

Northwest Alberta Economic Development Network

Date: September 17

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Location: 9701 AB-40, Grande Cache Tourism & Interpretative Centre, Alberta (In-Person)

Agenda

10:00 - 10:15 a.m. Welcome and Introductions

- Opening remarks
- Participant introductions
- Review of agenda and meeting objectives

10:15 - 10:25 a.m. Speaker: **Ian Large, Director, Regional Strategy & Market Intelligence, Invest Alberta** Current investment trends influencing Alberta's regions and Opportunities for communities to position themselves for growth

10:25 - 11:15 a.m. Interactive Workshop: Investor Readiness and Community Positioning

Facilitated by Ian Large, Invest Alberta and Nicole Nelles, NW REDS

Please bring your laptop to participate.

Participants will:

- Explore tools and resources used to assess investment opportunities
- Review how investors evaluate communities and regions
- Identify local and regional strengths that can be leveraged for investment attraction
- Work through practical exercises using community data and online resources
- Discuss how communities of all sizes can improve investment readiness

11:15 - 11:30 a.m. Networking Break

11:30 - 11:40 a.m. Speaker: **Julie Rossignol, Manager, Data Delivery, Data and Analytics Unit, Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration (JETI)** **Introducing Alberta's New Investment Data Tools**

Presentation on:

- The new **Investment Data Hub**
- The **Site Selector Tool**
- How communities can use provincial data resources to support investment attraction and economic development

11:40 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Interactive Workshop: Using the Investment Data Hub and Site Selector Tool Facilitated by Julie Rossignol, JETI and Nicole Nelles NW REDS

Please bring your laptop to participate.

Participants will:

- Access and navigate the Investment Data Hub
- Explore key datasets relevant to economic development
- Use the Site Selector Tool to identify and compare locations
- Practice extracting community-specific information to support investment attraction efforts
- Share ideas on how these tools can strengthen local and regional economic development strategies

12:30 - 1:15 p.m. Lunch and Networking at the 1701 Pine Plaza Mountainview restaurant, Grande Cache Hotel

1:15 - 2:00 p.m. Community Roundtable Updates Each community provides a brief update on:

- Key economic development activities
- Emerging opportunities
- Challenges and support needs
- Upcoming events and initiatives

2:00 - 2:40 p.m. Collaboration Workshop Identifying opportunities for:

- Regional partnerships
- Joint projects and funding opportunities
- Advocacy and information sharing
- Future Collaborative 56 priorities

2:40 - 2:55 p.m. Planning Forward

- Future meeting locations and topics
- Action items and next steps

2:55 - 3:00 p.m. Wrap-Up and Closing

- Key takeaways
- Confirm action items
- Adjournment

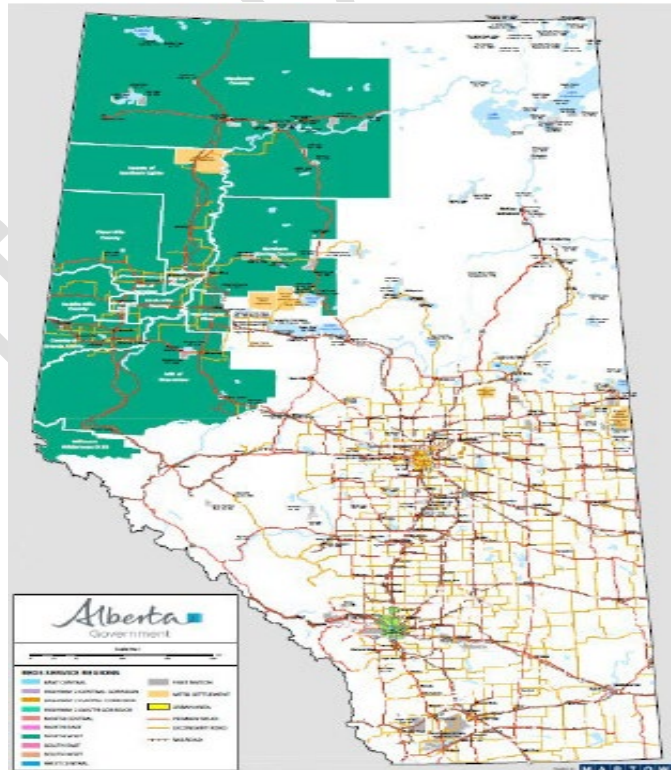
1. Purpose and Vision

Collaborative 56 is a regional network of economic development professionals across Northwest Alberta, designed to strengthen relationships, share knowledge, and coordinate action to improve regional economic outcomes.

The group is grounded in **intentional partnership, information exchange, and practical collaboration**. It is not an advocacy body; rather, it functions as a **facilitator of connections, learning, and alignment**. Identified gaps and opportunities will be methodically addressed within a coordinated framework and then communicated through appropriate channels.

