

Q1 Western REN CEO Report
 April 1st – June 30th 2021

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. 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* program results for Q1:

2021-22	Clients	Referrals	Company interactions
Q1 Apr 1-June 30	98	25	65
Q2 Jul 1-Sept 30			
Q3 Oct 1-Dec 31			
Q4 Jan 1-March 31			
Total 2021-22	98	25	65
Target	n/a	90	100
Total since program launch	692	619	891

The Western REN’s **Continuous Improvement Program**, which receives funding support from ACOA and LAE, has received renewed funding for 2 years. The program allows between 10-20 companies and allows for 5-10 days of Continuous Improvement consulting at a much-reduced cost to businesses. The projects will include firms from all parts of the region, from Digby through to Barrington. A new element of this project is an **expansion of CI offerings to help coach businesses through Succession**. A professional Succession consultant with an understanding of all of aspects of the process will perform a thorough analysis, help in developing the overall Succession strategy and coach the owner throughout the execution of the plan.

Supporting Public Sector

In Q1, Western REN staff and consultants from MCC Energy Strategies Inc. continued working towards implementing the top 2-4 opportunities identified in the **Western Regional Energy Investment Plan (WREIP)**. A funding application was submitted to the provincial Forestry Innovation Trust to conduct feasibility studies for District Heating opportunities in the region. Feedback was received for the unsuccessful Electric Vehicle Charge Stations application submitted in Q3, 2020. The Electric Vehicle Charge Station application is being refined for when the funding program re-opens in Q2, 2021. Energy Audits were conducted at two municipally-owned facilities within the region to identify opportunities to reduce energy expenditures at the sites. Opportunities identified through this process will be provided to the Municipalities to explore further.

Looking ahead to Q2: Applications will be submitted for funding opportunities for (1) Residential Efficiency Retrofits, and (2) Municipal Building Retrofits programs, offered through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. These projects were identified in the WREIP as ones with the largest potential impact, due to a combination of aging housing stock, and municipal properties. The goal of these retrofits will be to save households and municipalities money on their annual energy expenditures, while also reducing their energy demand from the Nova Scotia Power electric grid, thereby potentially making space on the grid for new energy generation opportunities. The Electric Vehicle application will also be resubmitted, utilizing feedback from the funder from the previous application.

Internet projects funded by Develop Nova Scotia are required to be completed by December 2023, but considerations are being made for the partnering municipalities to reflect that they made financial contributions to the projects. With the third wave of COVID19 causing closures to various schools, institutions and businesses, the Western REN has been receiving a higher influx of calls and emails asking for updates on the status of internet projects. Projects are being competed through Bell in the Bear River-Smith's Cove region in the Municipality of the District of Digby.

Looking ahead to Q2: Bell will begin working on builds from Weymouth in Municipality of the District of Digby, through Highway 340 in the Municipality of the District of Clare, into the Carleton area in Municipality of the District of Yarmouth. These builds are expected to be completed before end of Q2. Western REN staff continue to work with Develop NS and Bell to bring service to the new administration building in the Municipality of the District of Argyle, and the business park within the Municipality of the District of Digby.

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.

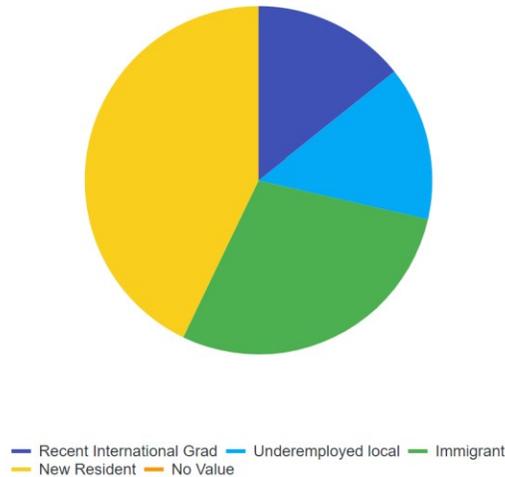
The following is a summary of results for Q1:

			Initial Connections	Known jobs found in the region
2021-22	New Connectors	New Connectees		
Q1 Apr 1-June 30	9	7	11	3
Q2 Jul 1-Sept 30				
Q3 Oct 1-Dec 31				
Q4 Jan 1-Mar 31				
Total 2021-22	9	7	11	3
<i>Agreement Target</i>	40	50	n/a	
<i>Total since program launch</i>	194	168	272	69

Connectee Stream April - June 2021

7

Count of Connectee - Stream



The *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:

2021	Companies designated
Q1 Apr 1-June 30	2
Q2 Jul 1-Sept 30	0
Q3 Oct 1-Dec 31	0
Total 2021-22	2
<i>Agreement Target over 9 months</i>	<i>15</i>
Total since program launch	75

Additional activity this quarter demonstrated within the program:

- 3 employers are working on AIPP Designation Applications
- 4 employers have submitted Endorsement Applications
- 2 candidates were approved for the Provincial Nominee Program
- 5 referrals have been made to the IRCC for the LMIA/TFW programs

Although the AIP program has been introduced as a permanent program, Western REN’s existing partnership to promote the program will end on December 31st, 2021. Any future partnerships for AIP are to be determined.

