

2015/16

Fernie Catchment Community and Employer Partnership Plan



EK Employment

Fernie Contract #43

Canadian Mental Health
Association for the Kootenays

June 2015

About the Community and Employer Partnership Plan

EK Employment Elk Valley is proud to deliver the Employment Program of BC for the Fernie catchment through the Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays (CMHA Kootenays) and alongside the Cranbrook catchment area, also through CMHA Kootenays.

The Employment Program of BC (EPBC) makes it easier for people to find work and provide stability for their families through a wide range of integrated services and supports. It is delivered through [WorkBC Employment Services Centres](#) across the province.

Each year EK Employment Elk Valley reviews, develops and implements a Community and Employer Partnership (CEP) Plan. This report covers the fourth fiscal year of service provision and the Plan for 2015/2016.

The Fernie CEP Plan is guided by the priorities of the Annual Plan for British Columbia. It is intended to:

- Identify local community labour market issues and needs and how we will respond, both in providing client services and in working collaboratively with employer and community partners;
- Identify proactive and responsive strategies and tools to quickly address labour market changes;
- Establish community and employer activities to address labour market needs; and
- Outline strategies that respond to the needs of Specialized Populations in our community.

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Introduction

Employment Services in the Elk Valley

CMHA Kootenays was the successful proponent for the EPBC Fernie contract (#43) and the Cranbrook contract (#44), which launched April 2012. The Fernie contract's catchment area is located in the Elk Valley and includes portions of the South Country. It includes three primary town sites (Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford) and many smaller communities. The area is located within the boundaries of the Regional District of East Kootenay Area A.

EK Employment Elk Valley is the WorkBC Employment Services Centre (ESC) for this area. A store front is operated out of Fernie and a mobile kiosk is operated out of Sparwood.

	Location	Services	Hours of Operation
Fernie Store Front	302 C 2 nd Avenue Downtown Fernie	All EPBC Services and Supports (including Self-Serve Resource Area and Case Management)	9am to 5pm Monday to Friday * closed all statutory holidays
Sparwood Mobile Kiosk	141 A Aspen Road Chamber of Commerce Sparwood	Self-Serve Resource Area and Itinerant Service	10 am to 3pm Tuesdays * closed all statutory holidays

Various employment services are available to job seekers and employers in the Elk Valley. This includes the EPBC and a number of programs run through other ministries including the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training. Additional information on employment related programs can be found through the Kootenay Regional Workforce Table [website](#).

Employment Program of BC Overview

The EPBC offers an integrated system of employment services and supports to all British Columbians who are seeking employment and are legally eligible to work in BC. The program includes all of the services the ministry previously offered and ensures quick and easy access so unemployed British Columbians get the services they need to get back into the workforce as quickly as possible. The EPBC is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

The EPBC is delivered through WorkBC Employment Service Centres across the province. EPBC clients are assisted with a wide range of needs, skills, education, employment experience, barriers and other circumstances to achieve labour market attachment (full-time or part-time employment) and to improve employment readiness.

In all WorkBC Employment Service Centres, including EK Employment Elk Valley, all job seekers are welcome to use the self-serve resource area free of charge for their employment related needs. It is hosted full-time by qualified staff who assist job seekers with everything from proof-reading resumes to

providing guidance on job searching. All job seekers are welcomed, oriented to the program, and screened to ensure they receive services as quickly as possible that meet their needs and eligibility.

Eligible job seekers are also assisted to reach their career goals through individualized support by providing training to upgrade skills, facilitating work experience placements, assisting to access trades training, or offering self-employment training. As well, eligible job seekers can access numerous employment and basic skills focused workshops. Information on basic eligibility for the EPBC and allowable exceptions is available through the [WorkBC website](#).

In addition to these services, EK Employment Elk Valley (in concert with the Cranbrook contract) hosts a regionally focused website that features the most up-to-date and extensive list of job vacancies in the region. It is a complement to the provincial job bank and a valued resource for communities and employers in the area. It can be accessed via www.ekemployment.org

Understanding the Elk Valley Labour Market

Wedged in the heart of the Canadian Rockies and close to the Alberta and Montana borders, the Elk Valley is a great place to live, work and play. It is an area renowned for its outstanding mountain environment with deep roots in the coal mining industry. Situated roughly three hours south-west of Calgary and in proximity to two international airports the Elk Valley has experienced significant investment and interest from within Canada and abroad. As well, the area continues to see strong tourism interest and visitation.

Community Profiles

While communities in the Elk Valley share similarities, each is unique in its own right offering various cultural, social, economic and environmental opportunities. Indeed, there are several connected labour markets operating both within and outside of the catchment's borders. Local governments and various organizations work collaboratively across the region for its growth and development. This is exemplified, for example, through the Elk Valley Economic Development Taskforce.

Fernie is an all-season recreation destination with resort municipality status. Fernie's population is estimated at 4,811 with the median age of 39.7 years. The two largest age groups are 50 to 54 and then following 30 to 34 according to the 2011 Census. During the winter season the population of Fernie is known to increase dramatically with temporary residents and the population continues to grow as many new comers are attracted to amenities and lifestyle.

Sparwood is also an all-season recreational area with a strong connection to the mining industry. Sparwood's population is estimated at 3,667 with the median age of 39.5 years. The two largest age groups are 50 to 54 and following 45 to 49 according to the 2011 Census. Given the location of the mines, Sparwood has recently experienced an in-flux of new residents attracted to the opportunities available at the mines. This is despite recent shifts in hiring discussed in the next section.

Elkford continues to have strong economic and social connections to the mining industry. The resource based mining industry employs more than 50% of the employed persons in Elkford. Similar to Sparwood and Fernie, there has been a growth in mountain property and project investment originating most specifically from Calgary. Elkford's population is estimated at 2,523 with the median age of 38.3 years. The two largest age groups are 50 to 54 and following 55 to 69 according to the 2011 Census with the median age of 38.3 years.