2. Core Principles

- **Collaboration over competition:** Working regionally to increase impact and access to funding. Strategically working together with surrounding communities. Identifying obvious linkages and then leverage resulting in solutions not thought of in solitary.
- **No formal barriers to participation:** No membership fees; inclusive of all regional EDOs (or CAOs etc. in the event municipalities do not have an EDO).
- **The region is:** JETI's Northwest Service Region Regional Economic Development Services



- **Non-advocacy role:** Focus on knowledge-sharing and coordination rather than political engagement.
- **Action-oriented engagement:** Emphasis on discussions, workshops, and problem-solving rather than presentations.
- **Regional representation:** Ensuring rural and smaller communities are heard and supported.
- **Evidence-based learning:** Promote access to reliable, timely, and credible information.

3. Membership and Structure

- **Primary participants:** Economic Development Officers, or in the absence of an EDO the administration who undertakes economic development.
- **Supporting roles:**
 - REDS: Facilitation, coaching, grant support, and connections.
 - Federal and provincial partners: Participation through targeted engagement opportunities.
- **Participation model:**
 - Active contribution expected (information sharing, engagement in discussions).
 - Emphasis on peer-to-peer support and relationship-building.

4. Key Functions of the Group

Collaborative 56 will:

1. **Connect and convene** regional partners to discuss challenges and opportunities.
2. **Facilitate knowledge sharing**, including best practices, success stories, and lessons learned.
3. **Support problem-solving** through structured discussions (e.g., Q&A, workshops, breakout sessions).
4. **Identify gaps and opportunities** in regional economic development.
5. **Enable access to resources**, including funding, programs, and expertise.
6. **Provide informal wrap-around support** (e.g., guidance on grants, introductions to key organizations).
7. **Strengthen alignment with federal and provincial priorities and pathways.**

5. Strategic Goals and Actions

Goal 1: Strengthen Regional Relationships and Knowledge Exchange

Objective: Build a connected network of EDOs with strong personal and professional relationships.

Key Actions:

- A. Rotate meeting locations across the region.
- B. Conduct regular regional and sub-regional retreats when feasible.
- C. Develop and maintain a **regional asset inventory and amenity list**.
- D. Facilitate in-person and virtual networking opportunities.
- E. Establish a clear **regional value proposition**.

Goal 2: Improve Access to and Leveraging of Funding

Objective: Increase the volume and success of funding applications into Northwest Alberta.

Key Actions:

- A. Develop and share a **regional grant calendar**.
- B. Coordinate multi-community applications where appropriate.
- C. Share intelligence on funding opportunities and program criteria.
- D. Support collaborative project development aligned with regional priorities.

Goal 3: Enhance Communication and Information Sharing

Objective: Ensure consistent, accessible, and high-quality information flows across the region.

Key Actions:

- A. Maintain a central communications platform (e.g., regular email updates/newsletter).
- B. Encourage **crowdsourced updates** from members.
- C. Establish a shared repository of resources and tools.
- D. Standardize terminology and clarify commonly used acronyms.
- E. Incorporate structured **Q&A sessions with partner organizations** (e.g., Community Futures, Alberta Innovates).

Goal 4: Address Regional Gaps and Support Economic Growth

Objective: Identify and respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Key Actions:

- A. Create a **case study and best practices library**.
- B. Host training sessions, workshops, and “lab-style” problem-solving forums.
- C. Explore growth opportunities (e.g., regional corridors, major projects).
- D. Support community education on emerging industries and developments.
- E. Facilitate engagement strategies that increase public understanding and buy-in.

6. Key Challenges to Address

- A. Limited capacity in smaller municipalities (e.g., one-person offices).
- B. Infrastructure constraints (transportation, broadband, utilities).
- C. Misalignment and competition between municipalities.
- D. Resistance to change and growth within communities.
- E. Difficulties accessing decision-makers and accurate information.
- F. Fear and uncertainty around large-scale or emerging projects.

7. Success Measures

Success for Collaborative 56 will be demonstrated by:

- A. Increased regional collaboration and follow-through among members.
- B. Growth in funding secured for the region.
- C. Greater recognition and value of EDO roles.
- D. Increased participation, including Indigenous economic development representatives.
- E. Expanded access to local training and professional development.
- F. Improved information flow and shared understanding across communities.
- G. Provincial recognition as a **best-practice model for regional collaboration**.
- H. Documented and implemented action plans.

8. Operating Model and Meeting Structure

A. Meeting cadence:

January and March: Virtual

May and September: In-person

- **Format:**

- A. Workshop-based sessions with minimal presentations
- B. Emphasis on discussion, Q&A, and peer exchange
- C. Guest participation for targeted conversations (not formal presentations)

- **Planned activities:**

- A. Regional tours and site visits
- B. Joint project development sessions
- C. Thematic gatherings (e.g., community supports, infrastructure, investment readiness)

9. Immediate Next Steps

- A. Confirm membership and contact list (all regional EDOs).
- B. Establish regular communication channel and schedule.
- C. Plan upcoming in-person session (e.g., Grande Cache gathering).
- D. Begin development of:
 - Regional asset inventory
 - Grant calendar
 - Shared resource library
- E. Identify 1–2 pilot collaborative projects.

10. Long-Term Vision

Collaborative 56 evolves into a **recognized, high-functioning regional network** that:

- Drives coordinated economic development outcomes,
- Strengthens regional resilience and competitiveness, and
- Serves as a model for collaboration across Alberta.