



# FIELD GUIDE 1

---

## Leadership

Formal and informal leaders must be future focused to chart the course and engage citizens in the process. Leaders are action oriented, accountable and partnership driven.

---

**Saskatchewan Economic Development Alliance(SEDA)**



---

## ThriveSask Partners



---

## ThriveSask Program

***"When a community takes the time to get to know itself, it gains a sense of identity and purpose that informs decisions about its future."***

*Lyman Orton, founder and chairman, Orton Family Foundation*

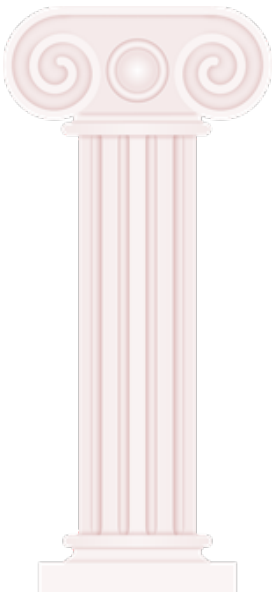
ThriveSask is a program convened and facilitated by the Saskatchewan Economic Development Alliance (SEDA). ThriveSask uses a heritage based action planning framework to guide community development efforts. It aims to harness the social, economic, physical, and cultural assets that set a place apart, and ultimately leads to tangible outcomes that benefit the entire community.

In developing this program, we were inspired by the commitment of many people and organizations. They include the Main Street Program in its various iterations in the United States, Canada and Saskatchewan as well as the Heart & Soul Initiative offered by the Orton Family Foundation. Our four

Field Guides draw from these and other resources which are annotated throughout the publications.

ThriveSask encourages communities to take steps to enact long term change, while also implementing short term, inexpensive and place-based activities that support the local business sector and create a sense of enthusiasm and momentum in the community. There is something special about every community. This unique sense of place – where people came from and who they are today – is the living heritage we draw from in the ThriveSask action planning process. Our values, beliefs and way of living we have inherited from past generations inform the present and our choices for the future.

The strength of any community lies in the hands of its residents. These FIELD GUIDES align with the program pillars and will support your community development efforts.



**LEADERSHIP** - Formal and informal leaders must be future focused to chart the course and engage citizens in the process. Leaders are action oriented, accountable and partnership driven.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY** - A multi-dimensional approach that recognizes economic, environmental and social well-being are interdependent. Asset based with a lens on local and regional market dynamics. Investment ready and entrepreneur friendly.

**PLACEMAKING** - Leveraging the natural and built environment to positively impact individual and community health. Capitalizing on the foundation of tangible and intangible heritage.

**PROMOTION** - Engaging residents as well as non-residents in celebrating the unique cultural heritage of each community. Supporting local economies.

---

## **Saskatchewan Accredited Economic Development Organization (SAEDO)**

SAEDO is an optional program which recognizes professional excellence in municipalities and economic development organizations. Earning the stamp of approval increases the visibility of your economic development efforts with businesses, political leaders, funders and local residents.

The ThriveSask Program is aligned with SAEDO. Benchmarks outlined in each of the four Field Guides are those which require to be met in the accreditation process.

The accreditation process consists of two phases:

1. **Documentation Review.** Applicants submit documents supporting achievement of benchmarks in each of four areas: Leadership; Economic Vitality; Placemaking and Promotion.
2. **Review Team Visit.** Certified Saskatchewan Economic Developers will conduct an onsite assessment.

Successful applicants will receive:

- Exclusive use of the SAEDO logo.
- A plaque to proudly display your achievement.
- Recognition on SEDA's online assets and Annual Report.

A one-time accreditation fee applies which includes cost of travel for a review team visit. Successful applicants are expected to participate in a documentation review every three years.

## **Field Guide 1: Leadership**

Laying a solid foundation is the first step to building thriving communities. Proactive leadership is essential to guide the way forward in the following seven areas:

1. Developing a Knowledge Base
2. Engaging Stakeholders
3. Assessment & Analysis
4. Formulating Action Plans
5. Determining Capacity
6. Building Partnerships
7. Measuring Impact

---

## Developing a Knowledge Base

# 1

SECTION

Information-gathering is the first essential step to formulating community action plans. It can be undertaken by staff or volunteers, or by convening the community at large. Here are some options that can be utilized based on your available resources and capacity.

### *Information Gathering Workshops*

This is a well-tested method of hearing first-hand the views and ideas of a wide range of key stakeholders. They are an opportunity for all participants to share information about resources in the region as well as their views on community priorities.