Industries and Sectors of the Local Economy

Important industries include: construction, manufacturing, mining and oil and gas extraction, wholesale and retail trade, health care and social assistance, and accommodation and food services. As well interest has been shown in small-scale manufacturing, light industry, professional services, natural resource extraction and green energy.¹

¹ Data sourced in this section of the report is taken through consultation with stakeholders as well as from the 2012-2016 Resort Development Strategy, BC Statistics Labour Market Reports, Chartered Professional Accountants

Mining - Within the Elk Valley there are five coal mines in operation through Teck Coal Limited. Teck is the world's second largest exporter of seaborne steelmaking coal and both a leading employer and driving agent of economies (local, regional and provincial). The Elk Valley's coal mining industry contributes 0.5% of the province's GDP. Teck Coal directly employs roughly 6 percent of jobs in the Kootenays alone. Replacing lumber, coal is now British Columbia's top export commodity.

While 2014 was a robust year for production, recently, due to changing coal market conditions, Teck has reduced production of coal and implemented strategies to reduce costs and improve efficiencies. At this point Teck does not anticipate layoffs; though, Teck's loss of revenue in the last years has meant that some subcontractors to the mines have been required to temporarily layoff staff. Within Teck, cyclical shut-downs are scheduled for the summer of 2015 and a hiring freeze is in place with an associated anticipated reduction of workforce by 10 percent through attrition.²

Tourism - While tourism trends are very much reflective of the economy, the Fernie catchment area has seen consistent growth in the number of visitors to the area. However, since changes in the US and global markets, the demographics and geography of visitors has changed. For example, some seasonal employees are arriving later in the fall. As well, tourist visits flow most strongly from the United States and Alberta.

Employment and revenue is generated through accommodation, food and beverage, transportation, and retail. One of the leading employers is Fernie Alpine Resort (Resorts of the Canadian Rockies) who operates over two seasons (winter and summer). Tourism represents a major component of the catchment's economy and employs many permanent and temporary residents. Indeed, employment connected to the tourism industry is showing a faster rate of growth than the British Columbia average. The rate of growth of employment related to tourism within the Kootenay Rockies Tourism area is significantly stronger (close to double) in the East than West.

Seasonal employment shifts do dominate the tourism labour market and many employers rely heavily on temporary visitors (or new residents) to fill many seasonal jobs. In the Elk Valley there are two dominant tourism seasons (winter and summer) with slower shoulder seasons (fall and spring). Many employers experience significant challenges to recruit and retain skilled workers. Provincial and federal programs are utilized to help fill the gap where there is insufficient numbers of adequately trained workers.³ This is a persistent and growing problem for employers and in particular for food and beverage positions as well as hospitality. Recent developments with the Temporary Foreign Worker Program are being closely watched by employers in related sectors.

Recent Employment Trends

The Kootenay economic region struggled over the last ten years in comparison to the province. The unemployment rate in the region has consistently been higher than the provincial rate, that is, until 2013 when it fell to 5.2 percent. In May 2015 the region's unemployment rate sat at 7.2 percent and the

of British Columbia Regional Check Up 2015 Kootenay Development Region, District of Sparwood Community Profile, and District of Elkford Community Profile.

² Data is sourced primarily from www.teck.com, press releases, and/or through meetings with staff of Teck.

³ Data sourced for this section is taken from www.tourismfernie.ca and "Tourism Labour Market Analysis for the Kootenay Rockies Region".

province at 6.1 percent. The ten year average for the Kootenay region is 7.07 percent and the province is 6.28 percent. In regards to labour force participation, the number of individuals either working or actively seeking employment as a percentage of the population aged 15 and older, sank to 59 percent in 2014. This is the second lowest participation rate in BC. Relevant economic and demographic trends include: workers retiring, choosing to return to school and obtain new skills, or to stay at home and raise children.⁴

Job loss has also been experienced in the Kootenay economic region. From 2013 to 2014 the region lost roughly 9000 jobs, which equates to an 11.8 percent decrease. This surpassed the labour market gains experienced over the previous three years. Of those jobs lost, estimated by Statistics Canada, roughly two-thirds were full-time positions.⁵

Other key points taken from the region's [labour market report](#) include:

- Around 40 percent of the region's residents live in rural areas.
- The Kootenay region had the highest median age of all the economic regions.
- Only 78 percent of the region's jobs were full-time positions in 2013. This is the third lowest in proportion in any of the regions.
- Around 28 percent of jobs in the Kootenay region were in goods-producing sector industries. This is the second highest proportion of any of the regions.
- The region has a higher than average proportion of employment in the goods producing sectors. This is expected to relate to the location of large industrial operations (such as the mines) in the region. As well it relates to the region being a popular tourist and recreation destination. A significant volume of jobs are reliant on these two industries.

Of interest, and taken from the [2014 Columbia Basin Trust State of the Basin report](#):

- Only 15 percent of respondents agree that there are sufficient job opportunities available in their community.
- Compared to 2012 and 2013 median hourly wages fell by 11 percent in the Kootenay economic region.
- Roughly 44 percent of businesses surveyed reported difficulties recruiting for positions at their business.
- In the basin region, hotel room revenues saw the least growth in Fernie (3 percent).
- The Regional District of East Kootenay saw an increase in business counts in 2013 by 1.7 percent.
- Fewer building permits were issued in the Columbia Basin region in 2013 compared to 2012.

Demand for employees in the Kootenay region is forecasted to exceed labour supply. According to BC Statistics this will start in 2012 and continue through 2020 (with the largest gap occurring between 2013 and 2015). The BC 2022 Labour Market Outlook is predicting 29,300 job openings to 2022, including 80 percent to replace retiring workers and 20 percent through expansion.

⁴ This section was taken from the [WorkBC Regional Statistics on the Kootenay region](#) in June 2015 and page 6 of the [Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia Regional Check Up 2015 Kootenay Development Region](#).

⁵ This section was taken from the [Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia Regional Check Up 2015 Kootenay Development Region](#).

The five occupations expected to grow the fastest in the region include: therapy and assessment professionals; professional occupations in nursing; physicians, dentists, and veterinarians; assisting occupations in support of health services; and paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community and education services.

