



COMMUNITY TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

Prepared for
The Town of Whitecourt



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1 INTRODUCTION

Whitecourt is a progressive community that boasts a good quality of life, amenities and job opportunities. Part of its progressiveness has been having the insight to realise that having a qualified and flexible workforce is central to economic prosperity and resilience. This study and resulting recommendations will set a roadmap towards Whitecourt becoming a leading community in integrated training and workforce development.

Business' #1 challenge is getting the right workforce.

This strategy and action plans integrate the findings from the background research (strategic document review, 2018/9 statistics and data analysis, situational analysis) and stakeholder consultation (business, academic and other stakeholder interviews) portion of Whitecourt's training and labour force development process.

The SCOAR® (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) is a detailed analysis of the current situation involving statistical analysis of the local economy, regional competitive outlook, trends and forecasts, investment readiness assessment, strengths / weaknesses / opportunities review using the McSweeney exclusive SCOAR® analysis from the perspective of training and workforce development.

The purpose of the project is to develop strategies and action plans to ensure that Whitecourt and area has the workforce to retain and attract employers both now and into the future.

Finally, this report identifies target industries that Whitecourt and its partners should be channeling its resources towards and aligning its training/workforce development with.



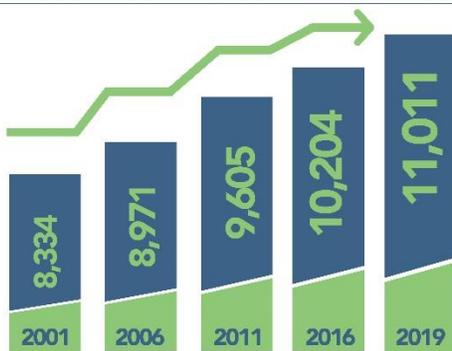
2 STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

Economic SNAPSHOT of the Town of Whitecourt



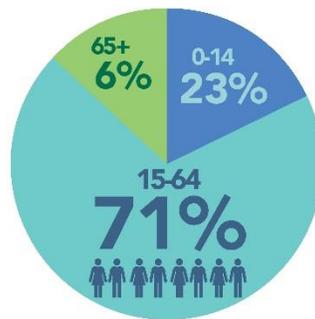
POPULATION

Total Population



Census Population Data, Statistics Canada, 2001-2016.

Age Profile



Educational Attainment



For the population aged 24-65.

HOUSING

Dwelling Value

Average Value **\$348,900***

Median Value **\$348,383****

Total number of households **4,468***

53% Single Detached House

20%

Moveable Dwelling

15%
Apartment / detached duplex

4% Rowhouse
8% Semi-detached house

All data sourced from Manifold SuperDemographics 2019, unless otherwise specified.

*Statistics from the Town of Whitecourt, **Statistics from Statistics Canada Census 2016.

Dwelling Income

\$144,780
Average Household Total Income

\$123,377
Median Household Total Income



16% of Whitecourt's population spends 30% or more of household total income on shelter costs

