



Tourism Investment Opportunity Assessment

CENTRAL ALBERTA ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP
JUNE 2022

Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP) Tourism Investment Opportunity Analysis at a glance...

- The Central Alberta Economic Partnership Region (CAEP REGION) includes numerous strong tourism operators at various levels of development. Overall, the region is keen to develop tourism and should be recognized as the future for tourism growth potential in the province.
- The region includes a variety of tourism types with some cohesion on a regional basis. It is made up of operators at varying degrees of development with few being at an export-ready stage.
- Overall, the region is in the early stage of tourism development. There are some strong operators at the export-ready level while others are in initial stages of growth and others are satisfied to include tourism as a second income manner relative to their primary business focus, usually agriculture.
- It also means there is a need for organization, product focus and marketing of tourism. There is a need to further develop human capacity and encourage municipalities to adopt policy in support of tourism – all traits of early development tourism.
- There are three basic types of tourism in the region that correspond to geographic regions. Agritourism is strongest in the area south of Red Deer into Three Hills County. Lake tourism dominates in the Sylvan Lake region. In the west of CAEP region, Indigenous and mountain recreation tourism dominates. In all but the latter, tourism is dominated by day use visitation while overnight visitation is most common in the western end.
- Tourism investment in CAEP region should focus on two basic types. The first is general or infrastructure investment that supports the overall growth, coordination, and marketing of all tourism in the area. The second is investment directed at specific initiatives and/or operators.

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Introduction

Tourism has a long history in central Alberta but as an economic development strategy it has been overshadowed by others such as agriculture and energy extraction. Tourism in Alberta is generally associated within a geographic box that includes Banff and Jasper to the west and Edmonton and Calgary to the east. Tourism in the mountain parks, while thriving, is generally understood to have achieved a visitation saturation point, driving many Albertans and others to seek alternative destinations. This makes the tourism landscape in central Alberta ever more important coupled with its role in general economic diversification. To that end, this report provides an early indication of tourism investment opportunity in central Alberta. The Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP) is dedicated to growing economic activity and exploring the potential of emerging economies.

The Ministry of Jobs, Economy, and Innovation partially funded the Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP), to commission a tourism investment opportunity assessment for the Central Alberta region as part of the Government of Alberta’s role in facilitating product development and access to capital dollars for the tourism industry.

- Building capacity in the tourism sector which will diversify the regional economy and tax base.
- Engaging CAEP members with an opportunity that has yet to be tapped.
- Supporting communities that have tourism investment as a very high priority with an objective assessment of the opportunities.
- Supporting members’ efforts to have more local budget directed towards tourism investment.
- Identifying projects that are shovel ready.



Part of the Ministry’s mandate is to support and focus the tourism industry to create compelling, authentic tourism experiences that will grow Alberta as a leading destination. This tourism investment opportunity assessment will actively assist in building entrepreneurial investment in tourism experiences, destination renewal, and new tourism destination areas within the Central Alberta Economic Partnership region.

The study involved three phases of work including an inventory of tourism operators in the region, identifying the level of market or export readiness and to make recommendations on products, services and synergies that could benefit from diversification and expansion. In the course of the work, it became apparent that the region is at an early stage of tourism development. There is tourism ‘champions’ throughout dedicated to their operations and growing tourism in the area. However, most operators at an early stage of development, still trying to determine if tourism is a viable direction or keen to maintain tourism as a second

income relative to their primary business focus. Early-stage tourism development generally means that operators are at different levels of proficiency and dedication. The area lacks a cohesive tourism direction or brand. It lacks organization of the sector toward partnerships, planned itineraries and general experience planning. It lacks municipal policy support to encourage growth. These represent typical traits of an area on the verge of tourism development and should not be understood as a deficiency of the people involved. Tourism can be enormously complex; it requires purposeful coordination to corral numerous strong-minded entrepreneurs and gain support of governing bodies. It also requires time especially in a seasonal tourism environment that prolongs the essential trial and error process that leads to success.