As detailed in the image below, taken from the Kootenay section of the [British Columbia 2022 Labour Market Outlook](#), occupations with the highest expected openings and labour supply shortage in the region include:

OCCUPATIONS with the HIGHEST NUMBER of JOB OPENINGS

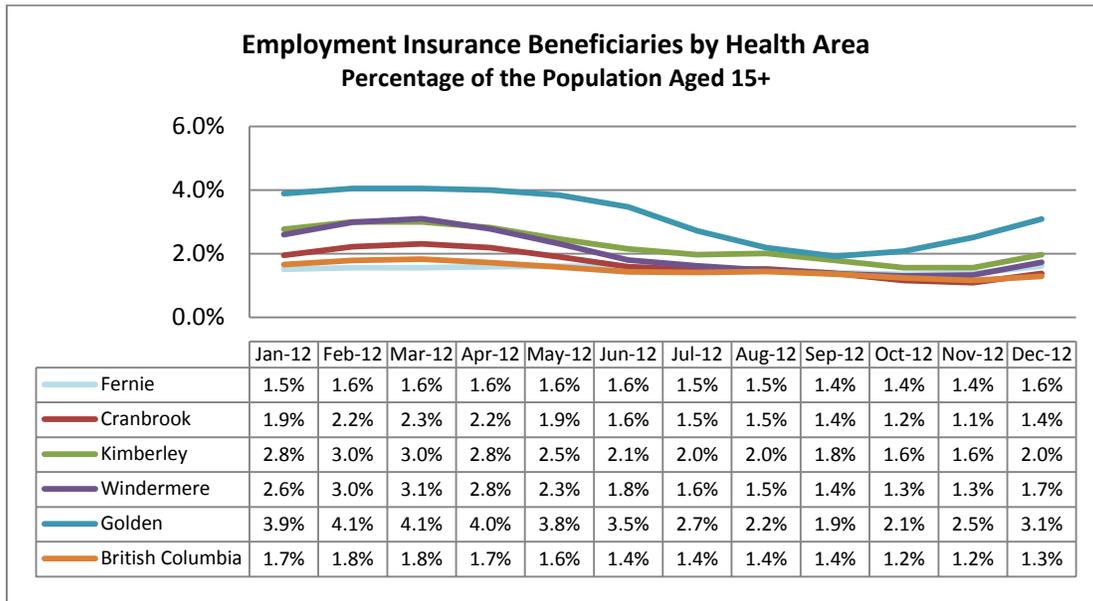
SKILL LEVEL	NOC	DESCRIPTION	EXPANSION	REPLACEMENT	TOTAL JOB OPENINGS	WAGE*
A	403	Secondary and elementary school teachers and educational counsellors	310	810	1,120	\$33.00
	062	Retail and wholesale trade managers	80	960	1,040	\$25.00
	301	Professional occupations in nursing	400	560	960	\$36.50
B	421	Paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community and education services	390	490	880	\$20.70
	122	Administrative and regulatory occupations	140	740	880	\$23.10
	124	Office administrative assistants – general, legal and medical	170	600	770	\$21.60
C	751	Motor vehicle and transit drivers	200	970	1,170	\$23.40
	441	Home care providers and educational support occupations	310	690	1,000	\$17.90
	341	Assisting occupations in support of health services	440	550	990	\$21.00
D	673	Cleaners	330	960	1,290	\$17.00
	861	Harvesting, landscaping and natural resources labourers	110	260	370	\$18.00
	661	Cashiers	60	300	360	\$11.80

*2013 BC Median Hourly Wage

The most recent statistics available on Employment Insurance and basic income assistance, at the local health area level which includes all primary town sites, are for December 2012. While somewhat outdated, this information is valuable since it gives a clearer indication of what is happening in the local labour market for the East Kootenays rather than the Kootenays as a whole.

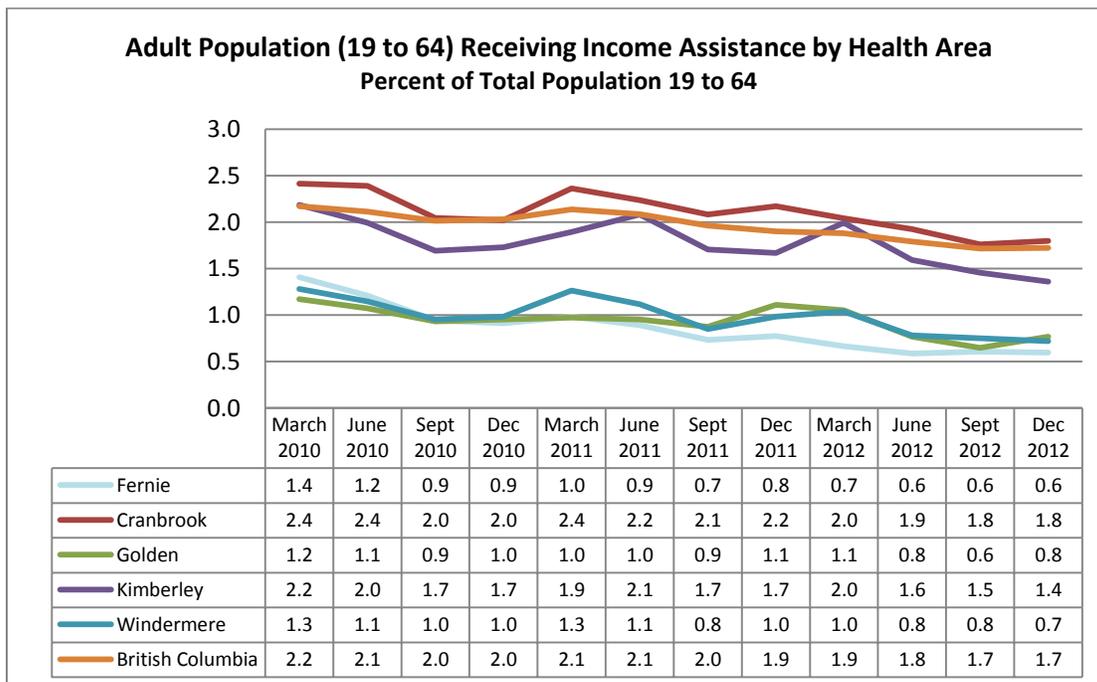
At this time 1.6% of the population aged 15+ were beneficiaries receiving regular Employment Insurance benefits. This is slightly higher than the next closest local health area (Cranbrook), which was at 1.4%. The provincial average at this time was 1.3%.

Employment Insurance Beneficiaries by Health Area



In relation, the most recent statistics available from BC Stats on the number of adults receiving basic income assistance shows that it stood at 0.6% of the total population ages 19 to 64. This percentage is lower compared to the next closest local health area Cranbrook (1.8%). The provincial average at this time was 1.7%.