Economic SNAPSHOT of the Town of Whitecourt



LABOUR FORCE & LOCAL ECONOMY

Top 5 Employment Industries



13%
Mining, Quarrying,
and Oil & Gas Extraction



12%
Retail Trade



9%
Manufacturing



9%
Construction



9%
Accommodation & Food
Services

Top 5 Employment Occupations



23%
Sales & Service



23%
Trades, Transport
& Equipment Operators



11%
Business, Finance
& Administration



10%
Management



8%
Manufacturing
and Utilities

Participation

79.3%

ALBERTA
71.8%

Employment

71.2%

ALBERTA
66.7%

Unemployment

10.2%

ALBERTA
7.1%



\$3 Million

2018 Value of
Building Permits **



\$1.5

billion in exports *

Median
Employment
Income

\$50,536

ALBERTA MEDIAN
\$48,190

Average
Employment
Income

\$69,126

ALBERTA AVERAGE
\$69,431

**Statistics from the Government of Alberta

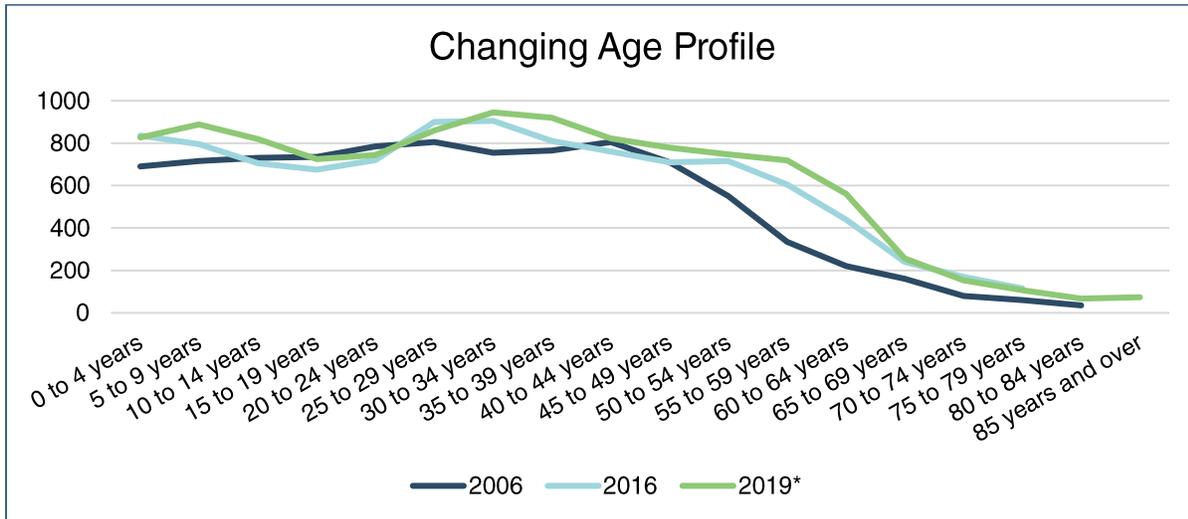
*Statistics from 2019.Q1 EMSI

All data sourced from Manifold SuperDemographics 2019, unless otherwise specified.

3 A GLIMPSE OF WHITECOURT BY THE NUMBERS

The census population in Whitecourt grew by 13.7% between 2006 and 2016, meanwhile, Alberta's population grew by 23.6% during the same time period. **Currently, the largest 5-year cohort is between 30 to 34 years old; however, the largest growth in the town over the past 10 years came from persons aged 55 to 64 years.**

Population Age Structure of Whitecourt over time, 2006-2016

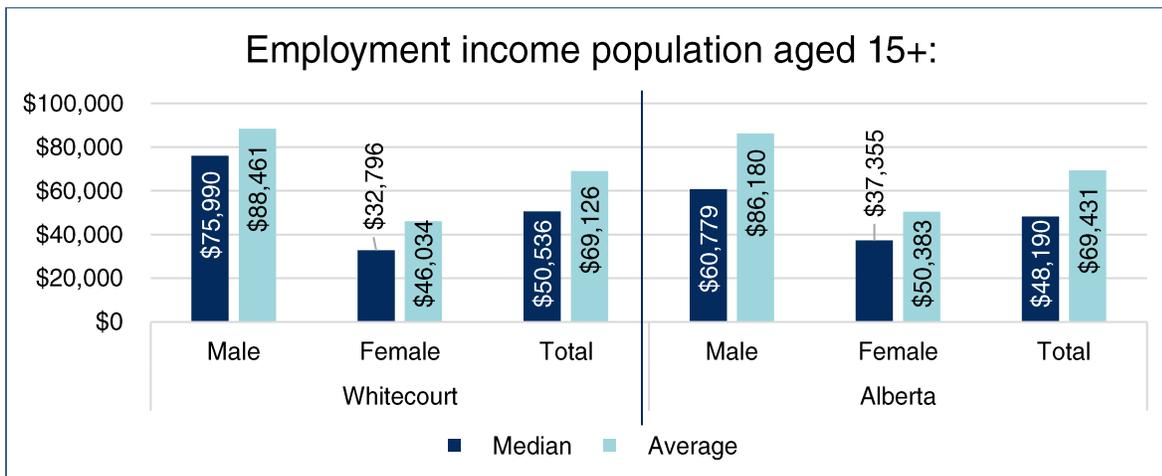


Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2016, and Manifold SuperDemographics 2019

Employment Income Levels

Town of Whitecourt residents have a **median employment income 5% higher** than that of the province and an **average employment income 0.4% lower** than the province. Male average and median employment incomes are higher than in the province, while both are lower for females, compared to the province.

Employment Income, Whitecourt vs. Alberta, 2018

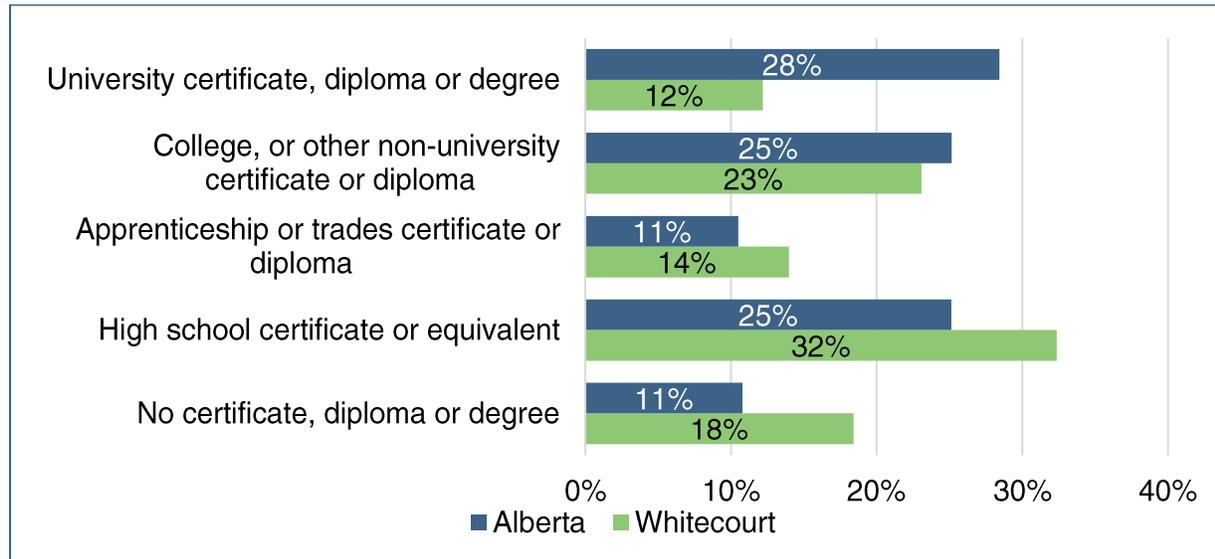


Source: McSweeney & Associates from Manifold Data Mining Inc. SuperDemographics 2019 (2018 incomes).

