

Performance Results for 2024-25

Community Futures (CF) is a program that supports community economic development and builds the capacity of communities to realize their full sustainable potential. The purpose of the CF Program is to help communities develop and implement *local solutions to local problems*.

Community Futures Performance Results		2024-25
<i>Strong rural community strategic planning and implementation</i>		
1. Total number of community-based projects (new & on-going)		57
2. Total number of local and regionally-based community strategic plans developed and/or updated		5
<i>Rural access to business development services</i>		
3. Total number of business training session participants		1469
4. Total number of business advisory services		164
<i>Rural access to capital and leveraged capital</i>		
5. Dollar value of loans		\$558,200
6. Total number of loans		8
Number of jobs created/maintained/expanded through lending ¹		26
Provide additional Information (e.g. Success stories, Links to priorities, leveraging work, communication events, etc.)		
<p style="text-align: center;">Executive Summary</p> <p>The 2024–2025 fiscal year was a period of strategic growth, community engagement, and resilient progress for the Economic Development and capacity building opportunities in the Wood Buffalo Region.</p> <p>Despite ongoing economic uncertainties and labor market fluctuations, our team demonstrated innovation, adaptability, and a steadfast commitment to equitable economic development in underserved rural communities.</p>		

¹ Estimated at the time of lending

Key Performance Areas

1. Business Development & Support

- **Small Business Engagement**

CFWB provided business training to 1469 participants, a 67% increase from the previous year and continued to provide technical assistance to business seeking financing support.

- **Access to Capital**

CFWB facilitated \$558,200 in approved credit facilities to support local small business initiatives, supporting in the maintenance and creation of 26 new jobs for the region.

- **New Business Incubation**

Through CFWB's "Travelling Roadshow", we are active in most rural communities within our Region through the launch of "**The 4 Pillars of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Project**" funded by Community Futures Pan West, Rural Opportunities Fund.

Project Purpose:

- Designed to get businesses opened in the Wood Buffalo region, and community members employed. Through respecting Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #92 – Business and Reconciliation, CFWB has supported disinvested neighborhoods with training programs across underserved communities.

2. Workforce Development Integration:

- To support small business development, CFWB has contributed to 26 new employment opportunities being created in our region. We continue to train aspiring entrepreneurs so that they are able to hire staff to support their operations.

3. Partnerships & Strategic Collaborations:

- CFWB partnered with Keyano College to support the creation and implementation of The Strategic Partners in Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship "TIE Project" funded by Northern Regional Economic Development (NRED) where CFWB was the Grant Recipient to support this initiative. CFWB has worked tirelessly to support this initiative and has engaged in a community survey which was carried out at our regional innovation summit held in Q3 to 125 attending participants. The Technology Centre is currently "on hold" due to competing priorities at the end of Q4.
- Strengthened cross-sector partnerships with The Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce, Wood Buffalo Regional Innovation Network, Keyano College, Regional Recreation Corporation of Wood Buffalo, Sekweya Youth Centre, Nistawoyou Friendship Centre, Fort McKay Metis Nation, Multi-cultural Association of Wood Buffalo amongst other partners to ensure training opportunities are delivered to a variety of community members and potential business owners.
- Initiated a regional Innovation & Entrepreneurship Summit in Q3 that convened over 125 stakeholders, facilitating the first ever Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship Event in the Wood Buffalo Region in support of Small Business Week 2024. This event was very successful, and

attendees consisted of a cross-section of stakeholders from community NPO's, business owners, innovators, technology innovators, food security innovators, municipal government, and other community partners.

4. Equity and Inclusion:

- CFWB is working with the Wood Buffalo's YMCA's Newcomer's Group to deliver business training to new Immigrant community members. Many newcomers are business owners in their own country, and as they settle in the Wood Buffalo region, they have a desire to be self-employed. Our assessment is that we have identified the need to work with this section of the community to develop opportunities for this segment.
- CFWB is actively working with the Teresa Tedesco Adult School (Fort Chipewyan), Fort McKay Youth Centre, Fort Chipewyan Community School, and other local high schools to ensure our adult youth are getting entrepreneurial training supports and learning opportunities for self-employment.

5. CFWB Strategic Plan

- In Q3, CFWB Board, Staff and management spent a day to create a new Strategic Plan which will guide the organization for the next three years.
- We have identified our Key Priorities as:
 - Secure Funding for CFWB's core operations.
 - Human Resources Attraction & Retention.
 - Board Member Attraction & Retention.
 - Community Engagement & Partnership with key stakeholders to support our mandate.
 - Attraction of Multi-level Government Support to deliver Business Projects/Programs.
- This document is important to guide our successes for years to come.

Challenges & Areas for Improvement

- **Data Management:**
While outreach and programming increased significantly, internal data collection and impact measurement tools need refinement to better track long-term business and workforce outcomes. Our staff have found the TEA System to be difficult to navigate and access to TEA Systems Support Desk is slow.
- **Sustainability of Grant-Dependent Initiatives:**
Some high-impact programs remain heavily reliant on short-term grant funding. Diversification of revenue sources is explored on a regular basis. Without adequate funding, CFWB is unable to sustain excellence in Funding Small Businesses, Training & Development, and Community initiatives.
- **Staff Capacity:**
With increased demand for services, staff burnout and workload management emerge. Investment in team growth and professional development opportunities is needed to ensure staff are able to function at optimal levels.

Overall Assessment

The CFWB team performed at a **high level** during the 2024–2025 period. The measured progress toward inclusive economic growth has demonstrated strategic foresight, and response to emerging opportunities.

With improved data systems, long-term sustainability planning, increased funding opportunities, additional partnerships, professional training programs, and highly committed staff, CFWB is well-positioned for even greater impact in the Wood Buffalo Region in 2025–2026.