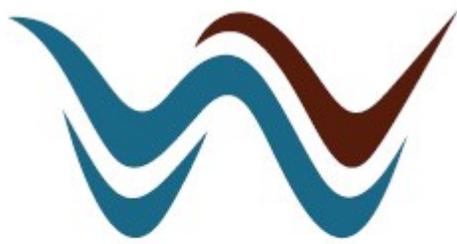
The **Local Immigration Partnership (LIP)** established its two primary committees and held their first meetings. The **Partnership Council** includes 25 people representing settlement services, healthcare, education, employment services, social services, economic development, and business sectors of the community. Their primary role is to provide overall guidance on the creation of a strategy to ensure that this region is a more welcoming place for immigrants. The **Immigrant Advisory Committee** comprises 18 members from 13 different countries and several different immigration “pathways”- international students, temporary foreign workers, immigrant entrepreneurs, Atlantic Immigration Program employees, etc. The members of this committee are eager to be involved in helping other immigrants settle and thrive. The LIP Coordinator is also conducting longer one-on-one consultations with individuals including international students, temporary foreign workers, and refugee sponsorship organization representatives. She is also participating in monthly calls with LIPs from all across the Atlantic Provinces who are all at varying stages in their delivery or services to the community.

Current significant issues/opportunities

- The current COVID-19 global pandemic continues, impacting heavily on the business community, especially in the hospitality sector. Programs remain flexible to nimbly respond to real time business needs.
- The Western REN is both a delivery partner and participant in a workplace COVID-19 screening program for employees. This free program is available for all businesses and organizations, regardless of size. All testing supplies are sent directly to businesses with instructions as to how employees get tested. It’s quick and easy, with results available in 15 minutes. Workplace screening is another layer of protection for workers, the people they serve, and their communities. More than 6500 employees from the Western Zone are already participating in this program.

Matters for noting

- By request from several municipalities, the Western REN has developed a white paper entitled ‘Economic Impact of the Lobster Industry in Western NS. The paper provides data on landings, export value and the impact on the maritime job market.
- CEO continues participation in the NS Business & Labor Economic Coalition, led by the Chamber of Commerce of Halifax and meeting 1x/week. This group is a point of contact for government as they make rapid decisions and changes to the business environment and help share these decisions with the NS business community.
- The Western REN COVID-19 Response Group continues to meet once a month, hosted by the Western REN CEO. Members include Chambers and Boards of Trade, NS Works partners, EDOs, NSBI, CBDC, ACOA, NSCC, Develop NS, YASTA, CDENE and more. The goal is to keep partners informed and share information from the across the region.
- Funded by ACOA, the first REN pan-provincial project, the REN Virtual Advisor Program, powered by Boomers Plus continues
- CEO LeBlanc is a member of the Ignite Board of Directors and the comité organisateur du Congrès mondial acadien 2024.
- CEO LeBlanc, a few Board members, along with leaders from the Public, Private, Education and Financial Sectors are the members of the Western NS REAP Team, part of a program delivered by MIT’s Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Program. The REAP program provides the space for participants to understand the drivers of a successful ecosystem, identify its comparative advantage and collectively accomplish its ‘must-win-battle’. The program continues until December 2021.



Western Regional Enterprise Network

AT A GLANCE - FIRST QUARTER - APRIL-JUNE 2021

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>Workplace COVID-19 Screening Program</p> <p>Rapid screening in workplaces adds a layer of protection and provides consumer confidence that the business is serious about COVID-19 safety.</p> <p>Over 6500 employees in the Western NS are involved. As a delivery partner, the Western REN promotes this program in support of maintaining the province's Phase 5 of re-opening the economy.</p>	<p>Lobster White Paper</p> <p>By request from several municipal units, the Western REN has developed a white paper titled "Economic Impact of the Lobster Industry in Western Nova Scotia".</p> <p>The paper, providing data on landings, export value, and the impact on maritime job market, will be available on the website.</p>	<p>Local Immigration Partnership Update</p> <p>The LIP has a goal of retaining more of the newcomer labour force in the region.</p> <p>Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established the Partnership Council of 25 wide-ranging stakeholders, with a goal of strategizing a path to a more welcoming region. An Immigrant Advisory Committee is 18 people from 13 countries, all ready to help newcomers settle and thrive in the region.