### *First Impressions Program*

In practice, a community in the First Impressions Program is paired with another one of similar size and character, and is rated by teams of volunteer visitors following a predefined evaluation format. The First Impressions Program provides useful input for municipalities or community groups wishing to enhance their business attraction efforts or refine their tourism plans by providing an unbiased view of how the municipality appears to others as a place to live, visit or do business. *Further Resources:* [Saskatchewan First Impressions Program](#)

### *Resource Mapping*

Community resource mapping involves compilation of an inventory of regional assets such as buildings/properties, people, events, institutions, attractions and businesses. It supports action planning based on the premise that “knowing what we already have is required in order to determine what we need”. *Further Resources:* [SEDA Resource Mapping Guidebook](#).

### *Local Needs Assessment*

Elected officials, staff and volunteer leaders must be aligned with the needs of local residents and businesses in order to develop strategies and action plans to support a sustainable future. One effective method for identifying problems, challenges and needs is conducting a Community Needs Assessment Survey. This process engages residents and local officials in collecting information and interpreting the results of the survey. *Further Resources:* [SEDA Community Assessment Guidebook](#).

### *Community Profile*

You may have an existing community profile, and if not, one should be developed. The community profile consists of local and regional socio-economic indicators and trends, as well as strategic assets and advantages of the community and surrounding region. *Further Resources:* [Localintel](#) is an online platform that provides a community profile. [SEDA’s learning platform](#) also links to alternative data sources.

## **B E N C H M A R K S**

- Completed Resource Inventory
- Current Community Profile

## Engaging Stakeholders

# 2 SECTION

There's something special about every town—the old downtown, the pastures or woodlands, a get-it-done spirit, or an everyone-is-welcome ethic. Whether they are real places, traditions, language or attitudes, these community characteristics are the things that really matter to the people who live there!

It is important to tap into this 'living heritage' and use it as a foundation to design and develop future focused strategies. In the context of the ThriveSask Program, community members are asked to make important decisions that embrace opportunities and overcome threats. By identifying the characteristics that make their community special and how these can be protected, enhanced or leveraged, residents can equip themselves to steer change. In doing so, they are crafting a positive message about the future that says, "We know who we are. We know what's great about this place. We know what we want our future to be."

To this end stakeholder engagement needs to be as broad and deep as possible and mobilized early in the planning process. As mentioned in Section 1, local residents can also assist in gathering information to assess competitive advantages of the community/region. Their input continues through to goal setting and generating ideas to achieve those goals. Since each community has unique local conditions, the number and mix of stakeholders will vary, as will the scope and depth of their participation. Here is a guide to typical community stakeholders:

GOVERNMENT	PRIVATE SECTOR	NON-GOVERNMENTAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Elected officials</li><li>• Departments such as fire, community planning</li><li>• Local schools &amp; post-secondary institutions</li><li>• Regional and national departments charged with relevant mandates (eg: heritage, transportation)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local &amp; regional businesses of various sizes.</li><li>• Real estate professionals and real estate developers</li><li>• Chamber of Commerce and relevant business organizations</li><li>• Sector organizations (eg: food security; tourism)</li><li>• Financial institutions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community based organizations</li><li>• Organizations or clubs representing specific community interests (eg: youth; disabled; recreation; culture)</li><li>• Groups focused on certain issues(eg: environment, gender equity)</li></ul>

Consultation with local residents and businesses will be required at different phases of your community development efforts. Broader consultation will be required as you start to dive into specific action plans such as:

- needs assessment research on services, products or activities residents would like to see in their community
- feedback on potential changes to public spaces that will be visible and impactful to all residents such as biking paths; pedestrian only streets; sidewalk cafes etc
- developing an image and identity of the community or downtown

### BENCHMARKS

- Documentation illustrating individuals from various sectors of the community have been engaged in formulating goals and action plans.

## Assessment & Analysis

# 3

From information and data collected, it is now possible to isolate local and regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and potential threats (SWOT). In practical terms, we suggest using a simple SWOT analysis to set the stage for priority setting and action planning.

### SECTION

This assessment must be followed by further evaluation of options to capitalize on opportunities and mitigate weaknesses or threats. This basic SWOT assessment can also be taken to a deeper level by gathering the same data for other communities outside the immediate market area and undertaking a 'competitive assessment' by comparing SWOT data of each community/region to determine your competitive advantages in comparison to other locations.

	<b>Helpful</b> to achieving the objective	<b>Harmful</b> to achieving the objective
<b>Internal origin</b> (attributes of the system)	<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <p>Positive internal characteristics and resources the community can exploit to gain competitive advantage.</p>	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <p>Internal characteristics that may restrict a community's performance.</p>
<b>External origin</b> (attributes of the environment)	<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <p>External factors with the potential to help the community achieve or exceed its goals.</p>	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <p>External factors that may prevent the community from achieving its goals.</p>

### BENCHMARKS

- The community has undertaken a basic SWOT analysis.

---

# 4

## SECTION

### Formulating Action Plans

With information now gathered and assessed, the next step is to generate ideas based on identified strengths and opportunities. Ideas turn into options, which in turn must be evaluated and prioritized.

