

Q1 Western REN CEO Report

April 1st – June 30st 2019

Supporting Private Sector

The *BusinessNow* program is one the pillars of service offered by the Western REN. The program entails contacting local businesses, meeting with them and determining what their needs are to grow and succeed. The process also identifies what challenges and roadblocks business may be facing that impedes growth. This information is gathered through various means, but mainly involves on-going dialogue and a diagnostic survey. The goal is to provide economic developers a tool to improve business climate, revitalize a community, and connect to business building a more vibrant economy. The model is an on-going relationship-based system where after meeting with clients, the *BusinessNow* Lead seeks out resources that the client may require to grow. These resources could be access to capital, staff training, assisting in talent recruitment, accessing new markets and business planning assistance. The relationship continues long after connections are made.

The following is a summary of *BusinessNow*'s program results for Q1:

2019-20	Clients	Referrals	Company interactions
Q1 Apr 1-June 30	10	10	23
Total 2019-20	10	10	23
<i>Target</i>	n/a	90	100
Total since program launch	196	261	233

The Western REN's **succession project**, funded by Global Affairs and NSCC, has successfully launched. The Western REN has begun issuing coupon codes to businesses interested in selling to give them access to the SuccessionMatching.com platform where matchmaking between buyer and seller can occur. Tremendous interest has occurred so far, with very little promotion of the program needed beyond the initial launch event. A close working relationship is being fostered with SuccessionMatching.com to ensure successful matches occur.

*Looking ahead... The Western REN is partnering with ACOA, Perennia and Ignite Labs on a **Lobster Bait Challenge**, providing oversight on the program.*

*Based on a successful pilot program, the Western REN's **Continuous Improvement Program** has been approved with funding support from ACOA. Launch expected in Q3.*

The Be Your Own Boss component of the Succession program, which will promote succession opportunities to local alumni, is set to launch this Fall.

Supporting Public Sector

The Western REN continues work on the **Western Regional Energy Investment Plan (WREIP)**, funded in part by the NS Department of Energy and Mines. Western REN staff and consultants from Sustainability Solutions Group (SSG) began by developing a master data needs list, with more targeted requests shared with each of the Western REN's partner municipalities, as well as Nova Scotia Power, Efficiency Nova Scotia, Waste Check and the province's Geomatic Information Systems (GIS) team. The data will be used to create a baseline of energy consumption, identifying opportunities for efficiencies, and energy performance benchmarking. Areas will be identified that would benefit from local energy storage from locally generated green energy facilities, as well as district energy and heating facilities.

Looking ahead... The data requested in Q1 has been received by the Western REN from most of the units in full, while some units have a few minor outstanding components. Data has also been received from all agencies but Efficiency Nova Scotia. The consultants have begun processing and mapping the data received to date.

Develop Nova Scotia launched and closed their Request for Proposal (RFPs) for Short-Term projects under the Province of Nova Scotia's **Internet Funding Trust**. With assistance from Western REN staff, the Municipalities of Argyle, Barrington, Digby and Yarmouth were able to select a partner Internet Service Provider (ISP) that was able to identify projects within the region that could be completed within the time constraints of this RFP's build requirements. The combined three projects would reach a total of roughly 1,900 civic addresses with fibre to the premises by the end of Q2 2020-21 in the Municipalities of Barrington, Digby and Yarmouth. These units were willing to offer letters of support to the ISP for their submission to the RFP, with amounts of up to 12.5% subsidy to strengthen their submission. A separate, privately funded development has begun in the Municipality of the District of Argyle. Proposed solutions provided by the partner ISP for the above units were presented to select staff and council members at the Municipality of the District of Clare, who requested proposed solutions be created for their unit as well.

Looking ahead... Submissions for short-term projects under the Province of Nova Scotia's Internet Funding Trust are being reviewed, with awards expected in the fall of 2019. Discussions have continued between the Western REN and the selected Partner Internet Service Provider (ISP) in order to prepare for the upcoming funding being made available through Develop Nova Scotia's Long Term RFP, which will be for solutions that could not be completed within the time constraints of the short term projects build requirements. A proposed solution has been developed by the Partner ISP for the Municipality of the District of Clare, and has been presented to their CAO by Western REN staff.

Western REN hosted a session with NSBI and local Economic Development Officers on June 25th, drilling down into past investment inquiry responses and fine-tuning for future inquiries.

