

Introduction

Lacombe County is an attractive, balanced, and progressive community, situated in the heart of Central Alberta.

Located on the QEII corridor, Lacombe County is located approximately 120km south of Edmonton and 160km north of Calgary. The County stretches 100km east to west along Highway 12 containing prairie fields and Boreal Forest and is home to many lakes – large and small.

We are a diverse municipality with a variety of agricultural operations, industrial developments, and small businesses, as well as a vibrant petrochemical and oil and gas industry.

With numerous post-secondary institutions nearby, including Burman University, and Red Deer Polytechnic, the County boasts a skilled and educated labor force.

Lacombe County also hosts a variety of recreational amenities: beaches, lakes, trail systems, parks, natural areas, and golf courses.

Project Details

Lacombe County invites qualified service providers to submit proposals to create a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (hereinafter referred to as the 'EDS') that will clearly outline priorities for the next five years. These priorities will be organized into an implementation plan, listing goals and objectives, and categorizing them as short, medium, or long-term. Priorities should include multiple elements of wealth creation for the County and its residents.

Currently, no EDS exists for Lacombe County, however, other internal plans and guides will be key in its development. These include but are not limited to: *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP), *Strategic Plan*, Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs), *Land Use Bylaw* (LUB), and *Area Structure Plans* (ASPs). Other documents include the *Community Profile*, *Business Development Guide*, and *Agriculture Guide*. The aim is to create an EDS that allows for overall growth and realizes the regions' tremendous potential.

The EDS will be a five-year plan, that will provide a clear direction and expected outcomes based on the consultation process as well as a measure of flexibility. The final EDS must be endorsed by Council and will be implemented by staff. It requires regular review and updating to ensure that it remains relevant.

Project Administration

Project Manager

The Lacombe County Economic Development Officer will act as the project manager, supported by the Director of Planning Services and administrative staff.

Consultant(s)

Based on the scope of the work plan, the expertise and professional services of a consultant(s) will be required to effectively facilitate the project and produce a final document. The successful consultant(s) will complete an EDS factoring input from all stakeholders, Council, and the public into decision making.

Scope

Identify opportunities to support and grow existing business, attract new investment, increase the number of available jobs that will appeal to skilled workers, thereby increasing the overall population and wealth generation of the County and its residents.

Objectives

The EDS will include input from Lacombe County residents, businesses, Council members, and other stakeholders. The engagement and consultation process will serve to shape the overall direction of the project.

The EDS will include but is not limited to the following requirements:

1. A full review of County documents, plans, and guides as listed in Appendix A.

2. A visit to Lacombe County and tour with key staff.
3. The completion of a SOARR analysis (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, risks, results).
4. In-depth consultations with identified stakeholders, Council, business community, and County residents.
5. Identification of short-term, medium-term, and long-term priorities and outcomes that will shape Lacombe County's activity for the next five (5) years.
6. Measurable goals, actions, and timelines that will allow Council and staff to effectively gauge success.

Communication and Public Consultation

This project will require a robust consultation process. The public and all stakeholders must be informed of the intended process and invited to participate in the creation of the EDS at appropriate intervals. According to the County's Participation Policy for the Public, Policy AC(40), the levels of engagement used will be to inform, consult and involve stakeholders and the public. The tools of engagement used will include: to *inform*, traditional and social media and open houses; to *consult*: one on one interviews, surveys, and public meetings; to *involve*: focus groups and workshops. Media will include Lacombe County News, County website and social media accounts, news releases, and local media outlets.

Process Outline

The steps involved in the creation of the EDS are outlined below. They are subject to further refinement as the work progresses.

Step 1: Approval by Council to Move Forward

The proposed Terms of Reference will be taken to Council for endorsement. The Project Manager will:

- Identify relevant plans, studies, and guides for review; and
- Establish a list of stakeholders to be consulted/involved throughout the process.

Step 2: Request for Proposals

An RFP will then be undertaken. Upon review of submitted proposals, County Administration will select the top two or three proposals. Those firms will be invited to present to Council for consideration, and Council will make the final decision to award the contract.

Step 3: Project Launch

Upon endorsement of the Terms of Reference by Council and selection of a consultant(s), the Project Manager will arrange for a public announcement to be placed in the *Lacombe County News* and on the County website and social media accounts. The announcement will outline the purpose of the EDS and provide a summary of the proposed planning process, highlighting the opportunities for public input.

