



CF NAME: ENTER CF Centre West

Fiscal Year: 2025-26

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1.0 CONTACT INFORMATION

Legal Name:	Community Futures Centre West (CFCWest)
Mailing Address:	PO Box 1828 Cochrane, Alberta, T4C 1B6
Location Address:	The Station at Cochrane Crossing - 360 Railway St W, Cochrane, Alberta T4C 2E2
Phone Number:	403-389-8272
Fax Number	403-932-6824
General E-mail address:	infocfcwest@albertacf.com and dgraham@albertacf.com
Team Lead:	Laura McDonald
Team Lead E-Mail:	lmcdonald@albertacf.com
Tam Lead Cell:	403-389-8272
Chairperson:	Palwinder Singh
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Website:	http://centrewest.albertacf.com/
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/Community-Futures-Centre-West-597577017036101/
Twitter:	https://twitter.com/CFCentrewest/
Instagram:	https://www.instagram.com/cfcentrewest/

2.0 ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

2.1 Description of your Organization

<p>Please outline any changes to your office, board or staff structure in the past year (e.g. office locations, coverage and staffing, board and committee structures). If none, please indicate 'not applicable.'</p> <p>CFCWest ensures a strong presence in our regional communities through the Board of Directors who act as our ambassadors. Our team consists of a dedicated group of professionals who provide strategic direction for the organization. Each Director brings a high level of experience, expertise, and community participation to the Board. In 2024 CFCWest saw the term of past Chair, James Dahl completed his term as Board Chair, and Palwinder Singh was nominated as Chair at the September AGM. Three new Directors, Warren Hall, Serina Kwok and Gary Manocha joined the CFCWest board. Stephen Simms, past board member, has now joined SIRC as a Member at Large.</p> <p>CFCWest's Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sets policy and provides overall strategic direction. ○ Oversee appropriate management of funds. ○ Ensure contribution agreement deliverables are met. ○ Provides support and mentorship to the Executive Director ○ Ensures CFCWest participates, collaborates, and maintains positive community relations with partners, stakeholders, and funders within the region. ○ Participates in and promotes professional development and training for its members. ○ Ensure overall organizational transparency is maintained and reporting is completed in a timely manner.

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Standing Board Committees are as follows: A Director must chair all committees, and the Board Chair acts as ex-officio on Standing and Ad-hoc committees.

The Standing Investment Review Committee (SIRC) adjudicates loan proposals and oversees the administration of the loan funds. The SIRC consists of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director, and the Business Development Advisor (BDA). SIRC members represent different geographic areas and levels of expertise, possess an understanding of financial management and are familiar with the operation of small and medium sized business operations. The SIRC currently includes two “non-director service professionals” or “Citizens at Large”.

The Executive Committee (EC) consists of the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, and the Executive Director. The role of this committee is to deal with tactical matters requiring board input as they arise and is the designate sub-committee for board recruitment. This may include answering inquiries from board members as well as the public, reviewing issues and making recommendations or presenting options to the board for full discussion and review. This committee also provides guidance to the Executive Director including completion of the Executive Director’s annual performance appraisal and collectively sets the agendas for board meetings.

Staffing:

Over the 2024-2025 fiscal year two recruitment processes were initiated due to resignations. The first recruitment process was initiated in the fall as the Community Development Lead resigned. In November of 2024, Lauren Pearson was hired to lead the CED portfolio. In the fall of 2024 long term Executive Director, Patti-Jay Powell made the board aware of her plans to retire in March of 2025. Internal succession was reviewed, and, in the end, a recruitment committee (Executive) was brought together to recruit and hire a new Team Lead.