This study, as per the scope is conducted at a high level to gain an early understanding of tourism in the Central Alberta Economic Partnership region. It is not a master or strategic plan for tourism, nor does it represent a feasibility study for any initiative listed.



Methodology

Methodology for the CAEP Tourism Investment Opportunity study involved a three-part process. First, to create an inventory of tourism generators in the CAEP REGION . The scope was specific to tourism generators that is, commercial tour or activity operators. During the inventory our team made note of trails, parks, accommodations, golf courses and museums commonly in destination promotion to better understand the overall landscape. The inventory yielded sixty-one tourism generators in the CAEP region. Inventory data gathering involved numerous sources such as county business directories, destination websites, Travel Alberta ATIS, Indigenous Tourism Alberta, and general searches involving referrals. The overwhelming majority of travel generators were captured. However, it is likely that some operators were missed for two reasons. The first is lack of a baseline inventory and the second is a tourism landscape of many emerging operators with low visibility. For instance, some do not have a website and could only be found on social media platforms.

The second phase involved engagement via an online survey. The survey tool was based on the export-ready criteria (See appendix A for Export-ready criteria) and sent to each tourism generator on the inventory. The purpose of the survey was first to obtain an understanding of the state of tourism development and potential investment opportunity in CAEP region using modified export-ready criteria as the measure. Secondly, was to identify specific operators that would be included in the later site visit stage. Thirdly, it was to engage with the tourism operators and seek feedback on key issues. Additionally, approximately twenty operators were contacted by telephone to obtain more information or clarify what was already gathered.



The survey was administered in March of 2022. This is generally considered a good time to engage with the tourism industry because for most it represents a shoulder period. The response rate was 40.9% or 25 of 61. If a participant did not respond within the first week of distribution a second survey was sent. This was repeated a third time after which efforts to garner participation ceased. In some cases, operators responded that they were away and would try and respond later in the season.

The third phase focussed on the group of twenty-five that responded to the survey. Each was evaluated based on their reported ability to meet export-ready criteria. A smaller group of fifteen operators were selected for a site-visit in April. Of the fifteen, ten indicated an ability or willingness to meet in person. The purpose of the site visits to engage with operators on a deeper level to explore potential growth, partnerships and what is required to grow tourism. Site visits occurred during late April.

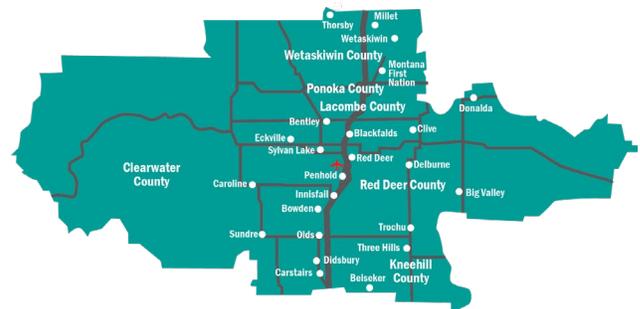
Summary of Tourism Landscape

This section provides an overview of tourism in the CAEP region from the perspective of data collected from the survey. It presents a picture of tourism activity characterized as 'early-stage development.' Central Alberta possesses numerous economic development strategies however, tourism is a relatively new endeavour compared to agriculture and resource extraction. Even though the region includes some strong tourism operators or champions, overall, it is at an early stage of development. Early-stage tourism development is characterized differently depending on the region. General principles of early-stage tourism which directly apply to CAEP region include:

- Transitioning from another, existing and dominant economy into a tourism economy
- Tourism often occupies a second-income status
- Tourism grows in the community because of the support of individual 'champions'
- It is generally not organized cohesively with shared targets and strategies
- Because of its loose organization it lacks a strong visible presence
- Few governing policies that directly relate to tourism development and function
- Lack of tourism expertise or capacity (excluding the champions) relative to the high degree of expertise in the existing dominant economy

Categories of providers. Most of the tourism businesses in Central Alberta self-report as adventure operators and attractions. Of the 25, ten are unique experiences that provide a diverse selection of activities, including one Indigenous Experiences. Next in order of ranking are facilities and interpretive guiding, followed by accommodations, food and beverage providers and transportation providers, as listed below:

- Adventure operator (10)
- Attraction (9)
- Facility (8)
- Interpretive guiding (7)
- Accommodation/lodging (6)
- Food and Beverage (4)
- Transportation (2)
- Heritage Museum
- Stock Car Raceway Facility
- Winery and Distillery
- Municipal Government
- Indigenous Experiences
- Conference/events
- Raceway and festival grounds
- Wagon, sleigh rides, host events, guiding and outfitting
- Authentic souvenirs/art/retail products for tourism
- Unique experience; glamping
- Other



Length of operation and seasonality. All participants indicated they were in operation for at least one year. Twelve report operating year-round, eight spring/summer/fall, two summer only, and the remainder report variations of seasonal operation. A total of 22 report operating at least 120 days/year while others did not, and some indicated 'depends on variables such as COVID'.

Marketing and reservations management. Participants were asked if they possessed established marketing activities with appropriate materials such as a website, digital print material, signage clearly displaying products and opportunities. A total of 21 indicated yes while the remaining stated they require assistance in this area. Eighteen reported to be listed on the Travel Alberta's ATIS while the others reported no or not sure.

Efficient booking systems are critical to success and export-ready consideration. Fifteen indicated they possess efficient booking systems able to conduct reservations and accommodate changes while others indicated they did not, it was in progress, or they require assistance in this area from CAEP or Travel Alberta.

Similarly, the ability to accept various forms of payment (cheque, credit cards, wire transfers) and efficiently carry out business-to-business payments to other vendors is important to export-ready status. Seven indicated yes, eight no and the others indicated this is an area they require assistance. Six indicated this function to be 'not relevant' to their business.

Desired linkages/partnerships. There is a strong desire for operators to create linkages. Most desired partnerships are with festival and event providers followed by the food and beverage sector then transportation and accommodations sectors. Most indicated a desire to create a wide variety of linkages. However, not all are looking to partner. Four of the 25 contacted for site visits reported they were not looking to expand, for instance, *We are not currently looking to partner. We have reached our farm's capacity for our current infrastructure and are not looking to expand.*

The emphasis operators placed on festival and events versus accommodations indicates that most visitation is perceived to be excursion (day visitors). For the region to attract strong investment it will need to examine avenues to increase overnight visitors and increase the mass of visitor opportunity.

Participant: *There are many visitors coming to the area in the past few years but very limited guided activities, food outlets, accommodations, and tourism infrastructure overall.*

Expansion ideas. Most respondents indicated they would like to expand in some way but not all. Some are comfortable at their current state of visitation and development. Those keen on expansion seek assistance in marketing and partnerships firstly. Secondly, they seek support with capital development (permanent and seasonal structures) and/or equipment to enhance

the visitor experience. Lastly, they seek support in the areas of purchase or lease of motorized vehicles to add to the visitor experience and with the cost of permits and licensing. Though support is noted in a variety of areas, marketing and partnerships is clearly the top priority. Some organizations provided specific support ideas such as:

... Currently raising funds to bring an accessible balloon to Red Deer. It will be the only one in Western Canada.

We would love to connect with a few partners to create a "Perfect Day Trip" around the city...including a stop in our kitchen for a cooking class and meal.

Better land use planning / environmental protection to protect capital investments made and ensure tourism potential is not destroyed by inappropriate and conflicting resource or recreational activities

Outdoor kiosk to provide after-hours information.

... Infrastructure building (i.e.) we have begun construction on a "Raceway Castle" that incorporates a Sound Barrier for the Raceway. We need funds to finish this construction so that it includes a covered entertainment area.

... We are testing the depths of our wine and spirit sales and potentially looking at an expansion that would become a show winery.

... Ensure access to finance for new operators, ensure GOA rules and regulations and policy is consistent in creating and maintaining sustainability for tourism operators.

... Mostly financial to leverage grant applications.

... Funding - the tourism sector was hit hard, and many did not survive or barely hanging on. The AB funding during covid was not sufficient to even cover the logistics around it.