Adults Receiving Income Assistance



British Columbia Labour Market Priorities

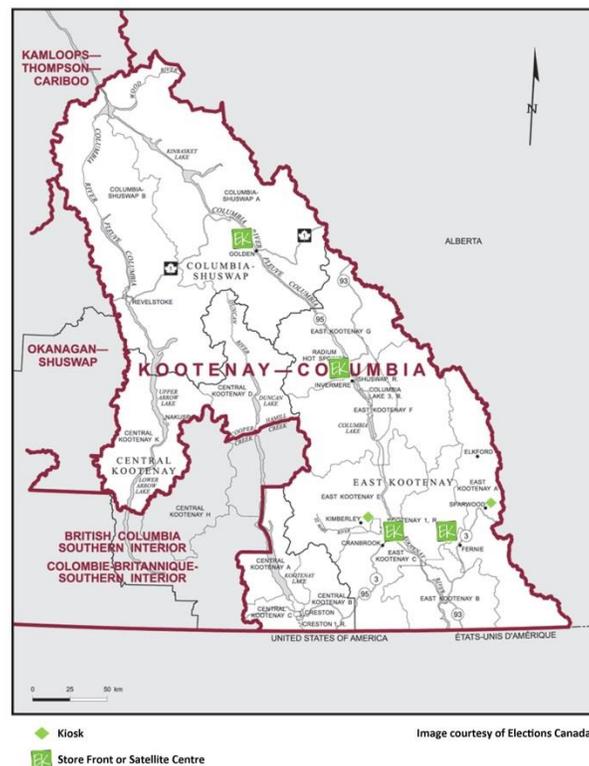
The most recent Annual Plan for British Columbia, developed through the Labour Market Development Agreement, notes the following priorities:

1. Investing in training to better align British Columbians with sustainable job opportunities;
2. Continual development of strategies to engage all British Columbians, including under-represented groups;
3. Continue partnering with local communities and organizations to further develop and increase community based partnerships across the province.
4. Enhance EPBC program supports through continued improvement of research and innovation, measurement, and reporting capabilities.

These priorities were integrated into response strategies to address current local labour market needs, in response to rapid labour market changes, and in regards to serving specialized populations. As well they have been integrated into the Contract's Annual Program Plan, Marketing Plan, and associated targets and activities.

Regional Perspective

Very much related to the provincial priorities, a key advantage of holding Contracts for both the Cranbrook and Fernie catchments is that it facilitates a regional perspective that appeals to stakeholders and works towards avoiding duplication of services. EK Employment offices cover much of the Kootenay Columbia region and, as illustrated below, are located in Fernie, Cranbrook, Invermere and Golden. Mobile offices (kiosks) are also located in Sparwood and Kimberley.



Community Engagement

Given the complexity of changes occurring in our economy and society both within the region and across our province, it is essential to be a collaborative partner. This enables us to best understand and address the local, regional and sector specific labour market needs. It better enables us to make meaningful (and proactive) connections between job seekers and employers. It can also assist in minimizing duplication of services and burn-out since many stakeholders work on related issues.

Efforts are focused on complementing and utilizing existing structures to prevent burn-out of stakeholders and create avenues where none previously existed. Strategic and organic partnerships facilitate the creation of foreseen and unforeseen opportunities, the efficient use of resources, and encourage knowledge development.

Given that the Fernie catchment area includes three town sites, it is important and a challenge to ensure that activities and partnerships reach these diverse communities and the surrounding more remote areas.

Partnerships and Engagement Activities

Our goal is to build relationships with employers to better understand their labour and human resource needs. We are active participants in working groups and committee memberships where possible, such as with the three local Chambers of Commerce and the Columbia Basin Literacy Advisory Council. On a regular basis we pursue dialogue with local education and training institutions at the secondary and post-secondary level on skills training and labour market information. In response we provide services and supports as requested and suitable (e.g. career planning and labour market information workshops). Last we identify and carry forward regional and sector specific needs through Contract Management Committee meetings and other relevant forums.

In summary, the Fernie ESC has:

- Contracted partnerships with a number of community organizations that work throughout this region, including the smaller town sites. These include: Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy and the Ktunaxa Nation Council.
- Contracted partnership with the YMCA of Greater Vancouver to deliver self-employment services.
- Purchased, active memberships with the following business organizations: Fernie Chamber of Commerce, Elkford Chamber of Commerce, and Sparwood Chamber of Commerce.
- Involvement at the committee level with relevant community service providers, such as and not limited to the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy and the Committee for Safety in Relationships.
- Initiated dialogue and relationship building with numerous community and business organizations. These relations are both organic and strategic where scheduled meetings are planned, for example, each quarter.
- Formed relationships with both leading and smaller employers in the region. For example 1,182 employers have registered on the EK Employment website across both the Cranbrook and Fernie catchments.
- Created tools and strategies to minimize duplication in communications and activities. This includes, for example, a newsletter introducing the staff team and noting their primary duties.

- Community engagement duties are appropriately distributed and communicated, not only verbally but also through job descriptions, work plans, and sub-contracted agreements.
- Community engagement targets and regularly scheduled meetings with sub-contractors and key partners ensure any changes in the labour market within the catchment area are brought forward and strategies are put in place to address the issues when needed.
- Key ESC staff work closely with regional representatives from the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training. This relationship ensures continuity of service and avoids duplication of efforts. Where duplication of services is identified, key ESC staff will monitor and assess moving forward as well as promptly notify the CAPA where appropriate.