2.2 Board of Directors

Name	Position on Board	Geographic Area of Representation	Month & Year Joined Board
Palwinder (Paul) Singh	Chair	Town of Cochrane	June 14, 2022
Jacqui Jepson	Vice Chair	City of Airdrie	August 11, 2020
Ryan Cameron	Treasurer, SIRC	City of Airdrie	June 14, 2022
Drew Hyndman	Secretary, SMARTstart Expansion Committee member	Town of Cochrane	September 13, 2018
Scott Grattidge	Director, SIRC Chair	Rocky View County	January 15, 2022
Jo-Anne Yau	Director, SMARTstart Committee	City of Airdrie	December 2, 2020
Warren Hall	Director, SIRC	City of Airdrie	March 15, 2024
Serina Kwok	Director, SMARTstart Committee Chair	City of Airdrie	September 10, 2024
Gary Manocha	Director	City of Airdrie	October 25, 2024
James Dahl, Ex Officio	Director	Rocky View County	January 15, 2018
Total Number of Board Members: 10			

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2.3 Board Diversity

Please indicate how many of your board members identify as a member of the following groups (a person can be counted more than one):	
Women	3
Indigenous	0
Youth	0
Person with a Disability	Members may be included in underrepresented groups, as per Statistics Canada data, less than 1% of Canadians report a disability.
Other under-represented group	

2.4 Staff

Staff Name	Position	Salary Percentage Covered by PrairiesCan Core Funding	Month & Year Hired
Laura McDonald	Team Lead	80%	March 4, 2025
Dianne Graham	Operations Lead	70%	July 25, 2005
Lauren Pearson	Community Development Project-Lead	100%	November 6, 2023
Ken Koob	Business Development Advisor (BDA)	90%	July 12, 2023
Total Number of Staff (FTEs): 3			

3.0 PLANNING

3.1 External and Internal Environment – Opportunities and Challenges

Describe the external opportunities and challenges facing your organization (e.g. your area's economic realities, operating context and strategic priorities). Briefly outline your plans to take advantage of these opportunities as well as to address potential challenges. What opportunities can CFCWest deliver on?
<p>Alberta's economy is poised for continued growth in 2025 and 2026 but faces heightened geopolitical uncertainty according to ATB Financials' latest economic outlook. The economy is entering 2025 with momentum driven by robust oil production, surging home construction, and a recent jump in employment. At the same time, the province is navigating rising unemployment as more job seekers come to Alberta and persistent cost-of-living challenges.</p> <p>ATB Financials' latest economic outlook projects Alberta's GDP to outpace the national economy, growing by 2.5 per cent in 2025 and 2.3 per cent in 2026. This growth is fueled by strong energy sector performance, emerging sectors like technology and petrochemicals, and continued interprovincial migration. While falling interest rates will support a rebound in consumer spending, trade uncertainty and a slowdown in international migration will create a headwind. As a result, ATB Financial has lowered its GDP growth forecast from its October outlook, which had projected 2.8 per cent growth in 2025 and 2.5 per cent in 2026.</p>

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Given the uncertainty, ATB Financial has prepared alternate scenarios, including the potential impact of escalating trade tensions that could hinder business investment and economic growth. The upside includes minimal trade actions and more major projects proceeding.

"Alberta's economy has been resilient in 2024 and has momentum heading into the new year, but we're entering a period of heightened uncertainty," says ATB Financial Chief Economist, Mark Parsons. "After a period of high inflation, the next challenge will be navigating the potential impacts of U.S. tariffs and adjusting to major population shifts."

During the year 2025-2026 year, CFCWest will continue their partnership with a multi partner ROF 2.0 project to create online learning programs for entrepreneurs. Community Futures Central Alberta is leading this project which will see the development and operationalization of an easy-to-access, online learning platform offering courses consisting of five modules each, designed to address the recommendations from the RRRF Small Business Needs Assessment in order help entrepreneurs start and grow successful businesses. The aim of the project is to modernize Community Futures' training material, utilizing technology to meet the learning style of a younger CF client demographic and to create relevant and competitive learning solutions for all of Alberta's entrepreneurs. CFCWest has been an active participant in the LaunchPad Online Learning program by Beta testing of the first two modules. Your Business, Your Plan and Talent and Teams: HR for Small Business. Staff, board members and clients have participated in this process.