What does the Central Alberta region need most to grow tourism? Firstly, respondents report that marketing and specifically *intentional marketing strategies* are required for the region. An example of intentional marketing is *Great day trips to take from Calgary, Red Deer and or Edmonton.*

Secondly, it is the promotion of central Alberta tourism as a destination and visibility for smaller operators – which can be incorporated into intentional marketing strategies. Some participants noted the strong efforts of Travel Alberta to support mountain-based tourism and they would like to see more emphasis on central Alberta.

Specific focus on partnerships and event collaboration. Respondents report that the creation of partnered events such as farm days and joining with cultural events to be first priority.

Secondly, the creation of corridors (which supports the idea of intentional marketing) such as the 'Cowboy Trail'. Thirdly is a call for a coordinated effort or as a respondent noted

One group to drive the tourism bus! We are always looking for ways to collaborate, but we need to make sure we work as a region.

Other insightful comments regarding the growth of tourism in the CAEP region include:

A proper tourism development strategy which focuses on the attractions of the area and encourages the right type of development which enhances rather than destroys these attractions and values. This should be followed by investment in / incentives for the proper infrastructure development and services needed.

More intentional focus on development of tourism clusters in the region to leverage existing operations and create itineraries for visitors to increase benefits for partners in the region more effectively.

Creating a welcoming presence to attract operators.

In the past decade we have seen the cart put before the horse in many ways with the area being promoted for tourism without any investments and services needed to support the growing number of visitors (accommodation, interpretive and other activities, visitor education and basic requirements such as information, signage, trail maintenance, facilities. etc.)

In summary, tourism communities across the CAEP region, range greatly from established operators with a strong understanding of broader tourism functions, through to second income operators and others at various stages of early development. From an investment perspective it suggests two important and very different directions for tourism investment consideration. The first is that general growth investment is required to support partnerships, marketing, training, and planning and organization to bring the entire region to a higher level of tourism functioning. Secondly, tourism investment is required to support individual operators' development and expansion. It is the opinion of this report that the former that is, general tourism investment toward the enhancement of the entire region should be an early focus for CAEP.

Summary by Product Types

The CAEP region includes three distinct types of tourism products: agritourism, mountain recreation and summer lake activity. They are situated in particular geographic regions but straddle counties. Each possesses its own strengths, challenges, and potential. Overall CAEP region includes some unique opportunities that can enhance overall investment potential. For example, the region can and perhaps should define itself in opposition to Alberta’s highly established mountain parks. For instance.

- The region is poised to experience increased regional visitation as visitor fatigue mounts with crowding at the mountain parks
- Being outside the parks provides CAEP region tourism operators greater freedom to provide activities not permitted in the parks, and to leverage that freedom
- Partner with existing inbound operators in the parks toward enhancing itineraries

There is an opportunity and imperative for CAEP region to get creative with product development. As regional visitation remains strong post-pandemic, Albertans who know or think they know Alberta well will be looking for novel experiences and reasons to visit places other than mountain parks. The imperative is for CAEP region tourism to step-up and provide novel experiences and as previously noted, to let potential visitors know what there is to do and how accessible these experiences are, i.e., cohesive, well-organized marketing.

	Lake tourism	Agritourism	Mountain tourism
Day visitation	Very high reliance	Very high reliance	Low to no reliance
Overnight visitation	Some but limited	Very limited	High reliance but limited supply
Export-ready (present)	Low	Low	Medium
Marketing coordination	Low	Low	Medium / high
Investment potential	High	Medium	High
Human capacity	Low with strong potential	Low with strong potential	High but limited access

The key takeaway from the table information is that the region is diverse and struggles structural elements such as reliance on day visitors versus overnight, access to adequate pool of tourism entrepreneurs and overall organization and presentation of tourism offerings.

Lake tourism

The Sylvan Lake region renowned for its summer lake and beach activity draws between 750,000 to 1 million visitors each year. Its primary attraction or travel generator is the lake. It already exists as an important part of the Alberta's tourism landscape; however, the aim of this project is to identify growth and investment opportunities. In terms of the latter the Sylvan Lake area's greatest strength is its name recognition as a lake destination. While a challenge is the type of visitation it tends to attract which is day use.