Examples of dialogue and relationship building pursued include:

- College of the Rockies
- Interior Health
- East Kootenay Addiction Services Society
- Ministry of Children & Family Development
- Volunteer Kootenays
- Job Options BC
- Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
- Tourism Fernie
- Columbia Basin Family Resource Society
- Kootenay Rockies Innovation Council
- Salvation Army
- Various WorkBC ESCs
- MetisBC Association
- Fernie Women’s Resource Centre and Shelter
- Kootenay Employment Services Society
- Kootenay Columbia Film Region
- Skilled Trades Employment Program
- Public Libraries
- City and District representatives
- Service Canada, Program Services
- Kinbasket Family and Child Services
- Columbia Basin Trust
- Community Futures East Kootenay
- Kootenay Aboriginal Business Development Agency
- Service BC

The following activities are planned:

Activity	Frequency	Value
Chamber of Commerce Meetings Fernie, Sparwood, Elkford	Monthly	Meetings provide an opportunity to network and stay abreast of current issues. Regular attendance ensures employers can make immediate connections with the ESC. Meetings with Chamber Managers are also scheduled as possible and generally on a quarterly basis. Also, the Fernie ESC regularly includes a submission to Chambers for distribution to membership. Promotional materials (including business cards) are stocked at all regional Chambers of Commerce.
Mobile Kiosks	Weekly	A project designed to better serve and reach job seekers in surrounding rural areas. Self-help kiosks are hosted in the field every week by trained staff. The kiosks were established outside of contractual obligations.
Community Job Fair	Annual	The local employment office has traditionally hosted an annual job fair each fall. The community job fair is a valued service offered to small and medium sized employers who

		<p>compete with the ski resort to recruit sufficient numbers of employees for the winter season.</p> <p>Interest in hosting job fairs during other peak hiring times is also explored throughout the year and will be set up based on interest and demand.</p>
Online Survey and Website	Annual	<p>Our online survey provides a convenient and anonymous way for stakeholders to share feedback. It includes structured and open-ended questions.</p> <p>Our website is designed for employers to manage and post jobs independently. It also includes various useful resources for both job seekers and employers. It is a joint project of the Fernie and Cranbrook Contracts and thus includes a regional job board, which is a great benefit to employers who can reach a broader market and job seekers who can view many more opportunities within commuting distance.</p>
Scheduled and face-to-face drop-in visits	Monthly	<p>ESC staff complete face-to-face informal and formal meetings with both employers and community organizations. Targets have been established and are reviewed monthly.</p> <p>Meetings focus on ensuring that target audiences are familiar with our services and supports. As well, meetings help us to ensure we are kept abreast of new challenges and/or developments. Promotional materials are re-stocked.</p>
Focused Meetings and Board/ Advisory Committees	Varied	<p>Participation in Boards/Advisory Committees ensures that the local ESC can be a collaborative participant in the development of the region. It also ensures we can share an employment focused perspective on related issues.⁶</p> <p>For example, the Business Services Coordinator meets regularly with the Fernie COTR Campus, Fernie Chamber Executive Director, Teck Coal Senior Recruiter, and Fernie Alpine Resorts Human Resources Manager. The Case Manager participates in quarterly meetings for the region's Columbia Basin Literacy Advisory Council and the Business Services Coordinator participates quarterly at the regional level.</p>
Inter-Contract Meetings	Monthly	<p>Management staff across both the Fernie and Cranbrook contracts meet twice a month to discuss issues that transcend the Contract boundaries. This facilitates a regional response to labour market issues.</p>
Sub-Contractor Meetings	Quarterly	<p>Management staff meet, at minimum, once per quarter to discuss issues and opportunities. These meetings involve staff from both the Fernie and Cranbrook contracts which</p>

⁶ Upon review and assessment of feedback received from employers it was determined that the need to strike a separate employer/community council would be viewed as redundant.

		<p>facilitates a regional response to issues.</p> <p>Meetings are held with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, Ktunaxa Employment Services, Golden Community Resource Society, and the Invermere Family Resource Centre.</p>
Community and Employer Engagement Log	Daily	<p>Given that employers and job seekers are impacted by and willing to recruit/work across the region, communication logs are shared between the Fernie and Cranbrook Contracts. This is an important tool to facilitate rapid learning on the broader regional labour market. It also minimizes duplication.</p> <p>Meetings with staff responsible for marketing and outreach in the Cranbrook catchment is also completed twice per month in order to share information and coordinate efforts.</p>
Community Presentations	Varied	<p>Provision of workshops on career planning, the local labour market, and other topics related to assistance in obtaining employment or hiring.</p> <p>Targets have been established and are reviewed quarterly.</p>
Open Houses and Forums	Varied	<p>On an intermittent or as needed basis the ESC will host drop-in open houses and participates in the creation and planning of forums.</p> <p>An example of a forum organized, implemented, and to be continued is a community focused non-profit coffee hour.</p> <p>Informal drop-in open houses are scheduled weekly at the store front.</p>

Tactical Work with Employers

At a tactical level, the Fernie ESC works daily with employers and regional business organizations.

Support	Method
Recruit and retain employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free online postings • Job Board • Referrals • Annual job fair • Online company profiles • Free room rental for interviews • Collection of resumes on their behalf • Anonymous postings • Provision of relevant fact sheets and advice
Access program services and supports	The ESC maintains a database of communications and expressed needs/interests of employers so that when a suitable client is identified we can make the best connection with interested employers.

	<p>We continually work to build a resource library of programs and tools relevant to employers.</p> <p>Through networking, meetings and marketing the ESC promotes how employers can engage with and participate in EPBC related activities.</p>
<p>Distribute and generate local labour market information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post information on the EK website • Prepare creative and up-to-date labour market displays in the ESC. • Distribute information through aforementioned activities and partnerships • Deliver presentations and identify new opportunities to present labour market information. • Participate in community events, panels, and forums • Contribute local labour market information to the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation through CMC meetings and other forums as requested. Job Creation Partnerships, Labour Market Partnerships, and Research and Innovation Initiatives will be explored in applicable situations. • Contribute local labour market information to research bodies as opportunities are presented. • Utilize the EK Employment website to generate local labour market data while respecting the privacy of users. Ensure the EK Employment website includes relevant links to online sources of information.

Strategies to Address Labour Market Needs

The catchment area's labour market is and will be facing challenges in recruiting and retaining employees for the foreseeable future. Different strategies will have to be pursued and various stakeholders will have to be involved in order to accommodate the needs of both employers and job seekers. Both short term and long term strategies must be pursued.

Current Labour Market Needs

While we realize that we are one piece of a larger puzzle, we aim to identify any trends or issues and apply strategies that are within our capacity and refer up through the Contract Management Committee meetings for anything that is beyond our capabilities.

Numerous priorities are identifiable in and across communities in the Fernie catchment area. In addition to those points already raised in the section "Understanding the Elk Valley Labour Market", changes to our economy and society have locally translated into:

- Temporary residents arriving later in the peak season and at times leaving earlier. Many local employers rely on this population to staff their business during peak seasons.
- Slow-downs in business associated with the mining industry. Some employees have been laid off or their hours reduced.
- Increased reliance on tourism industry given recent economic downturns. Challenges are experienced during slow seasons, which trickle over into shoulder seasons as hours/jobs dry up and the cost of living remains high.
- In-migration of skilled workers from the nearby oil sands and/or other areas.
- Fewer people in the labour market due to lower birth rates and an aging/retiring population.
- Challenges with employing older workers, youth and specialized populations.
- Shifts in careers being pursued and the relationship with work across generations.