SMARTstart program expansion funded through a ROF 2.0 grant will continue to be a key growth program for CFCWest in the year 2025-2026. To enhance SMARTstart, which is a proven methodology, supports rural entrepreneurs and increases the likelihood of new business success. Changes to the program will provide communities with tools and resources to implement the program more easily in their communities. The intangible benefit of the program is the development of a robust and tight knit business community the program creates in each community. We are also creating a support network for the local small businesses outside of the program which will continue well after the mentors & participants leave the program. In April of 2025 Lauren Pearson will present & promote the SMARTstart program to members of Economic Developers of Alberta at their annual conference in Kananaskis. Exciting improvements are underway for SMARTstart. We have just completed the initial build out of the SMST Centralized Hub. Built upon the Mighty Networks platform we can provide individualized "spaces" for each community to allow better communication flow between Coordinators, Entrepreneurs and Mentors. This integration will eliminate the need for additional tools such as WhatsApp, Cloud storage, Google/Outlook calendars and reduce the number of email communications all while increasing the ease of communication amongst cohorts. New materials are being developed to support new and existing communities. These include workshop outlines, presentation templates and workbooks to bridge the gap between in-person workshops and online learning. These materials will be made available in the relevant Hub spaces.

As of Feb 1st, 2025 GoForth Institute will no longer be available for the online component for SMARTstart. CFCWest has sourced MasterClass at Work as a viable alternative for our online learning platform at the same price point as GoForth. The MasterClass at Work platform offers Classes, Learning Paths and Video Playlists that correspond with majority of the competencies presented during the SMARTstart workshops. Adjacent playbooks, exercises and case studies aid in discussion content for Peer-to-Peer networking sessions. We are confident the addition of these platforms and training materials will allow for greater consistency and collaboration within the SMARTstart program and allow for continued expansion into additional communities.

CFCWest is committed to working with clients until March of 2026 when the majority of RRRF client loans will term out. In January of 2024 CFCWest saw significant payout of RRRF loans on the January 12th, 2024, deadline. I predict increased staffing allocation will be required to ensure repayment goes smoothly over the next year.

Describe the internal opportunities and challenges facing your organization (e.g. staff/board retention, recruitment and training. Briefly outline your plans to take advantage of these opportunities as well as to address potential challenges.

The cost of living has increased to levels unseen for quite some time, and with no further increase in regular operational funding from PrairiesCan, CFCWest is looking at the status quo regarding salaries. In the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the CED

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position was filled twice. CFCWest cannot compete with the salaries of the municipalities and as such it affects our ability to keep staff members. Time dedicated to new staff orientations has affected our operation from a project, revenue and efficiency perspective. On March 31st, 2025, the current Executive Director, Patti-Jay Powell is retiring after twenty years of service. Laura McDonald has been hired to fill the vacancy. Her start date with CFCWest has been set for March 4, 2025 to allow for orientation and overlap with the portfolio.

In 2024-2025 the BDA struggled to get loans appropriate to match criteria set out by both policy and Contribution Agreement. In conversations with bankers, they too are seeing clients' businesses in crisis alongside insufficient cash flow. The post pandemic businesses attempting to grow are unable to qualify for development lending due to poor credit scores and outstanding CRA debt resulting from the pandemic.

While we were able to attract three new board members to our board, it is increasingly difficult to attract volunteers to CFCWest. As stated by CTV Edmonton, declining volunteers are increasing the risk to rural municipalities. Researchers from the University of Alberta's Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities interviewed representatives from across the province about the decline in volunteerism, and found Alberta towns and counties are already struggling to compensate for the essential role volunteers once played. "There is no doubt the persistent decline in the capacity of volunteer organizations in rural Alberta represents a significant threat to rural municipalities across the province," the report from Clark Banack and Meredith Jevne says. While CFCWest has a full board contingent of members currently, this trend will likely affect our organization in future years.

The CFNA continues to offer professional development during Spring Training and the Annual CF Symposium which CFCWest normally attends. CFCWest takes a very strategic approach to ensure each staff member receives relevant training. Training opportunities are reviewed annually during staff performance appraisals. On many occasions, CFCWest has taken advantage of either partner training at little or no cost or has applied for bursaries or grants to take advantage of other training opportunities. In addition, CFCWest takes full advantage of any training opportunities and/or funding promoted through the EDP Program.