Education and Skills Attainment

Approximately 3,127, or 49% of residents ages 25 to 64, have attained some post-secondary education in the Town of Whitecourt. The figure below illustrates the most common types of post-secondary education.

Post-Secondary Education, Persons aged 24 to 65, 2019



McSweeney & Associates from Manifold Data Mining Inc. SuperDemographics 2019

The following figure illustrates the major fields of study for residents of the Town of Whitecourt who have completed post-secondary education. The figure shows a large supply of high skilled workers – particularly in areas related to business, health, education and engineering.

Post-Secondary Major Field of Study, by Gender, Whitecourt, 2019¹

Top 10 Fields of Study	Total	Female	Male
Business, management, marketing and related support	592	468	124
Health professions and related programs	464	398	66
Mechanic and repair technologies/technicians	449	10	439
Education	350	275	75
Construction trades	326	8	319
Engineering technologies and engineering-related fields	201	28	172
Personal and culinary services	180	122	58
Natural resources and conservation	147	31	115
Transportation and materials moving	107	11	96
Precision production	98	3	94

Source: McSweeney & Associates from Manifold Data Mining Inc. SuperDemographics 2019.

¹ 'Major Field of study' is defined as the main discipline or subject of learning. Classification of Instructional Programs, Canada 2016: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/concepts/classification>.

Labour Market Gaps and Surpluses

The following table highlights where there are the largest local labour market gaps and surpluses. The gaps indicate jobs that are being filled by workers residing outside of Whitecourt, while the surpluses indicate occupations where residents are having to go out of town for work.

Table 1: Labour Market Gaps/Surpluses by Occupation (3-Digit NOCS)

Occupation Group	Live in Whitecourt	Jobs in Whitecourt	Gap (-)/ Surplus
Total - National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2016	6,719	8,102	-1,383
Occupation – undetermined	110	108	2
All occupations	6,609	7,994	-1,385
Machine operators and related workers in pulp and paper production and wood processing and manufacturing	123	34	89
Plumbers, pipefitters and gas fitters	138	67	71
Central control and process operators in processing and manufacturing	118	63	55
Office administrative assistants - General, legal and medical	132	80	52
Harvesting, landscaping and natural resources labourers	149	98	51
Underground miners, oil and gas drillers and related occupations	58	236	-178
Motor vehicle and transit drivers	388	563	-175
Machinery and transportation equipment mechanics (except motor vehicles)	145	308	-163
Contractors and supervisors, maintenance trades and heavy equipment and transport operators	37	194	-157
Machining, metal forming, shaping and erecting trades	58	156	-98

Source: EMSI Analyst 2019.Q1 and Manifold SuperDemographics 2019

Concentrated Occupations

Location quotient (LQ) analysis can be used to measure the relative concentration of an occupation, compared to the rest of the country. It compares the percentage of jobs by occupation in the labour recruitment area, relative to the total percentage of jobs in the same occupation in Canada. Occupations are concentrated if they have a location quotient (LQ) greater than 1.25, which would indicate that the area employs 25% more of that occupation than the benchmark.

High-LQ occupations are important because they are generally employed by high-LQ industries, which tend to be export-oriented and form the majority of the region's economic base. High-LQ occupations thus provide a workforce-oriented perspective of the region's economic base. Such occupations are vital for the continued prosperity of the region. The table below shows the most concentrated occupations in the Town of Whitecourt's labour recruitment area (i.e. labour shed).

Table 2: Concentrated Occupations, 2018

Occupations	2018 Jobs	2018 Location Quotient
Oil and gas well drillers, servicers, testers and related workers	488	21.38
Contractors and supervisors, oil and gas drilling and services	360	20.71
Oil and gas well drilling and related workers and services operators	164	19.37
Oil and gas drilling, servicing and related labourers	111	16.20
Central control and process operators, petroleum, gas and chemical processing	141	11.61
Managers in agriculture	760	6.37
Contractors and supervisors, heavy equipment operator crews	194	5.89
Heavy-duty equipment mechanics	278	5.45
Heavy equipment operators (except crane)	303	4.61
Supervisors, motor transport and other ground transit operators	145	4.58
Transport truck drivers	864	3.53
Power engineers and power systems operators	77	3.39
Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics	228	3.29
Industrial electricians	80	3.26
Welders and related machine operators	218	2.78
Contractors and supervisors, mechanic trades	135	2.68
Accounting technicians and bookkeepers	313	2.49
Contractors and supervisors, other construction trades, installers, repairers and servicers	105	1.92
General farmworkers	102	1.75
Electricians (except industrial and power system)	120	1.59