The majority of visitation to the area is excursionist day visitation from Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, and the rest of Alberta. Regional or day visitors who also bring their own food and beverages tend to equate to a low yield traveler. Its popularity is testament to the fact it serves a regional recreation/travel need which is important in and of itself. However, to increase the region's tourism investment attractiveness, it will need to explore ways to convert a sizable portion of day visitors into overnight stays. Visitor yield increases substantially with an overnight stay which in turn creates a stronger investment climate.

One challenge for Sylvan Lake is to overcome a lack of 'things to do', that is a lack of recreational providers of rentals (there are some) to lessons and guided tours, pop-up activities and events. All these tend to add days to a visit which encourage overnight visitation. Evening entertainment and activity such as dinner theatre and similar family-oriented product is especially important to encouraging overnights stays as is a variety of dining options.

Another challenge is a lack of high yield accommodations in the area relative to its overall visitation. There are hotels although searches identify approximately seven then revert to Red Deer properties. The vacation property sector (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.) is strong as is the number of campgrounds but both encourage the visitor to bring their own supplies and entertainment. Both challenges listed herein suggest a lack of tourism-oriented entrepreneurship.

Sylvan Lake region can increase its overall tourism investment attractiveness with a shift toward a stronger overnight product. That would represent a notable change in tourism for the region and should be carried out with community input.

Agritourism

Agritourism dominates as the primary travel generator in the geographic area of south of Red Deer and into Three Hills County. There are many farm-related operations that provide a visitor element in addition to their core agriculture operations. Few provide overnight accommodations apart from some basic non-serviced camping pads. Visitor attraction elements generally focus on a farm visit with the opportunity to purchase locally produced goods such as jams, honey, wine and in some cases more extensive farm-to-table offerings. Agri and culinary tourism represents growing segments of the industry. These product categories present strong potential but need to be well matched with the needs and aspirations of target markets.

The agritourism region attracts day visitation from Red Deer, Calgary, Edmonton, and other parts of Alberta. It was noted by several operators that visitation increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic when a variety of travel restrictions were in place.

There are few export-ready tourism operators in the region and not all are in the agritourism sector. For instance, Good Knights Entertainment which provides a medieval experience including overnight accommodation is an export-ready operator situated amid an agritourism landscape. Conversely, D&A Farms (agritourism) is near-to export-ready and can take a leadership role in the sector.

According to participants, enhanced tourism investment attractiveness would require the development of coordinated itinerates, increased coordination with overnight accommodation sectors in Red Deer and Drumheller and generally more exposure including branding for the sector.

Mountain tourism

The western part of the CAEP region is nestled in the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains between Jasper National Park to the north and Banff National Park to the south. The primary travel generator for the area is the mountains and associated mountain recreation. The geographic area stretches from Sundre to Nordegg. It presents a world class supply of accessible natural beauty and adventure, ecotourism, and Indigenous tourism potential. It involves tourism that is decidedly different from the rest of the CAEP region. It is characterized by several strong export-ready players such as Discover Nordegg, and Indigenous tourism led by Mahican Trails and Painted Warriors. The latter are situated in the Sundre area.

The region attracts overnight visitation. According to participants this segment has grown steadily over the past five years, but it comes with concerns of a lack appropriate resort beds and staff accommodation quarters. Despite its proximity to iconic mountain parks and the David Thompson highway it is remarkably undeveloped at present. Reasons for its relative undeveloped state are many but some include a lack of developable land, a lack of tourism entrepreneurs or capacity and a history of localism among others. It's combination of extraordinary natural tourism supply coupled with the core group of tourism entrepreneurs makes for a strong environment for tourism investment. It includes the greatest concentration of export-ready operators in the CAEP region but due to its lack of product and ability to attract and retain a critical mass of overnight visitation it too is at an early stage of development.