3.2 Strategic Priorities

	Identify and describe your top three strategic goals
1	Build Strong Communities, Connected to Innovation and Growth-needs assessment and community engagement.
2	Skill Development and Entrepreneurial Training-SMARTstart Expansion Project & Business Succession Project.
3	Support business growth through lending and advisory services, targeted at strong economic growth and rural diversification

3.3 Alignment with PrairiesCan Priorities

Please outline your organization's plans or activities (e.g. projects/initiatives) to address PrairiesCan's priorities. PrairiesCan acknowledges that circumstances are different across organizations and therefore your organization may only be able to address select priorities instead of each priority.

Priority	Planned Projects/Initiatives (2 – 3 sentences)
Inclusiveness: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women• Indigenous people• Youth (aged 15-34)• Persons with Disabilities	Partner with the Town of Crossfield for the annual Women in Business Conference to provide business training for local Crossfield business owners. SMARTstart Entrepreneurial training program in Airdrie, AdvanceSMART & SMARTstart expansion program. Actively recruit women to fill vacancies on the CFCWest Board. Business Loans granted to women entrepreneurship indigenous programming for entrepreneurs. Continue to advise and assist women clients who have received CGI funding through CFCWest CGI loan/grant program. Continue our partnership with RAYEC and Southern Alberta Junior Achievement (JA)

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	Program. While the EDP program is currently closed due to capacity issues, once the program is reinstated CFCWest will continue to utilize the services of the Pan West EDP program.
New Value and Competitiveness: <i>Accelerating economic growth through new sources of value and innovation in traditional sectors</i>	Promoting economic growth through innovation is of utmost importance as CF's were created many years ago with this outcome in mind. For CF's, key lending to business diversifying from traditional sectors is a strategy that can build value. Projects aimed at entrepreneurs affecting labor, building collaboration, and stimulating business growth are significant. Projects looking into key aspects of land, labor, capital, technology, and entrepreneurship will accelerate economic growth.
Green Economy: <i>Enabling success in a net-zero future</i>	As a small business entity, playing a role in a subset of Canada's possible pathways to net zero, facing potential barriers to scalability and relying on technologies in early stages of development are key to net zero status.

4.0 GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

4.1 Incorporation / Policy Updates

Please provide copies of the following only if they have been updated since they were last submitted to PrairiesCan (or WD):

Incorporation / Policy Documents:	Date Document Was Last Updated	Date Submitted
Articles of incorporation and association	January 25, 2023	January 30, 2023
Bylaws	2014-2015	January 30, 2023
Loan fund management Please include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interest Rates (if less than prime plus 2%)• Interest transfers• Loans in excess of \$150,000 (if applicable)• Syndicated Loans• Equity Positions• Appeals and redress mechanism	January 25, 2023	January 30, 2023
Conflict of interest	January 25, 2023	January 30, 2023
Board of Directors (policy for appointment/selection, terms of office, etc.)	January 25, 2025	January 30, 2023

4.2 Cyber-Security

Please indicate when your electronic security measures and processes were last reviewed, and any subsequent upgrades.

Complete cyber security overview and equipment upgrades have been completed over the past years.

4.3 Transparency and Accountability

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As per the contribution agreement section on Reflecting Community, Transparency and Accountability, please confirm below that the most current, up-to-date information is posted on your website for the following items:	
Names of the current Board of Directors (and names of any non-board members of the Investment Review Committee – if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Profile of Board composition (i.e. geographic representation, sector/area of expertise, gender, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Board Recruitment and nomination processes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Annual audited financial statement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Performance results	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Referral Reference to the FEDO to make it known to members of the public that business services for Francophone entrepreneurs are available	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Investment/Loan Fund redress /appeals process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Please comment below if current information is not yet available on your website.	
Posted on website.	

5.0 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The process of setting overall performance targets should take into account considerations such as your historic performance, status and trends in your region’s economy, activities of other business service providers, needs of your community(ies), capacity of your organization, etc.