Source: EMSI Analyst 2019.Q1

Economic Base of the Town of Whitecourt

Key Industries by Number of Jobs

LARGEST INDUSTRIES BY TOTAL EMPLOYMENT

1. Support activities for mining, oil and gas extraction
2. Restaurants and bars
3. Specialized freight trucking
4. Logging
5. Elementary and secondary schools
6. Commercial and industrial machinery repair and maintenance
7. Sawmill and wood preservation

FASTEST GROWING INDUSTRIES BY EMPLOYMENT GROWTH (%)

1. Other financial investment activities
2. Other schools and instruction
3. Recreational vehicle (RV) parks and recreational camps
4. Gambling industries
5. Commercial and industrial machinery and equipment (except automotive and electronic) repair and maintenance
6. Other amusement and recreation industries
7. Logging

LARGEST INDUSTRIES BY # OF BUSINESSES

1. Support activities for mining, oil and gas extraction
2. Specialized freight trucking
3. Commercial and industrial machinery repair and maintenance
4. Building equipment contractors
5. Other specialty trade contractors
6. Management, scientific and technical consulting services
7. Logging

Whitecourt and the region (defined by Division No.13 - Census division), have a cluster of industries related to wood product manufacturing, which is concentrated (in terms of labour) relative to the province, including:

- Pulp, paper and paperboard mills
- Logging
- Sawmills and wood preservation

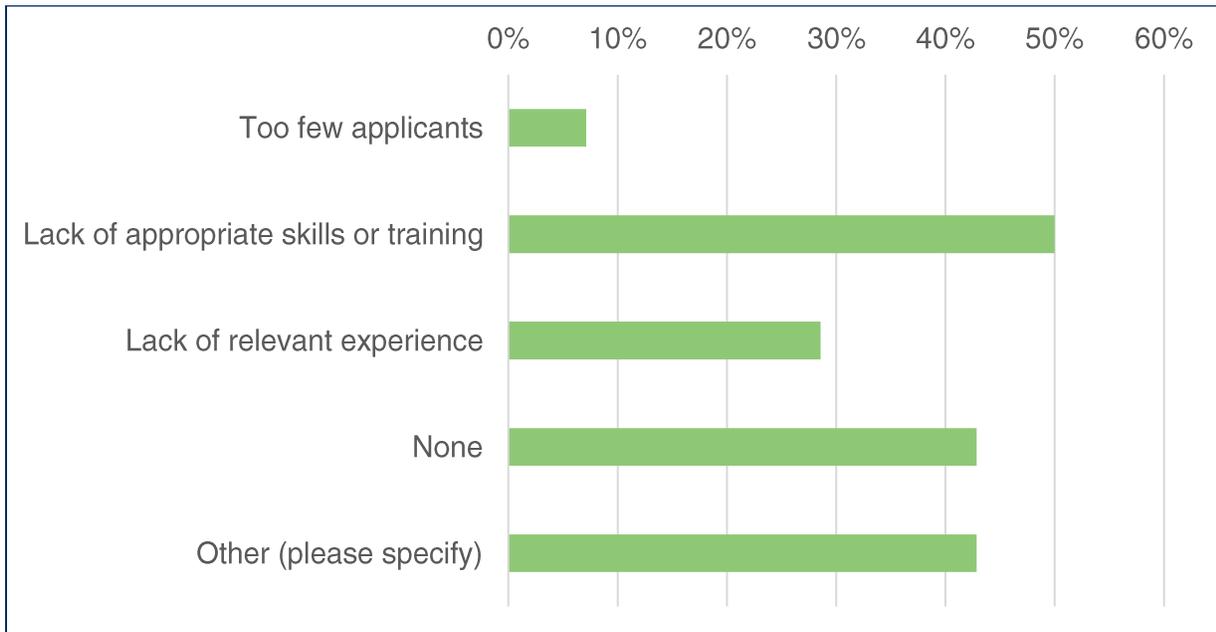
Whitecourt has a labour concentration in wood product manufacturing, as well as professional services relative to the rest of the region (Division No.13). The following industries are concentrated relative to Division No. 13 only, and indicate where Whitecourt specializes in niche/service industries and could potentially be a service provider for the region:

- Employment services
- Other schools and instruction
- Management, scientific and technical consulting services
- Architectural, engineering and related services