Addressing Talent Needs

The *Connector Program* is a networking initiative that helps local businesses and organizations connect with new graduates, immigrants and international students interested in starting and growing their career in Nova Scotia. The following is a summary of results for Q1:

2019-20	New Connectors	New Connectees	Initial Connections	Known jobs found in the region
Q1 Apr 1-June 30	21	13	33	3
Total 2019-20	21	13	33	3
<i>Agreement Target</i>	46	58	n/a	n/a
Total since program launch	126	101	157	41

The two-year *Immigration pilot* project between Western REN, Nova Scotia Office of Immigration (NSOI) and ACOA focuses on building awareness of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP) and identifying and connecting employers looking to fill labor gaps to NSOI for the support required to become a designated employer under the AIP. The following is a summary of AIP results for Q1:

2019-20	Companies designated	Known positions endorsed	Known families receiving permanent resident status
Q1 Apr 1-June 30	6		
Total 2019-20	6		
<i>Agreement Target over 24 months</i>	42	190	
Total since program launch	48	45	14

From April 22-30th CEO LeBlanc was invited by the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration to take part in **Destination Acadie 2019**, an outbound mission to Senegal, Casablanca and Portugal to promote francophone areas of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to potential francophone immigrants. The mission took place from April 22-30th, with both panel presentations and booths used to promote the region to interested individuals.

*Looking ahead - The Western REN's proposal to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to establish a new **Local Immigration Partnership (LIP)** for the Western Region was green lighted for a feasibility study, with the intent to fund based on the results of the study. The goal of this partnership will*

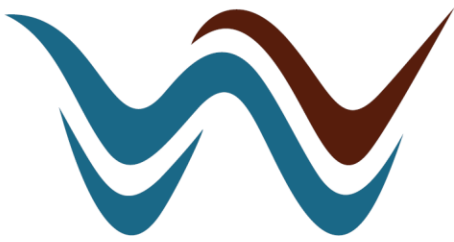
be to enhance collaboration, coordination and strategic planning at the community level in order to develop a regional immigration strategy and targeted action plan; to increase the overall number of newcomers and produce a more welcoming and inclusive community. This new LIP will ensure strategic recruitment based on labor market needs, improve newcomer settlement and integration outcomes and strengthen the region's ability to better address the needs of newcomers.

Current significant issues/opportunities

The Western REN is well situated as a leader among the REN's to lead a provincial initiative such as a succession program and mentor RENs in continuous succession support to private sector firms. Working through the steps with prospective sellers adds value to the RENs services, opens the doors to potential new immigrants to the region and uncovers new business opportunities. The coupon codes may be issued to a business in any sector, and a mix of activities and tools can be employed to: find suitable buyers/successors; employ trusted valuation processes; communicate and test financing for buyers; make referrals to partners who can help mitigate the financial costs of succession readiness; provide space for the dialogues around fear, family visions and employee related matters.

Matters for noting

- REN CEOs met in Truro on April 15 & 16th. Agenda items included sharing of best practices and opportunities for regional specialization.
- CEO is participating on a National Advisory Council for Community Solutions Network, a new platform for communities to connect by providing valuable information, learning opportunities and advisory services in key areas of data and technology for municipal and community leaders helping to improve the lives of residents.



Western Regional Enterprise Network

AT A GLANCE - FIRST QUARTER - APRIL -JUNE 2019

Increasing investment within Western Nova Scotia through collaborative actions.

<p>Engaging Private Sector <i>Direct client-facing services support businesses and provide needed data about strategic economic development needs.</i></p>	<p>Engaging Public Sector <i>Coordinating and supporting municipal and business development partners to maximize investment opportunities.</i></p>	<p>Targeting Talent Gaps <i>Work with all partners to increase successful recruitment and retention of needed workforce into the region.</i></p>
<p>Western REN's 6th ANNUAL SUMMIT</p> <p>Succession Simplified October 22 Meteghan Fire Hall 8:30am-1pm Lunch provided</p> <p>Hear from regional business-people and experts in the many aspects of succession planning.</p>	<p>Internet Infrastructure</p> <p>Western REN staff has supported the Municipalities of Argyle, Barrington, Digby, and Yarmouth to select a partner ISP for application to the NS Internet Funding Trust.</p>	<p>Immigration Pilot</p> <p>Already exceeding the designation goals set for the two-year pilot program, the Western REN Atlantic Immigration Pilot has been extended to March 2020.</p>