Sundre area

The Sundre area includes a strong supply of tourism and hospitality providers spanning white-water rafting to ranch experiences. Despite its relatively robust supply, it too is an early stage of development. Tourism providers at the export-ready stage include Mahican Trails and Painted Warriors both strong indigenous tourism providers. Their clientele spans local to international and with support they can anchor a strong indigenous tourism node. West of Sundre is Mukwah

Tours Rafting and several horse ranch experiences. Within the town of Sundre is an extraordinary supply of food and hospitality options. Data from this review suggests that the Sundre region is poised for strong tourism growth if it can determine a direction (focus) and then coordinate existing and future players. At present it includes numerous strong but mostly individual operators. When this region can present a coordinated direction for the future it will strongly encourage tourism related investment in key areas such as accommodations. Presently investment is likely to hesitate until a strong direction is achieved.

Nordegg area

The Nordegg area is dominated by mountain recreation operators and the collective known as Discover Nordegg (includes approximately a dozen operators). Its location and supply of natural beauty places puts it in an especially strong position to capitalize on shifting dynamics in mountain tourism. While the mountain parks will always be Alberta's strongest travel generators, issues of crowding and vehicle congestion have encouraged many, especially regional and rest of Canada visitors, to look elsewhere making the Nordegg area a prime candidate for medium to long-term growth. Whether the region embraces its potential as a leader in nature-based tourism will be determined by such factors as land use policy changes, whether local people embrace tourism, an overall plan for tourism, attracting more tourism focussed entrepreneurs and attracting tourism investment.

The Nordegg area has the potential to be an anchor in a tourism corridor that includes Sundre, itself, and Banff or Jasper looping back to hub airports.



Recommendations on Products Services Packages and Synergies

The aim of this section is to highlight tourism investment opportunities that will support the growth of tourism in CAEP region. This includes opportunities involving individual operators, development of partnerships, and corridors and essential support to the sector toward its organization and marketing that will ultimately enhance its overall performance and investment potential.

Opportunities do not appear in ranked order

1. Western Indigenous, adventure corridor. The development of a themed corridor with numerous partnerships and potential. It extends from the Calgary airport through to the Sundre region capitalizing on existing export-ready indigenous tourism and the strong critical mass of local providers in the general area. It passes to the Nordegg region rich in adventure and ecotourism product then off to Banff and back to Calgary. It holds potential to capture all levels of visitors from regional and Rest of Canada through to international inbound. It requires support in a variety of areas but presents a stable venue for tourism investment in Alberta.
2. Indigenous tourism in the Sundre region. Indigenous tourism is a critical part of the larger tourism corridor presented above. It consists of several key or anchor operators such as Mahican Trails and Painted Warriors. Each has expansion plans and a track record of success.
3. Sundre Tourism Development Plan. The Sundre area possess strong tourism potential with a variety of offerings that range from guest ranches, Indigenous tourism (presented above) and an outsized variety of in-town hospitality offerings. However, at present it is difficult to determine what is its primary attraction(s) or how it can cohesively attract visitors and present them with specific complimentary experiences and itineraries. Sundre requires a tourism development plan (master plan, strategic plan, etc.) that can identify directions for its tourism growth including an identity or brand. Once that is in place it should become more attractive to investment.
4. Aurum Lodge. Aurum Lodge is well known as the first eco-lodge in the Nordegg area. It provides critical accommodations to the region and there is potential to expand and redevelop some aspects. The lodge is on the market and represents a strong investment opportunity.