4 WHAT EMPLOYERS SAID

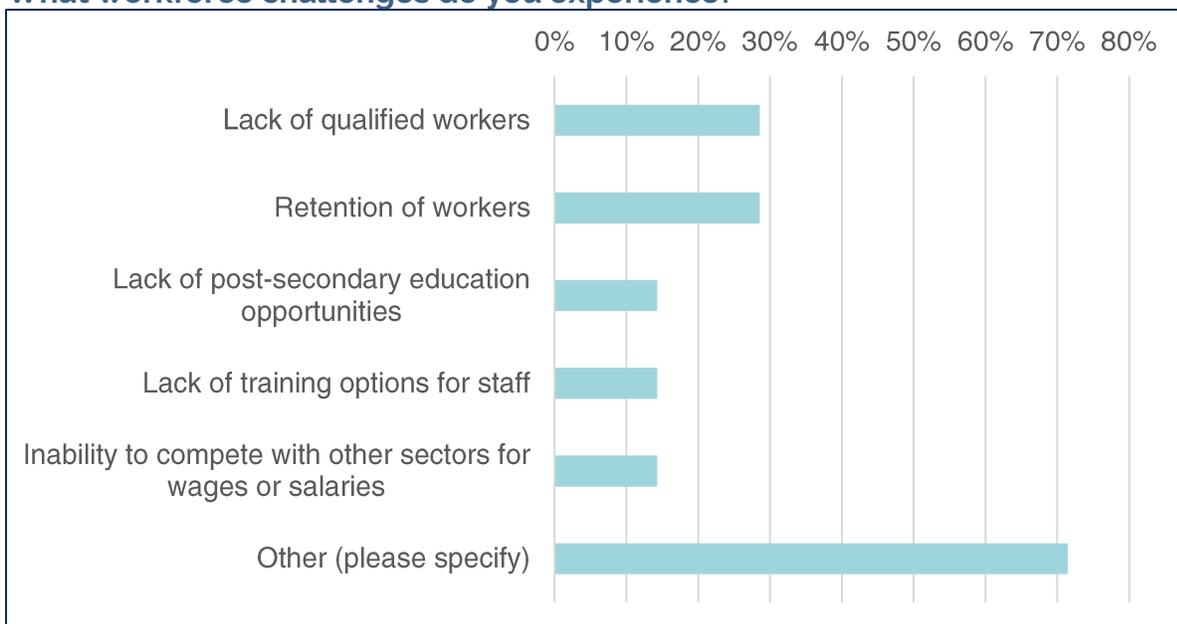
Employers were interviewed through focus groups, one-on-one interviews as well as an online survey. Below are the high-level findings:

What, if any, hiring challenges does your company face?



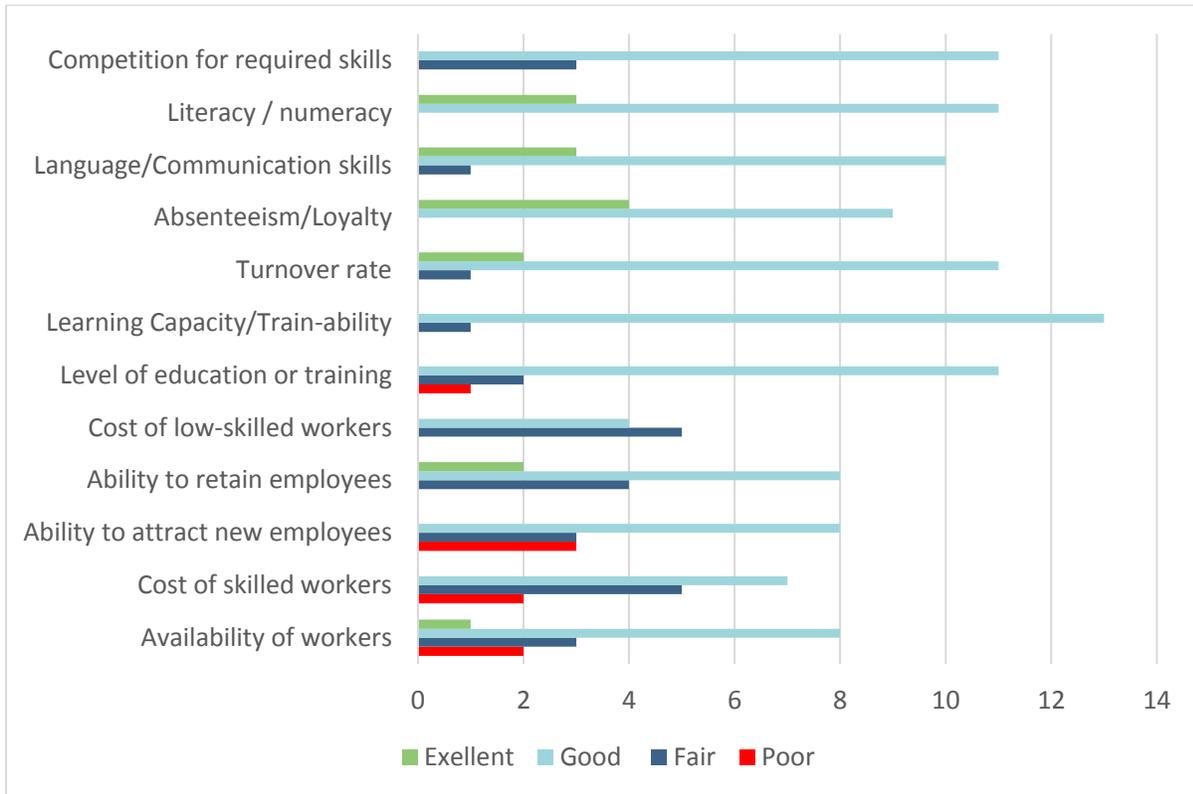
'Other' included high expectations of employees compared with their skill levels, job readiness, high cost for certifications required if they don't have them.

What workforce challenges do you experience?



