lethbridge Job Demand Tool/Job Board
www.chooselethbridge.ca



- Uses AI to aggregate job postings from online job boards (national & local) and compile into one Lethbridge specific job board. (EDL does not enter jobs manually).
- Provides detailed reports that can be used by local employers to manage recruitment strategies, explore workforce trends, and monitor their competition.
- Allows EDL to dig deeper into workforce concerns and collaborate with partners and stakeholders.

EDL Employment Opportunities
www.chooselethbridge.ca/workwithus

There are times when Economic Development Lethbridge will post career opportunities within the organization and for initiatives they are involved with. These are not related to the Lethbridge Rural Renewal Stream. The Work With Us tab will only be visible on the organization's website when they are actively searching for candidates.

Building on the efforts to promote Canada's Premier Food Corridor (CPFC), EDL once again partnered with Tourism Lethbridge and Lethbridge District & Exhibition to host the 2nd annual Brighter Together Food Journey. The backdrop for the event was the newly opened Agri-food Hub & Trade Centre on the Exhibition grounds during Whoop-Up Days. Attendees had a firsthand look at agriculture, processing, research and history in our region with stops at Farming Smarter, Perry Farms, Thrive Honey and concluded with the lissksiniip coulee walk on the grounds of Lethbridge College. After the tour through CPFC, attendees returned to the Lakeview Salon at Exhibition Park for a networking event and to enjoy many of the ingredients seen earlier in the day, integrated into the evening's menu selections. The event was well attended and will continue to grow with planning for the 2024 event already underway.

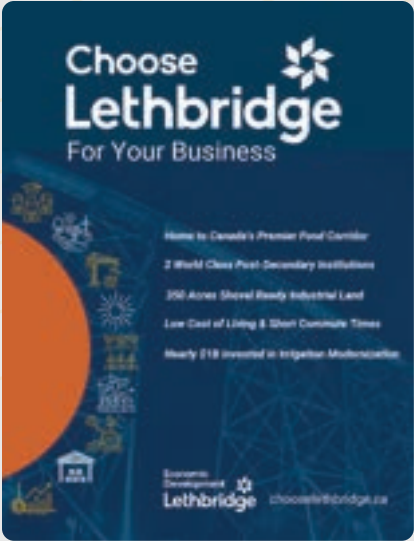
In 2023, the Meltwater social media and digital monitoring software was integrated into the toolkit for EDL. The power of this innovation allows the organization to monitor its digital presence and benchmark against other municipalities and economic development organizations across the country. Through keyword searches chosen by EDL, reports are generated to keep on top of overall sentiment for sectors, initiatives, and relevant content. This data can then be used to benchmark what and how EDL is showing up digitally compared to their

peers. EDL has set up datasets to benchmark against other areas in the country when it comes to agriculture, innovation, supply chain & logistics, and overall business development. The software can also be used to amalgamate content from numerous digital sources to give an overall view and sentiment on specific topics. Another benefit of the new tool to the organization is that it includes a social media management system which has been incorporated to help build and manage social media campaigns.



One of the bigger projects in the back half of 2023 was the planning to redevelop the Choose Lethbridge website. Through funding approved by the City of Lethbridge in their 2023 budget, EDL began the process of building a new website. The first step

was hosting a website development pitch competition to help gather ideas of tools and layout for a new website. The project proved to be invaluable, as pitchers presented new and innovative ideas for incorporation into the organization's new website. The next step was an RFP process, which laid out the vision of the organization for this project. Response to the call for RFP's was high and after enlisting the help of EDL staff and Tecconnect business advisors who specialize in web development, a partner was selected in early 2024. EDL hopes to unveil its new website sometime in Q2 of 2024.



EDL continued to spread messaging about the organization in 2023 with content in printed publications. These included the 2023 Invest in Alberta magazine, The Dirt, a publication of the Lethbridge Construction Association and provided a CPFC advertisement

in the Lethbridge & District Exhibition commemorative publication. Sponsorship and attendance at events continued in 2023 with some of the highlights being the EDA Conference held in Kananaskis, Ag Expo, Supply Chain Exchange Conference and numerous events held locally and provincially. The organization was also honoured with two awards at the Economic Developers Association Conference. The Rural Women Entrepreneurs in Tech program was the winner in the Regional Collaboration & Partnership, large community or region category and EDL Chief Executive Officer, Trevor Lewington was the recipient of the President's Award.



Creative Industries

In October 2023 Economic Development Lethbridge started work developing a “Creative Industries Strategy” for Lethbridge and the South West region – a 3.3 year initiative funded by the City of Lethbridge. The program has a goal of developing and attracting the Film, TV, Entertainment and Gaming industries into the region and the groundwork began right away. This included meeting with over 50 stakeholders within the local, regional, provincial and national creative ecosystems to determine needs, potential partnerships and areas of opportunity for Lethbridge. From those initial meetings as well as being included on a discovery trip to ‘Canada House at the Emmy’s’ for ‘The Last of Us’ a strategic plan was formulated and approved in February.

One of the first items completed was to include some local Lethbridge and Piikani/Kainai talent in things like set visits to Billy the Kid Season 2 and the Netflix “My Life with the Walter Boys” screening in December. The ecosystem has strong post secondary institutions with Lethbridge College and its country leading AR/VR research program as well as University of Lethbridge having new media, music offerings and developing some film programming which should start in 2025. There are many great locations in the city and surrounding area and pockets of talent within music and arts organizations here. Economic Development Lethbridge looks forward to laying the groundwork for this exciting industry over the coming years.



Operational Excellence

Through funding opportunities and grants, EDL was able to leverage funding provided by the City of Lethbridge to help bolster work initiatives in 2023. This includes funding and grants from provincial and federal partners for work to be done in marketing Canada's Premier Food Corridor. Partner funding also helped launch the ElevateIP Alberta program to help entrepreneurs and start-ups develop and implement a new IP (Intellectual Property) strategy for their business or idea.

As a publicly funded entity, EDL in 2023 undertook cost saving measures including moving their physical location and all staff to the Tecconnect building and ending their lease at the downtown Lethbridge location. Other cost saving measures included selecting a new banking provider for the organization, repurposing of equipment for new initiatives and a review of contractors and service providers.

In 2023 EDL also began the forage into the world of AI and investigate tools that can be utilized by the organization to increase productivity. Tools like Gazelle (Investment Attraction), Meltwater (Marketing), ChatGPT and Synthesia



(Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Creative Industries), and Virtual Gurus (RINSA), were added to technologies being used by the organization. These resources have proven useful in helping EDL accomplish tasks and goals while remaining a leader in early adoption of new technologies, something the organization will continue to work on by incorporating these and other features in the construction of their new website.

Synthesia
STUDIO:
WESTEM
Overview
May 2023

Partnership

Economic Development Lethbridge knows that the power of collaboration helps drive progress in our city and region. Here are some of the partnerships we've formed and are a part of:

SAITI, CWG, SAAEP, CPFC, RINSA, ElevateIP Alberta, and Team Lethbridge



Thank You!

We extend our gratitude to our local, provincial, national and international partners and stakeholders for their invaluable support in our endeavours. Your assistance is instrumental in contributing to our success.

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