Making choices means narrowing down the options. To do this effectively, you've got to think about which options will lead to the best results, which are most needed, and which will take years to put in motion. Possible actions, or options, are ideas that can translate into viable action strategies. If an idea is impossible to implement, it is not an option. Here are five useful ways to process ideas<sup>ii</sup>:

- 1) **Filter.** Remove ideas that are impossible or out of scope for your group. If possible, pass them on to other projects or organizations that are more suited to the task.
- 2) **Combine.** Combine redundant ideas or expand an idea to capture several similar ones.
- 3) **Set the foundation.** Some ideas imply a need for preliminary actions that lay the groundwork for the idea (or multiple ideas) to happen—that is, the foundational first steps. If several ideas point to the need for a new program, additional staffing, or a new committee, then the original ideas can be packaged together with the foundational requirement.
- 4) **Develop scenarios or strategies.** Combine ideas into a bigger program or long-term strategy. This is especially relevant to land use planning or design where ideas fit a specific concept such as saving open spaces or where they hinge on a certain approach such as creating a pedestrian-friendly downtown.
- 5) **Re-scope and clarify.** Some ideas may need more clarity around what it would take to make them happen. Others may be broad and need to be more narrowly defined in terms of the scope of your work. It is easy to support a general idea such as cleaning up the town, but the actual option for a town plan might be to recommend the use of town funds to support staff to conduct a cleanup program.

#### Formulate Action Plans

The next step is to turn choices into action plans and ensure that commitments are secured to make things happen.

#### Evaluate Options

Once your team has a list of options that are within the scope of the project and within the realm of possibility, you will need some intelligence on these options, including potential costs, impacts and benefits. It's time for the tough work of prioritizing some options over others, devising ways to make them better, and understanding the trade-offs between incompatible options.

No-brainers. Some options may not need much evaluation time or effort if they are clearly aligned with the community's vision and do not necessarily require a big investment, and do not compromise other options. No-brainer options can be fast-tracked to the final list of recommendations.



---

Setting priorities. This is where there are many options that can't all be done at once. They are competing for the limited time and money your community can furnish. These options require priorities to be set. Sometimes you don't need to choose between one option and another, but only need to decide which to do first. A priority action gets front row seats because it offers strong and clear benefits such as:

- Offers good value for the cost
- Is most urgent
- Is highly recommended/supported by local stakeholders
- Necessarily precedes other actions (the first step or the foundation to making other actions possible)
- Has a champion who is ready to make it happen
- Is such a great idea that a champion or funding is guaranteed to materialize?

Your team can talk through these characteristics or use a system of scoring each option to help identify priority actions. First choices are options that have the highest community benefit for the least effort. The team can further prioritize based on public sentiment, potential uptake (are resources immediately available for this option?), urgency (does this address an immediate need or is it an opportunity with a short time frame?), or logical sequencing (does one option need to happen before another?)<sup>iii</sup>.

### **Craft the Action Plan**

The action plan is essentially a report that summarizes the process, describes the issues and opportunities that were considered based on knowledge gathered and agreed on, highlights conclusions and recommendations, and a plan for making these recommendations happen.

The first section of your action plan is the record of the process and information gathered in Sections 1 through 3. The final section that needs to be developed is an effective implementation plan for each recommended action that spells out the what, who, why, and when to make it happen.

An action plan typically includes these seven elements:

1. Action. Give this a name that is quickly understood. Many towns simply refer to it as the (Town Name)ThriveSask Action Plan.
2. Action rationale. The rationale for the action can be explained in terms of the decisions that led to selecting the action, the purpose and expected results of this action, and the community values and goals that the action seeks to benefit.
3. Champion / action leader. Who will lead the charge on this action? Who will play supporting roles and what are they?
4. Tasks. What are the key tasks or steps required to accomplish the objectives?
5. Timeline. When will key tasks be underway/completed? When will the effort wrap up?
6. Milestones. Are there key successes or results to point to along the way?
7. Resources. Are there any resources such as grants or support from large organizations?

### **BENCHMARKS**

- An economic development plan or action plan is in place to support strategic priorities.

# 5 SECTION

## Determining Capacity

When we speak of capacity, we are generally referring to the local leadership teams’ potential to marshal human, financial and other resources to effect positive change. Local leaders often struggle with capacity constraints and should assess if the resources to achieve the community and economic development outcomes that they set for themselves are in place.

The important consideration is to ensure that the amount of resources available matches the scale of effort envisioned, otherwise it is likely that implementation challenges will arise. Equally important is building expertise amongst staff and volunteers through training and information sharing and maintaining an active dialogue about resources needed to achieve desired outcomes.