'Other' included retaining highly skilled professionals from outside region and immigrants, attracting specialty-skilled persons to region, and burn out of employees in long-term roles.

How would you rate the following workforce factors in the Town of Whitecourt based on your business needs?



Employers also expressed their needs regarding hard-to-fill positions. There were many that were specific to their industry, but there were also those that crossed industries, such as:

- Accountants and those competent with Quickbooks
- IT and computer professionals
- Class 1 and 3 drivers
- Fire-fighters
- First responders

Industry-specific hard-to-fill positions/gaps that also coincide with the data from independent sources that indicated a labour force deficit includes:

- Heavy-duty mechanics
- Power engineers
- Chemical engineers
- Steam vessel technicians
- Electricians

- Millwrights
- Pipefitters
- Welders
- Instrumentation technicians
- Foresters
- Qualified chefs/cooks and hospitality personnel
- Trained customer service people

5 CURRENT TRAINING AVAILABLE IN AND AROUND WHITECOURT

There are currently both accredited and non-accredited training courses available in or near Whitecourt. Many employers indicated that they do their own training but rely on the following for outside training/certifications and/or recruitment sources.

Institution or Company	Courses Offered	Comments
NorQuest College	Diploma training in Whitecourt: Health, Administration and Community Studies; upgrading and equivalency assistance; continuing education and custom training available	NorQuest is provincial lead in the region. Courses from other institutions can be delivered with NorQuest's consent if a number of students can be assured. Received provincial contract for CALP (Community Adult Learning Program) in September.
NAIT	Apprenticeship classroom training; Diplomas and degrees in a number of Disciplines	NAIT Courses can be delivered with NorQuest's consent with assurance of participant numbers
University of Alberta	Degrees in business and professional designations in Medicine, Engineering, Accounting and Business	U of A courses can be delivered with consent from NorQuest
Northern Lakes College	Delivers Power Engineering course with practicum in steam lab in Peace River	
Living Waters School Division	Catholic Schools in the region with academic and technical streams of study; RAP / Dual credit programs	
Northern Gateway School Division	Public Schools in the region; academic and technical streams; RAP / Dual Credit programs	

Safeway Consulting	Fire; variety of safety-related training; certification and re-certification; on-site consulting service	
Brogan Safety	Health and Safety focus; Certification and Re-Certification; on-site consulting services	Maximum number of students is 18 and minimum of 10
HSE Integrated	Health and safety supplies and services and on-site advisory services	
New Ventures Safety	Contract safety training	
A-Team	First Aid, AED / CPR training and consulting	
Rotorworks Inc.	Helicopter flight school; testing and certification; applied training for camp services; coordinates with other firms to offer expanded list of training and services	
North Star	Recently incorporated non-profit society with mandate to provide coordination of companies seeking specialized training	Members are companies in the area. Society is in early stage of development
Ballad Consulting	Training consultants. Provide advisory services on training requirements and sources of training. Delivers GED, carpentry, janitorial and kitchen, basic job/essential skills	

6 STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, ASPIRATIONS, AND RESULTS (SCOAR®)

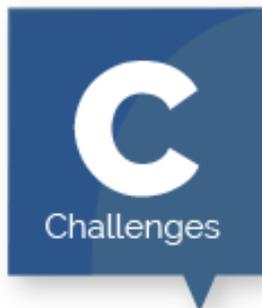


You are probably familiar with a SWOT analysis. Over the years, we have found that with using SWOT, communities tend to get mired in the weaknesses and threats they are facing and don't look at what is possible. Thus we developed our SCOAR® analysis that while considering the challenges that a community has, focuses on using their strengths to take advantage of opportunities that will, in turn, create their preferred future. Following is the Town of Whitecourt's SCOAR® as pertains to training and workforce development.



- High employment participation rate relative to Alberta and Canada
- Population has continued to grow through the recessionary period beginning in 2014
- Residents in Whitecourt enjoy a high quality of life; individuals live primarily in single-detached homes; they enjoy lower housing prices than the province while having comparable employment incomes
- Working-age cohort (15-64 years of age) makes up 71% of the population and is proportionately higher than Alberta or Canada
- Strong entrepreneurial culture
- Proximity to the Duvernay formation that continues to attract development activity even through poor market conditions
- Well established businesses in both the forestry and oil & gas sectors, with the forestry sector providing some economic stability during low oil & gas cycles
- Percentage of residents with college degrees or apprenticeship trade certificates/diplomas is higher than Alberta or Canada
- Strong RAP/Co-op/dual credit programmes in both high schools alongside career counselling
- The community has a sharp focus on training and meeting the needs of employers
- Growing private-public partnerships to provide training locally
- Employers demonstrate a strong commitment to training and skill development

- School districts, Provincial Ministries, agencies, NorQuest College and other colleges all demonstrate a willingness to collaborate on training solutions to meet local and regional needs
- Active Business Support Networks across the region provide good venues for both intelligence gathering and collaborative activities such as career fairs
- Whitecourt and communities in the region are already being pro-active and effective in meeting training needs
- Whitecourt and area benefits from a strong and collaborative economic development support system – The Chamber, Community Futures, GROWTH, provincial agencies and municipalities work well together