Step 4: Background Information and Report

Under the direction of the Project Manager, the Consultant(s) will complete a review of all relevant statutory and non-statutory plans, studies, and guides (as outlined in Appendix A). The Consultant(s) will also participate in a community visit with appropriate staff.

Following the review and community visit, Consultants will complete a SOARR analysis to indicate the strengths, opportunities, aspirations, risks, and (desired) results. The SOARR analysis will be included in the Background Report.

Step 5: Public Consultation

The public consultation strategy will include an open house, one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

The Open House event will offer the public an opportunity to view summarized items from the background report in presentation format and provide feedback on the findings and share possible strategy elements

Interviews will be conducted with one business representative from each Division, plus other key industry contacts, government or non-governmental agencies as determined by the Project Manager for a total of 12 one-on-one meetings.

Focus Groups will consist of council members, key industry segments (agriculture, oil & gas), regional partners (Tourism, Chamber of Commerce), governmental and non-governmental agencies. These stakeholders will comment on issues and considerations outlined in the background report and provide their views on possible strategy elements. These will take place either in person or virtually.

An online survey will be available on the County website along with the background report for those who are not able to attend in-person events. Hard copies of the survey will also be available at the County Office.

Step 6: Issue Analysis

The background report will be edited to include identified issues from input gathered through all stages and methods of public engagement. The expanded background report will be presented for review to the Project Manager to confirm the direction for the development of the draft EDS.

Step 7: Council Review of Draft EDS

A draft EDS will be prepared based on the information gathered from the general public, stakeholders (including governmental and non-governmental agencies), administration, and Council. The draft EDS will be presented to the Project Manager for review before presentation to Council for their consideration. Any necessary revisions will be made based on further direction from Council.

Step 8: Public Review of Draft EDS

Residents of the area, the general public, and other stakeholders (including governmental and non-governmental agencies) will be invited to comment on the draft EDS.

A news release will be prepared to highlight key aspects of the draft EDS and to announce that a public meeting will be held to review the draft EDS.

A summary of the draft EDS will be provided in the *Lacombe County News*. The draft EDS will also be posted on the County website and available at the County Office for review.

A survey will be utilized to ask questions related to specific elements of the draft EDS, along with the opportunity to provide open-ended feedback. Feedback will also be accepted in hard copy at the County Office.

All comments received will be summarized into a report that will be presented to the Project Manager and then to Council. This report will also include suggestions for possible changes to the draft EDS based on input. Any necessary revisions will be made based on the direction of Council.

Step 9: Council Endorsement of Finalized EDS

Upon completion of the revised EDS, the Project Manager will present the final project to Council for their endorsement. The EDS will become an internal plan and will guide economic development activity in Lacombe County for the five years following Council endorsement. The EDS should undergo a formal review after five years. Each year it is expected that appropriate staff review activities, goals, and outcomes as outlined in the EDS for presentation updates to Council.

The adopted EDS will be posted on the County website and copies will be made available at the County Office. The Project Manager, with support from the Communications Co-ordinator, will prepare a final news release announcing Council's endorsement of the EDS. The EDS project completion will be communicated through the *Lacombe County News*, as well as County social media accounts.

Project Timeline

December 2021	Presentation of TOR to Council
January 2022	Request for Proposal published
February 2022	Proposal deadline
March 2022	Consultant presentations to Council
March 2022	Consultant selection
March 2022	Document review and community visit/tour

May 2022	Delivery of background report
May 2022	Public consultation strategy begins
September 2022	Presentation of draft EDS to Council
October 2022	Public review of draft EDS
October 2022	Update of EDS
November 2022	Final presentation to Council

During the project, scheduling and other issues may arise that will require some flexibility in the timeline. Revisions in the timeline will normally occur at the commencement of each phase in consultation with Council.

Project Budget

A total of \$60,000 has been identified for project-related expenses and external consultant(s) services.

A minimum of \$5,000 of the proposal shall be reserved for advertising, public consultation, and print materials.

LACOMBE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Terms of Reference: Appendix A December 16, 2021

Internal plans and guides for review:

1. *Municipal Development Plan*
2. *Strategic Plan (2021-2023)*
3. *Land Use Bylaw (Sections 6 and 7)*
4. Lacombe County Intermunicipal Development Plans (relevant sections pertaining to economic development opportunities)
5. Lacombe County Area Structure Plans (relevant sections pertaining to economic development opportunities)
6. Community Profile
7. Business Development Guide
8. Agriculture Guide