### Structure

Terms of Reference and/or Bylaws are required to dictate the group’s mandate and engagement of individuals at a leadership level. Examples of structures supporting local and regional development include:

In House	Arm’s Length from Municipality/First Nation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• voluntary committee</li> <li>• in-house staff assignments, department or division of local government</li> <li>• economic development or revitalization task force</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• voluntary committee</li> <li>• development corporation, arms-length and external to local government</li> <li>• development task force</li> <li>• regional development partnership incorporated organization</li> <li>• non-profit organization</li> <li>• service contract with an outside organization</li> </ul>

*Further Resources: SEDA has sample bylaws and terms of references available upon request.*

### Financial Resources

Local leadership teams must be prepared to provide the necessary financial resources for community building efforts. Those resources will typically be used for things such as: office facilities, equipment and staffing; professional services. (legal, accounting and other consulting services); and marketing expenses.

Action plans should accurately assess what costs are necessary to reach objectives and goals. It is important to note that nearly all core funding for community and economic development is derived from local government.

Suggestions for sourcing revenue and/or services include:

- Shared services and overhead with compatible community based groups such as the local Chamber of Commerce.
- Dedicating a portion of business license or parking revenues.
- Business Improvement District levy (if appropriate to the group mandate).
- Special event revenue generation.

- 
- Membership based revenue.
  - If the organization is arm's length from a municipality, consider generation of income from rent, sales of professional services and corporate sponsorships.
  - Project funding may be available from various government agencies.

*Further Resources: SEDA online funding database and proposal writing references.*

### **Human Resources**

Determining the key objectives or priorities relating to staffing (full or part time or volunteer based) is the first step. Ideally, the community will have a plan in place to guide this process. The specific responsibilities and requirements of the designated professional can then be established and a JOB DESCRIPTION drafted. *Further Resources: SEDA has sample job descriptions for community and economic development staff available upon request.*

### **BENCHMARKS**

- Depending on structure, Committee Terms of Reference or organizational Bylaws are in place.
- The group has a budget and resources adequate to fulfill its function and mandate.
- The organization has been able to expand its resources through relationships with alternative funding sources or generation of own source revenue.
- The organization is able to respond to customers and stakeholders in a timely and effective manner.

## **Building Partnerships**

# 6 SECTION

Developing effective partnerships internal to and external to the community will be a key element of community building efforts. Partnerships are an investment of time and energy from all those involved - in particular they often take a considerable investment of time to build the quality working relationships that underpin effective collaboration. The risk here is that sometimes this can lead to a focus on the partnership for its own sake rather than for its capacity to deliver a useful program. Partnering is a mechanism for sustainable social, environmental and/or economic development - it is not an end in itself<sup>iv</sup>.

For partners to be able to work together they need to work with a number of agreed upon principles; Equity, Transparency and Mutual Benefit:

- Equity because it leads to Respect: for the added value each party brings
- Transparency because it leads to Trust: with partners more willing to innovate and take risks
- Mutual Benefit because it leads to Engagement: more likely to sustain and build relationships over time.

Most of those involved in partnerships agree that the partnerships that endure are ones that are most open to learning from their own and other's mistakes. Every partnership can be seen as a

form of ‘action learning’ where the partners are learning by doing. True collaboration transforms the individuals that engage in it consciously: partners help each other grow personally and professionally while accomplishing the objectives of the partnership.

Partnerships work well when<sup>v</sup>:

- There are clear decision-making protocols or procedures agreed and in place.
- Most day-to-day decisions are carried out by individuals or small groups on behalf of the partnership.
- Only major decisions (for example, of policy or expenditure) are brought to the partners as a whole group.
- There is regular, accessible and succinct information-sharing between the partners.

*Futher Resources: SEDA has access to Partnership Building Toolkits; examples of MOA’s and agreements.*

## **BENCHMARKS**

- The leadership team has effective relationships with local government, community organizations, and the business community.
- The group has effective relationships with other communities and/or development organizations within the region.

## Measuring Impact

# 7

## SECTION

Communities and organizations require information to make decisions about which policies, programs, and initiatives to implement, and which will contribute the most to an improvement in community conditions and economic vitality over time.

Tracking and measuring is most often pushed to the ‘backburner”, however, a failure to measure the return on investment of local ratepayers or funding agencies will inhibit allocation of resources in the future. A basic logic model approach can be used in almost every situation and involves documenting the following:



*Further Resources: The Province of British Columbia has developed a Performance Management Toolkit that is easy to use. It includes a comprehensive list of indicators that can be customized by each user. It may be accessed by contacting the SEDA office.*

## **BENCHMARKS**

- The organization utilizes a performance tracking system.

- 
- 
- <sup>i</sup> Orton Family Foundation Heart & Soul Guide 2015
  - <sup>ii</sup> *ibid*
  - <sup>iii</sup> *ibid*
  - <sup>iv</sup> Partnership Toolkit, International Business Leadership Forum
  - <sup>v</sup> *ibid*