- There is a significant disparity between male and female employment income (females being 30% or more lower)
- There is a high dependence on oil and gas-related employment resulting in exposure to “boom and bust” cycles
- Workforce restructuring by oil and gas companies has resulted in more contract labour (fewer benefits, less security) versus regular full-time employment
- Time limitations on Duvernay reserves and logging supply
- There are some mismatches in resident labour supply and demand - some can be readily redeployed to other occupations while others would require significant re-skilling
- Employers find it difficult to retain hard-to-fill positions when employees are from urban centres
- Critical mass needed for colleges to run some types of training (control system specialists, steam vessel certification) will be difficult to achieve
- Employers find some young people lacking in basic life skills, work ethic and understanding of working on a team
- There is a perception that local students don't understand the quality of jobs available in their backyard
- While Whitecourt offers a great quality of life for families, single professionals sometimes leave for lack of opportunities to meet other singles and nightlife
- Spouses of recruited staff find it challenging to find jobs that use their skills
- There is a labour surplus in the disciplines currently offered by NorQuest College in Whitecourt, but labour deficits for some disciplines that students have to go away to study for
- Student/learner interests are lacking in some needed fields such as foresters, fish and wildlife specialists
- Career pathways are difficult for young people for some training such as Class 1 Drivers



- Flexible regional facility that could house training with state-of-the-art teleconference facilities NorQuest building downtown is operating under capacity
- Increased cooperation with post-secondary institutions that offer the training that local employers require
- Increased public-private partnerships to meet identified regional training needs and introduction to career opportunities
- Identification of target industries for the region and aligning training programmes with those industries
- Coordination of training/re-certification with municipal employers (municipalities require many of the same occupations as private sector employers)
- Life skills and workplace readiness training was identified by many employers
- Marketing, customer service and communication skills for retail, tourism, food service and other public-facing service employers/employees
- A training bulletin board or online system to allow employers to post foreseen training/re-certification needs and allow for aggregation of demand to achieve desired class sizes
- Establishment of a central 'training brokerage' as part of an on-going business retention and expansion program
- Promotion of careers in trades for females (to address the income disparity between males and females)
- 'Home-coming' events that showcase what Whitecourt has to offer to former graduates to attract them back
- Business and financial management courses for the increasing numbers of contractors who were formerly employees



- Whitecourt and region develop both the capacity and reputation for a highly-skilled workforce that attracts and retains profitable, high-quality businesses
- Communities in the region are prosperous and economically resilient
- Work, education and lifestyle opportunities to attract and retain young people and entrepreneurs
- A workforce that embraces training and technological advances in their industry and occupations
- Local economy is not cyclical and has year-round vibrancy because of the types and calibre of businesses resident in the area
- Reputation for knowledge, wisdom and wealth creation in the area



- Whitecourt is seen as a key training centre for northwestern Alberta
- Whitecourt and surrounding communities possess a training/lifelong learning culture and environment
- The communities in the region distinguish themselves with the best available workforce in businesses that compete and thrive in their sectors
- Thriving businesses and employees drive local tax assessments to fund services and amenities that are equal to or better than other communities in Canada

7 KEY STRATEGIC THEMES

The following themes have been derived through a rigorous process that included a thorough study of the town's economic development base analysis, a target sector review, focus groups and consultation with businesses, training/education providers and stakeholders and emerged from the Town of Whitecourt's SCOAR[®] analysis.

These strategic areas of focus, or where the Town and stakeholders should focus their resources, are:



Public-Private Partnerships

Becoming a Regional Training Centre



Workforce Retention & Attraction

8 STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The following strategic actions address both the challenges and opportunities within each theme. It is noted that while the desire of the Town of Whitecourt is to develop solutions under each theme, it does not currently have the internal resources to implement this plan, having only one full-time employees (FTE) in economic development. The following strategic actions have been developed assuming 2 full-time employees (FTEs)'s plus a contract position as outlined under Theme #1 – Public-Private Partnerships.

Theme #1

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

This theme is about bringing supply and demand together to proactively guide training needs in Whitecourt and the region. In addition, local businesses may contribute access to facilities and equipment to augment practical training.



Businesses know what skills and positions they need, but secondary, post-secondary and private sector training providers may not be aware of business needs – both current and future given the increase in automation. In addition, government funding programs like the Canada-Alberta job grant can pay for eligible training costs.

In today's economic environment, innovative solutions to training are needed – as opposed to building a static facility where its equipment becomes obsolete as industry races ahead. RAP, co-op, dual credit and student career counselling programs prepare high school students for the future, but post-secondary institutions are constrained in what they can offer unless they have confirmed course demand.