Note: Both you and PrairiesCan must agree to your final overall performance targets.

5.1 Please complete the table below.

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Performance Indicator	Target	GROUP 1 MPS	GROUP 2 MPS	GROUP 3 MPS
**Targets should be greater than or equal to your MPS.				
Indicate which Group your CF is in (groupings can be found in the attached Instruction Manual):	Group 1			
Number of new community-based projects	6	2	2	2
Number of business training session participants	200	400	400	300
Number of business advisory services	200			
Number of loans	12	12	8	6
Value of loans	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$400,000	\$200,000

6.0 FINANCIAL

6.1 Budget Forecast and Cash Flow (PrairiesCan Core Funding) Requirements

Please provide your total budget forecast (revenues and expenses) for the coming year, shown by quarter. For sources of revenue, please include PrairiesCan core funding, PrairiesCan planned / requested interest transfers (if applicable – CFs and WEIs only), and other revenues of which there is a high level of certainty, as separate line items. The PrairiesCan core funding will constitute the cash flow by quarter for advance purposes.

PrairiesCan will not accept a deficit operational budget. If there is a surplus, please provide details as to why this is the case. When including other funders, please ensure PrairiesCan funding is fully committed.

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Operations Budget (Total Operations)

	Q1 <i>Apr-Jun</i>	Q2 <i>Jul-Sep</i>	Q3 <i>Oct-Dec</i>	Q4 <i>Jan-Mar</i>	TOTAL
CASH RECEIPTS - REVENUES					
Total PrairiesCan Contribution**	\$73,741	\$73,741	\$73,741	\$73,741	\$294,963
Fees for Service	\$3,400	\$3,400	\$3,400	\$3,400	\$13,600
RAYEC		\$2,600			\$2,600
EDP	\$1,125	\$1,125	\$1,125	\$1,125	\$4,500
ROF 2.0 SMARTstart Expansion Project	\$19,250	\$19,250	\$19,250	\$19,250	\$77,000
Retained Earnings	\$8,640	\$8,640	\$8,640	\$8,640	\$34,560
Total Revenues*	\$106,156	\$108,756	\$106,156	\$106,156	\$427,223
CASH DISBURSEMENTS - EXPENDITURES					
Wages, Benefits, Professional Development	\$70,833	\$70,833	\$70,833	\$70,833	\$283,332
Administration	\$8,360	\$8,360	\$8,360	\$8,360	\$33,441
Staff Travel, Meals and Accommodations	\$2,113	\$2,113	\$2,113	\$2,113	\$8,450
Board Training, Travel, Meals	\$2,450	\$2,450	\$2,450	\$2,450	\$9,800
Office Equipment/ Computers	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$12,000
Legal	\$250	\$250	\$250	\$250	\$1,000
Marketing & Community Partnerships	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$14,000
RAYEC		\$2,600			\$2,600
EDP	\$1,125	\$1,125	\$1,125	\$1,125	\$4,500
ROF 2.0 SMARTstart Expansion Project	\$14,525	\$14,525	\$14,525	\$14,525	\$58,100
Total Expenditures*	\$106,156	\$108,756	\$106,156	\$106,156	\$427,223
RECONCILIATION					
Surplus	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

*Revenue and expenditure totals should agree.

**PrairiesCan's total contribution should be accounted for in the cash-flow requirements a

Note: The following budget is an Excel embedded template.

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7.0 ATTESTATION

I attest that the information contained in this document is true and correct, and that the operating plan and budget has been presented to and approved by the board.

Completed by:

Name:	Patti-Jay Powell
Title:	Executive Director
Date:	January 31, 2025

Submission Instructions

- Please utilize the [PrairiesCan portal \(https://pacifican.prairiescan.gc.ca\)](https://pacifican.prairiescan.gc.ca) to upload this document by **January 31, 2025**.
 - Please upload a copy of your Operating Plan in WORD format only. Please do not submit a PDF version.
 - Make sure to click the "Notify Officer & Exit" button to complete the upload.
 - Please follow up with an email to your PrairiesCan Officer advising that it has been submitted.
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