5. **Goldeye Centre.** The Goldeye Centre is a unique sprawling facility situated in the Nordegg area and owned and operated by the Goldeye Foundation. The facility presents with summer camp characteristics blended with mountain resort qualities. It has an opportunity to play a unique and important role in western Alberta tourism. The Goldeye Centre, with its not-for-profit status and facility structure, can become a center for nature introduction. That is, a facility that caters to a public new to outdoor experiences. It can provide a range of learn to camp programs (different levels) to the public, schools, and other groups. It would be responding to the growing trend of people attending the outdoors with little to no experience often resulting in incidents and near misses. The aim would be to fund operations with grants and some revenue generation. Target groups could include new Canadians and a variety of marginalized populations. Funding to support outdoor/nature access for marginalized populations exists. A shift to this direction would require an investment toward feasibility analysis surrounding operations and facility modifications.
6. **Good Knights Entertainment.** This privately held facility-based tourism experience located in the Three Hills area provides visitors with a medieval experience complete with accommodations and meals. Good Knights is an energetic operation that attracts visitors from regional, rest of Canada and international markets. As such it acts as a travel generator bringing visitor to the region specifically for its experience. Its overnight capacity is limited and requires investment to expand. Good Knights also has the potential to play a stronger role in tourism partnerships.
7. **D&A Gardens.** This visitor-oriented farm operation is in the Elnora area. It is known for its 19 varieties of Saskatoon berries. It makes and sells jams, wine and caters to brunches and brisket dinners. It has some no-service campsites but essentially caters to day visitors from Calgary and Red Deer. It has strong potential for growth but requires investment to expand its wine operation.
8. **Medicine Lodge Ski Hill.** This small T-bar ski area is in Bentley. It has a forty-year history in the community. It has a strong board / governance structure that would like to see improvements and possible year-round activity. Medicine Lodge is not a tourism generator at present. It caters specifically to the local community. There is strong potential to grow the site into a hosting area for hiking and mountain biking. It requires a comprehensive master plan including site plan.
9. **Sylvan Lake overnight strategy.** There is desire to explore what it would take to shift some of the many day visitors to overnight. Adding this component to the already popular Sylvan Lake area would greatly enhance its investment attractiveness. The region needs to thoroughly examine ways to enhance overnight stays coupled with community input on such a shift.
10. **Agritourism marketing.** The south of Red Deer region of CAEP region holds strong agritourism potential. Operator feedback indicated that they are seeking support in

marketing and overall organization (including itineraries). Both promotion and organization could occur concurrently and strengthen a keen-to-grow community of agritourism providers.

11. Tourism training. Common in early development stage tourism is varied levels of tourism knowledge. Some are well underway and at or near to the export-ready stage. Others need to catch up to be able to better work together toward itineraries, partnerships, and innovative product development. Tourism training would benefit the region greatly.

Next Steps

Based on the research of the region, site visits and verification of obtained data in relation to future activities, Planvision is outlining the following grants to support the individual operators in reaching their potential. In some instances, capital investments are needed while in others there is an appetite for product and service development including the development of partnership packages to diversify the region and entice more economic growth.

Travel Alberta Grant Applications ~ Next Intake September 12-October 14, 2022

The Travel Alberta grant program offers two programs. Details at:

<https://industry.travelalberta.com/programs-tools/tourism-investment-program/capital-investment>

- **Tourism Infrastructure Investment** - purchases, construction, and renovation used in the development of a tourism-related product, experience or in the rendering of services.
- **Tourism Asset Investment** - purchasing cost of new capital assets to enhance the product offering and visitor experience. They are not intended for sale in the regular course of the business operation.

Much like the project methodology for this project was developed from the Travel Alberta Export Ready Checklist and Travel Alberta Grant Application questions, it is highly recommended that the members continue to be guided by these documents:

<https://industry.travelalberta.com/programs-tools/tourism-development/export-ready-checklist>

Prairies Economic Development Canada ~ 1.34 million for Indigenous Tourism in Alberta

Details at:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/prairies-economic-development/news/2022/03/government-of-canada-makes-key-investments-to-boost-tourism-in-alberta.html>

Other Grants ~ Ongoing

Grant Support. As much of the region is in an early stage of tourism development and likely unfamiliar with grant opportunities, there is an additional resource that may be tapped into.

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CAEP region members may wish to sign up for the free weekly newsletter providing the most up-to-date grant opportunities and events organized by themes. Mr. Kincade is also a grant mentor who can be hired to support grant applications. It's unlikely that it is needed for the Travel Alberta grants because they come with mentorship, however, there are additional federal and provincial grants that often go un-used because individuals and partners do not have the confidence to apply for them.