These can broadly be translated into three key needs, which relate to the province's priorities:

Need	Response
<p>Increase quantity of skilled workers with adequate qualifications for in demand occupations.</p>	<p>Improve foundational and vocational skills of job seekers through provision of short-term, occupational, apprenticeship training or work experience placements.</p> <p>Improve basic essential and employability skills of job seekers through essential skills training, workshops, community events, and referrals to local service providers (e.g. Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy).</p> <p>Engage with employers to gather their input on current and emerging labour market needs. Share this information.</p> <p>Deliver consistent and professional services to job seekers.</p> <p>Research the labour market needs of the area, region, province and country. Share this information.</p> <p>Engage with local, regional, and provincial advisory panels.</p> <p>Review related employment, skills, and training plans prepared by federal and provincial governments and incorporate into work of the</p>

	<p>ESC.</p> <p>Continued collaboration with provincial and/or regional research initiatives such as the Tourism and Human Resources study of Resort Municipalities and the Kootenay Regional Workforce Table.</p>
<p>Increase labour pool in area applying for local positions.</p>	<p>Promote in demand occupations to job seekers.</p> <p>Collaborate with community service providers to recruit workers to area.</p> <p>Explore career changes with suitable clients and support them in realizing this transition.</p> <p>Engage with employers and job seekers to better understand this issue.</p> <p>Host job fairs in the region and promote employer job fairs.</p> <p>Deliver presentations to secondary and post-secondary student groups. Focus on anticipated labour market needs.</p> <p>Promote employment of non-traditional workforce groups (e.g. through wage subsidies, job development or customized employment).</p> <p>Continued exploration and education on how to attract, retain, and engage employees from various generations (i.e. traditionalists, baby boomers, generation x and generation y) and groups under-represented in the labour market.</p> <p>Engage with local, regional, and provincial advisory panels</p>
<p>Increase number of sustainable employment opportunities.</p>	<p>Promote funding opportunities available through Community and Employer Partnerships including Job Creation Partnerships, Labour Market Partnerships, Research and Innovation, and Project Based Labour Market Training.</p> <p>Promote entrepreneurship and self-employment services available through the Employment Program of BC. Refer ineligible participants to other service providers.</p> <p>Refer businesses who are experiencing a challenge (e.g. labour market issue) to relevant EPBC services and/or other programs.</p> <p>Improve foundational and vocational skills of job seekers through provision of short-term, occupational, apprenticeship training or work experience placements.</p> <p>Engage with employers and employer associations to raise awareness and promote opportunities for year round employment (e.g. discussing the benefits of re-training employees and/or facilitating flexible work options).</p>

Rapid Labour Market Change

The preferred approach is to be proactive in identifying any foreseen changes in the labour market (for example, shut-downs, layoffs, or growth) and work with key stakeholders to ensure ESC staff are available to assist. This will include utilizing other partnerships/initiatives to assist meeting the needs of the workforce and employers.

Being aware that a proactive approach is ideal we recognize there may be unforeseen changes in the labour market. ESC staff will work diligently to respond promptly to these changes by establishing a meeting with key stakeholders to identify the issue and work collaboratively to respond to the needs by utilizing community and employer partnerships.

Having dedicated staff persons, such as the Business Services Coordinator and Office Manager, and a regional team (involving staff in Cranbrook, Golden, and Invermere) allows us to keep a very close watch on the status of the labour market and quickly address any issues that may arise. This information is translated to front line staff as applicable to their positions and in a timely manner to ensure prompt response. Employers, as well, have ready access to staff to discuss their needs and observations.

Responses to Increased Labour Demand

Establish communication with new businesses moving or setting up in the area to offer services such as advertising positions through the ESC job board, hiring fair participation, utilization of ESC space for job fairs and/or interviews, and discussion of the local labour market.

Facilitate event hosting and inform job seekers about regional and local job fairs organized by the ESC, employers, or other providers.

Gather local labour market information and use this information to assist clients who must change their career to find sustainable employment.

Revise marketing plan as required and suitable with particular attention to target audiences and specialized populations.

Explore ways to increase service delivery.

Responses to Decreased Labour Demand

Establish communication with large businesses that have announced a closure or mass lay-off to offer services that may help with the transition of staff.

Explore ways to increase service delivery.

Offer specialized programming to clients with common needs.

Assist job seekers transition careers, work locations, or places of residence.

Promote funding available through Job Creation Partnerships and Project Based Labour Market Initiatives to create meaningful work experiences.

Strategies to Respond to Needs of Specialized Populations

For the purposes of the EPBC, specialized populations have been identified as those who may require alternative service delivery arrangements to access employment services, in order to meet their unique needs and increase the likelihood of outcomes being achieved. This could include accessing services from alternate locations, through focused outreach, or in partnership with other organizations who have specialized expertise.

EPBC Specialized Populations include Aboriginal Peoples, Francophones, Immigrants, Persons with Disabilities, Rural and Remote populations, Multi-Barriered individuals, Survivors of Violence or Abuse, and Youth.

In the delivery of the EPBC, CMHA Kootenays works closely with many community organizations and services providers to ensure clients receive the best service possible, and that specialized populations defined under the contract are adequately supported. To this end CMHA Kootenays has subcontracted with the following service providers in relation to the Fernie Contract:

Subcontractor	Services	Location/Scope of Services
Ktunaxa Nation Council (Ktunaxa Employment Services)	Provides case management, employment coaching, outreach support and workshops primarily to Aboriginal clients.	Serving Aboriginal clients throughout the Cranbrook and Fernie contracts.
Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy	Provides support with the self-serve area, workshops, literacy support, and individualized support to EPBC case managed clients.	Serving clients throughout the Cranbrook and Fernie catchments primarily within the ESC's.