Strategic Actions:

1. Run a pilot program that works with employers, high schools and post-secondary institutions to match market demand with training supply. Apply to the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Program to fund a contractor who would set up the program with the goal of it continuing, jointly funded by business and the municipality. The contractor's tasks would include;
 - a. Report to and inform Economic Development Officer and partners established prior to contractor hire;
 - b. Implement a business liaison program, focussing on workforce needs of employers;
 - c. Identify courses that would have critical mass needed in the region to be run in Whitecourt and build lists of students who will enroll;
 - d. Liaise with the training provider that would best provide that training and coordinate any needed partnerships, permissions, including with the Ministry of Advanced Education;
 - e. Market and coordinate the Canada-Alberta job grant applications where the grant can be used, noting timing required for processing;

- f. Build an inventory of area businesses that would provide facilities needed for the practical training requirements where needed and oversee draft agreement/MOU between the businesses and training provider. This inventory would also include public and private sector training facilities;
- g. Communicate with and align project with area high schools that run RAP and dual credit programs so that students know what is available in terms of career prospects and local training.

Theme #2

BECOMING A REGIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

Whitecourt is a regional centre - for business, shopping and leisure for a region of nearly 50,000². Does this mean it can be a centre of training for the region's workforce and employers? This does not necessarily imply new 'bricks and mortar'.



Whitecourt already offers training courses. Whitecourt has a 'cluster' of training options and physical spaces, including NorQuest (that has under-utilized space), high schools (that are not generally used in the evenings nor on weekends) and potential training spaces/equipment within its businesses. The identified challenge is that these need to be co-ordinated in one agreed plan to optimally use the spaces and offer the courses that current and potential employers want, and respond to future industry needs. There is presently not a need to build new space, but to maximise the effectiveness of what exists and augment the audio-visual technology so that instructors can be brought in virtually when needed and use leading-edge technology.

There is a strong offering of health & safety and other industry-related courses as well as accredited courses offered by NorQuest College such as office administration and healthcare. There are also courses available online through other colleges that require practical experience such as the power engineering course with Northern Lakes College and there have been one-off courses in disciplines such as fire-fighting, first responder and will soon be a course for first-year heavy-duty mechanics, In addition to courses offered, consideration should be given to student needs such as accommodation, social networking and job placement assistance. By having training courses that respond to investor needs, this responsiveness gives Whitecourt a very strong competitive advantage over municipalities with similar community, transportation and feedstock strengths.

Strategic Actions:

1. Develop a Regional Training Task Force – this could be lead by the contractor hired in Theme 1, and align course development with the needs of targeted industries. This would include the offer within secondary, post-secondary and other training providers;
2. Hold a roundtable with post-secondary institutions to present target industries, occupation gaps, their training needs and determine what a training facility in Whitecourt would require to provide training and student needs as well as be flexible to

² 2019 projected population of Community Futures Yellowhead East region that Whitecourt is central to.

respond to the future changing needs of employers, including broadband and multi-media facilities. Access to the Supernet should be considered a backbone of this project.

3. Following the roundtable, meet with NorQuest to map out how their facility and facility management department will be part of the project.
4. Scope out the Regional Training project, identifying opportunities, vision, project outline, deliverables, budget and timelines.
5. Identify funding criteria for short-term and longer-term
6. Hire a contractor to implement the project, reporting to the "Regional Training" Task Force and working alongside with the LMP project manager, Town Council, and NorQuest College.

Theme #3

WORKFORCE RETENTION AND ATTRACTION



Most of the investment in a community comes from those businesses which already exist in a community. The process of **Business Retention and Expansion** helps identify not only current issues impacting Whitecourt's business community, but also helps create business support relationships and partnerships. This process also helps to identify and capitalize on investment opportunities in Whitecourt. The number one issue facing businesses in Whitecourt is retaining and attracting the right employees for them to succeed.

The greatest success for Whitecourt's employer's in retaining and training long-term employees comes when they recruit employees from the region, where they have roots. Second is attracting families that enjoy the town's amenities, great schools and family-oriented activities. Difficulties exist with retaining young, single professionals and those whose spouses are unable to find meaningful employment.

Strategic Actions:

1. Implement a structured career path program for both high schools and adults who are looking for a career change. The program could include:
 - a. Industry presentations in schools
 - b. Scheduled and publicized industry tours with willing employers (could be publicized outside the region)
 - c. Available career counselling for adults with aptitude testing and mentoring
2. Work with NorQuest College to assist in designing the newly funded CALP (Community Adult Learning Program) so that it aligns with the town and regional needs.
3. Hold a "Whitecourt Home-Coming" event that showcases the assets of the town, targeted industries, entrepreneur support system while being a fun reunion event. Social media could reach talent that has left the region.
4. Work with providers and ECE training providers to ensure good childcare in the town, developing a key competitive strength.

5. Develop a targeted strategy for immigrant attraction that appeals to a certain ethnicity that will give Whitecourt the needed critical mass to retain that group of immigrants.
6. Provide seed funding for a young professionals social group, using Meetup or other social media tool.
7. Work with regional partners to develop a central job posting bank for positions within commuting distance.

9 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In terms of workforce development and retention, the Town of Whitecourt is already lifting above its weightclass when compared to other communities. Its approach to industry development by ensuring the right workforce and training is available is progressive and in line with the key challenge of its employers: finding and retaining the right employees.

By implementing the actions outlined in this plan, Whitecourt will not only position itself as a municipality that proactively works with its businesses and supports its residents in their career paths, but one that has taken action towards resilience and economic diversification. By focussing on training as a new industry, there will be a ripple effect upon attracting new workers, residents, businesses and the entrepreneurial energy that students bring to a community.