Broad strategies to respond to the needs of specialized populations in the catchment area include:

- Integrate cultural planning into human resource policies, which may contribute to a diversified workforce and staff teams.
- Participate in professional development, relevant boards and advisory committees to ensure staff are well informed of local initiatives and have an informed understanding of the unique needs and abilities of specialized populations.
- Consult with local organizations and communities to identify ways to integrate and improve local employment services. Identify best practices, tools, and preferred communication channels.
- Develop formalized partnerships with community organizations that work with local specialized populations. Explore ways to improve access to employment services.
- Promote and utilize the full breadth of services and supports available to specialized populations through the EPBC and refer to other programs/organizations as needed and appropriate. Ensure staff are trained and confident in the delivery of these services and how to align them with client needs.
- Identify and connect specialized populations with supports and services available through other organizations and/or government. Collaborate with community organizations to customize services to specialized populations.
- Build an online library of resources and tools.
- Ensure Reception is a professional and welcoming space, and ensure staff are available to meet with clients in a timely manner.

- Provide feedback through the Contract Management Committee (CMC) meetings on the issues, concerns, experiences, successes and struggles for specialized population clients in accessing and obtaining support through the EPBC.
- Ensure communications and marketing materials are targeted to specific audiences and ready accessible in “hot” locations.
- Engage with employers on how to attract, retain and engage with job seekers who tend to be under-represented in the labour market.

More specifically to each specialized population:

Specialized Population	Response
Aboriginal Peoples	<p>Ask all clients booked for a needs assessment if they would like to be served by an Aboriginal Case Manager.</p> <p>Enable Aboriginal clients to be served by an Aboriginal Case Manager through itinerant service and/or storefront locations.</p> <p>Build on and learn through a contracted partnership with the Ktunaxa Nation Council.</p> <p>Design and customize promotional materials with this group in mind (e.g. representative photographs, targeted brochure, simplified language, translated).</p> <p>Provide translation services to case managed clients requiring this service and post signage in the ESC indicating translation services are available.</p>
Francophones	<p>Liaise with local French secondary school to ensure they are aware of services available to Francophone residents in the area.</p> <p>Enable EK Employment website to be translated into French.</p> <p>Provide translation services to case managed clients requiring this service and post signage in the ESC indicating translation services are available.</p>
Immigrants	<p>Liaise with local Settlement Worker to ensure they are aware of services available to new immigrants. Build on this relationship as they are a staff person of a contracted partnership with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy.</p> <p>Liaise with recruitment agencies to ensure they are aware of services available to new immigrants in the area. This is often a first contact we have with many new immigrants as one partner is being recruited to work in the area and the other partner is looking for employment.</p> <p>Explore options to translate the EK Employment website into other languages. Train staff on free and paid tools available.</p> <p>Provide translation services to case managed clients requiring this service and post signage in the ESC indicating translation services are available.</p> <p>Distribute Newcomer Guides to clients.</p>

Persons with Disabilities	<p>Make adaptive equipment or services available to job seekers including but not limited to assistive technology, alternative service delivery channels, etc.</p> <p>Train staff on the use of various disability assessments as well as specialized assessments.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with and refer clients to related service providers such as Community Living BC.</p>
Rural and Remote populations	<p>Serve remote clients through itinerant service when and if they are unable to visit a storefront.</p> <p>Deliver services through a mobile office in the community of Sparwood.</p> <p>Facilitate virtual access to services, telephone access (1-800 and texting), or itinerant.</p> <p>Promote availability of job search and job start financial supports.</p> <p>Provide transit schedules and maps to clients.</p> <p>Ensure EPBC and EK Employment resource materials are readily available in all communities and "hot" locations.</p>
Multi-Barriered	<p>Ensure an integrated approach to service delivery.</p> <p>Utilize client consent to form collaborative teams addressing barriers experienced.</p> <p>Ensure clients have opportunity to complete career, general, and specialized assessments.</p>
Survivors of Violence and/or Abuse	<p>Liaise with local and regional service providers to build on existing relationships and explore opportunities for learning and collaboration.</p> <p>Meet quarterly with local women's resource centre and crisis shelter.</p> <p>Participate in Elk Valley Committee for Safety in Relationships.</p> <p>Train staff on working with clients who are survivors of violence or abuse, including identifying signals.</p> <p>Refer clients to local resources and community associations.</p>
Youth	<p>Refer clients to local resources and programs such as Get Youth Working, Skills Link, Futurpreneur, and the Columbia Basin Trust Wage Subsidy or Training Fee Programs.</p> <p>Present on career planning and the EPBC with local post-secondary and secondary school groups.</p>

Accountabilities and Targets

Each year the Fernie CEP Plan is reviewed and revised through engagement activities and feedback. Engagement activities are designed to facilitate learning and communication, address the aforementioned priorities, promote the EPBC, build on existing and potential partnerships, and reach our target markets.

As part of a CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) accredited organization CMHA Kootenays understands the importance of strategic planning to increase the efficiency of the organization, reduce risk, encourage collaboration and the movement toward a unified goal, motivate staff, help achieve objectives and facilitate proper coordination.

These targets and evaluation activities are designed to relate back to the Fernie CEP Plan.

Feedback

Soliciting for, learning from, and implementing change responsive to feedback received is integral to the success of the Fernie CEP Plan. The Fernie ESC is committed to listening and responding to: clients, individuals, employers, community service providers, community leaders, funders, and communities.

This is completed through various formal channels as well as through less formal drop-in visits so that employers, community organizations, etc. have ready access to sharing their feedback. The following are examples of how the Fernie contract collects feedback:

- Annual program survey distributed to stakeholders, self-serve clients, and case managed clients in person and online
- Evaluation forms distributed following workshops and public events (such as job fairs)
- Targeted outreach to clients who have successfully completed a service to gather experience based stories
- Collection of success stories (anonymous or consent based) from stakeholders, self-serve clients, and case managed clients

Success stories, in particular, are shared internally and externally as possible. This provides valuable and personal insight into how the EPBC supported a job seeker to gain employment (or an employer recruit qualified staff). Success stories are a topic on the agenda of each staff meeting (held monthly) and all staff are requested to submit a minimum of one per quarter. Where consent is provided, the success story can be shared externally through Ministry Quarterly Marketing Reports. Where consent is not provided, the stories can be shared anonymously and confidentially.

As well a formal complaints process is in place at the ESC. This is displayed at the store front, detailed on the website, and communicated at intake with all case managed clients.

Evaluation of Activities

In order to plan adequately, there must be a means and process to evaluate activities. This ensures that learning can be applied to future events and plans. The Fernie ESC participates in and completes both annual and monthly evaluation processes, which inform daily operations and annual planning projects.

First, an annual review of the activities undertaken is completed each fiscal year. This is completed through an Annual Outcome Report, which is conducted internally and focuses on a range of topics. A

copy of last fiscal's report is published [online](#). The outcome report compares counts realized to established targets. It is distributed internally to staff and the CMHA for the Kootenay's Board of Directors. It is also made public on the following websites:

- www.ekemployment.org
- <http://www.kootenays.cmha.bc.ca/>

Completion of a regular and standardized outcome report ensures that staff and the public have the opportunity to reflect on the past year's activity. Through its publication and generation it also encourages discussion on where we were strong and where there may be room for improvement. It encourages dialogue, openness and transparency.

Second, the Fernie ESC's performance is monitored through a monthly Balance Score Card and ESC Deliverables report. The Balance Score Card is distributed to the Board of Directors, partners, and management staff. It is reviewed in summary with ESC staff at monthly meetings. It provides an at a glance overview of traffic to our storefront, website, services delivered, and marketing conducted. The ESC Deliverables report is reviewed and discussed with the staff team in detail during the monthly staff meeting. This enables the ESC to continue building on successes and proactively address issues as they arise.

Targets

A number of targets have been established internally for the ESC. These are on top of contracted performance measures and contractual obligations with the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation for the EPBC. As well various indicators are observed and monitored, which contribute to a better understanding of how we are performing and serving clients. For example (and not limited to):

Walk-In Traffic - Daily traffic to the ESC and remote mobile kiosk is measured to ensure that utilization remains strong. Users are also asked to indicate why they are visiting the ESC. Both measures enable the ESC to gauge which services are well or under-utilized.

New Clients - While there is seasonal variance in the number of clients who are accepted into case managed services, this is targeted monthly. Staff also track the number of no shows to appointments (including intake) to assist in proactively identifying problems in providing employment services to clients. This can, for example, assist in serving clients from specialized populations.

Website Hits - Numerous measures associated with the EK Employment website are reported monthly. This is targeted monthly and gives us a clear point of reference for online engagement with the ESC and enables identification of entry points for communication and marketing strategies.

Employer and Community Association Outreach - This helps to ensure the ESC is on the leading edge of local labour market information. It assists to increase our profile and stay well informed and able to work collaboratively on community or client needs.

Services Delivered – Client service targets have been established across both catchments and are monitored monthly. These include targets for workshop participation, training agreements, wage subsidies, unpaid work placements, specialized assessments, and self-employment. Client service targets can be excellent motivators for staff; however, cannot get in the way of delivering quality client service that focuses on their distinct needs. Targets will be established for services that relate most strongly to specialized populations.

Average Number of Jobs Posted – This is monitored monthly and targeted so that the EK Employment website remains the “go to” place to learn of and apply for local employment opportunities. The website is an excellent entry point to dialogue with employers daily about their recruiting needs, challenges, and experiences.

Communications and Marketing

The Fernie contract is committed to expanding marketing and community engagement efforts with focus placed on increasing and improving service delivery options. Focus is placed on optimizing existing local connections.

Regular communication and a robust marketing plan ensure that the Fernie ESC is kept well informed and in the fore-front of the public and our partners' minds. This also helps to ensure that our services and supports are aligned with the local labour market. Timely and clear communication and information sharing is vital to developing meaningful partnerships.

CEP Plan Communication

The Fernie CEP Plan will be shared with stakeholders in multiple ways. It will be distributed to our Board of Directors and sub-contractors initially and then more widely via the website, emailed to key partners, and made available at the ESC for those who wish to have a hard copy.

Marketing Plan

Each year the Fernie ESC prepares, reviews, and implements an annual marketing plan. It forms a point of reference for communications throughout the year and the creation and revision of an annual marketing plan allows staff to be reflective and responsive in annual program planning.

The marketing plan is designed to be flexible and living in nature so that it can be responsive to change and learning. The marketing plan has distinct communication goals, but more broadly connects to the CEP Plan as well as Annual Outcomes and Program Plans. The Fernie marketing plan is coordinated with the Cranbrook catchment marketing plan.

The following communication goals have been established:

1. Be relevant and responsive to clients accessing EPBC supports and services, including in particular specialized populations
2. Maintain and enhance relationships with employers and community associations across the region with the intent to collaboratively serve clients and support them reaching their career goals
3. Promote awareness of the EPBC and EK Employment
4. Position the ESC as the leading source of labour market information

The delivery of messaging to our various audiences will be completed through:

- EK Employment Website and the Elk Valley Employment Centre Facebook page
- Print material distributed throughout the communities
- Networking
- Formal meetings
- Social media and online community boards and calendars
- Community boards and events
- Public presentations, radio updates, and community updates

- Signage
- Advertisements and/or newsletters

When exploring new delivery channels, the following will be taken into consideration to ensure it is a wise investment of resources and a suitable format: Training/Skills, Time, Cost, and Audience.

Above and beyond Contract based key performance measures and monthly targets, the following categories of information are observed and monitored monthly. The completion of these tasks has been incorporated into staff and/or sub-contracted job descriptions or contracts. Many have established targets as well.

Categories monitored monthly include:

- Employer Website Cold Calls
- Facebook Post / Online Promotion
- New / Community Releases
- Media Coverage
- Paid / Free Advertisements
- Presentations Received
- Presentations Delivered
- Wage Subsidy Outreach / Contact
- Community Association Outreach / Contact
- Employer Recruitments Outreach / Contact
- Event Attendance
- Postering, Brochures, Flyers
- External Training Completed

Conclusion: Reflective and Reflexive Planning

The Fernie CEP Plan is intended to:

- Identify local community labour market issues and needs and how we will respond, both in providing client services and in working collaboratively with employer and community partners;
- Identify proactive and responsive strategies and tools to quickly address labour market changes;
- Establish community and employer activities to address labour market needs; and
- Outline strategies that respond to the needs of Specialized Populations in our community.

With this said, EK Employment Elk Valley encourages all individuals, community organizations and employers to engage with the Centre. Through coordinated and collaborative work great progress can be achieved toward the priorities listed in this report and the sustainable development of our communities and province.