



Centre for Innovative &
Entrepreneurial Leadership

Business Vitality Initiative (BVI)

Phase Two Focus and Action Report

Vulcan, Alberta

March 2009



Vulcan &
District
Chamber of
Commerce



TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Business Vitality Initiative	3
Vulcan Phase 1 Assessment Results.....	3
Vulcan Phase 2 Results	5
Action Group Summary	7
1. Downtown Revitalization	7
2. Attract Visitors Downtown from Tourism Sites.....	8
3. Strategy for Attracting Needed Businesses.....	9
Next Steps.....	10
Appendix 1: Attendance List.....	11
Appendix 2: Examples of How BVI Communities Have Taken Action	12
Appendix 3: About CIEL	15

The Business Vitality Initiative

The Business Vitality Initiative (BVI) helps communities to assess their capacity to work with and support entrepreneurs, and to foster small business growth. The BVI measures the perceptions of community leaders, business people and citizens about the current business environment in their community and compares the results to an average of other communities to determine possible short and long-term actions the community can undertake to improve its business friendliness.

The Vulcan BVI was sponsored by the Vulcan Business Development Society, and organized by the Economic Development Officer, Leslie Warren. She selected and invited the participants, who were to be 50% business people, 25% local leaders and 25% citizens, representing a diversity of interests, ages and perspectives in the community. On February 3, 2009, forty-five people attended the Phase 1 session of the BVI in Vulcan, and thirty-seven of those filled out the BVI survey.

Vulcan is one of four Alberta communities selected to participate in a pilot of the BVI funded by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD). ARD has partnered with CIEL to deliver the BVI to assist with economic development in rural Alberta.

Phase 1 used focus groups and a comprehensive survey to assess the community's small business potential.

Vulcan Phase 1 Assessment Results

In the Assessment Session, participants were asked to give three words to describe their community. The majority of responses were positive. According to respondents, Vulcan is a friendly, safe, and clean community with a unique feature (Star Trek). When participants were asked to identify key strengths, the top responses were health care, proximity to major centres, and the variety of services. When participants were asked why they live in Vulcan, small town lifestyle, work, and a safe place to raise a family were mentioned most.

When participants were asked to provide directions for improvement for their community, the need for more businesses and a more attractive downtown core were mentioned most often.

More detail can be found in the Vulcan Phase 1 Assessment Report.

Section Scores

From highest to lowest, section scores out of 100 were as follows:

- Infrastructure & Business Services (69)
- Quality of Life (67)
- Communication & Connectivity (58)
- Government & Organizations (57)
- Leadership Teamwork & Networking (56)
- Innovation (55)
- Markets & Marketing (55)
- Opportunities and Attitudes (54)
- Capital & Funding (53)
- Education & Training (51)

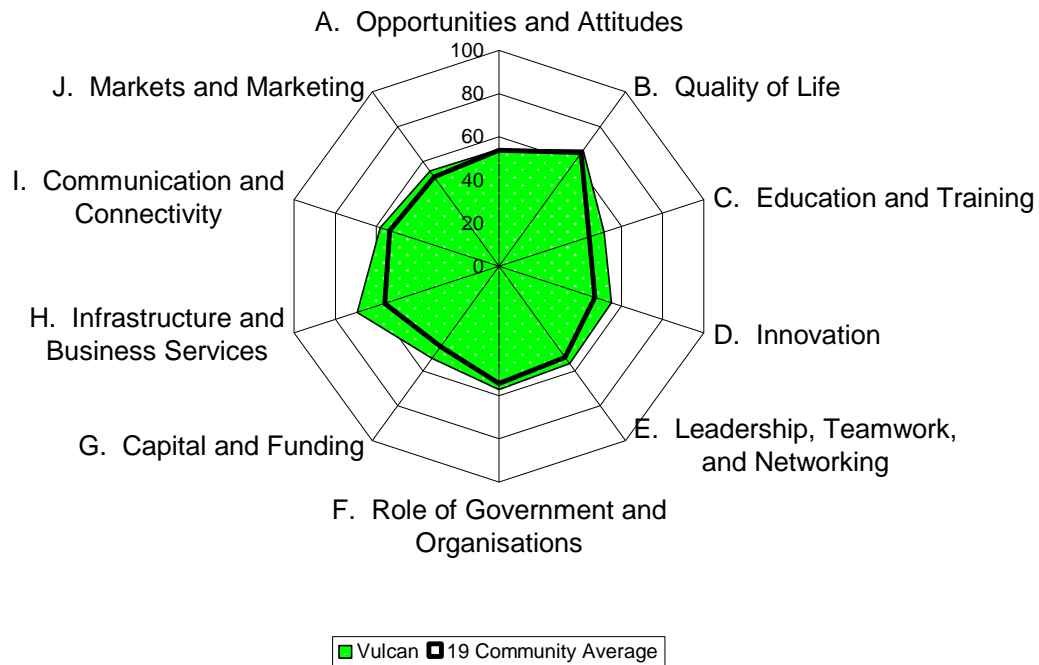
The average score for all sections was 57, a score 10% higher than the average for 19 Canadian communities which have undertaken the BVI.

Vulcan scored equal to or above the 19-community average in all 10 sections. Particular strengths for Vulcan are its score for the 'Quality of Life' section of 67 out of 100 (2% above the community average), and its score of 69 (24% above average) for Infrastructure and Business Services, which was the highest scoring section of the survey.

The lowest scoring section of the survey was 'Education and Training' which had a score of 51 (16% above the 19-community average).

The radial graph below contrasts Vulcan's section scores with the average score for other communities which have done the BVI in Canada. The closer the shaded section is to the outside ring, the higher Vulcan's score, and the greater the business friendliness.

Vulcan and All-Community Section Scores



Vulcan Phase 2 Results

The Phase 2, or Focus and Action Session, held on March 26, 2009, was open to the entire community with the purpose of setting priorities for improvement and jump-starting the community to action. See Appendix 1 for an attendance list.

During that session, the assessment scores and other results, as described in the Phase 1 Report, were presented. The community was then given a series of possible courses of action, derived from focus groups and questionnaire responses (and the group was asked to add their own suggestions to that list) to improve the community's environment for business. All of the actions were posted on sheets of paper throughout the room, and participants were given 5 votes to identify their priorities and select actions that they were interested in investing their time and energy into. The results are presented below with the number of votes for each. Each action item is divided into four categories: capacity building, networking, marketing, and research/ administration/ planning.

Possible Short Term Actions <i>Shaded items were chosen as priorities and became the subject of action groups.</i>		Votes
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth & young adult opportunity identification session & strategy identifying recreational, educational, business, etc. opportunities (session could start with several specific opportunities identified in BVI or with brainstorming evening & weekend events/activities for young families) 	12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategy and initiative to increase local volunteering 	7
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apprenticeship initiative 	5
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Main Street revitalization beginning with targeting dilapidated and filling empty buildings 	25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review external marketing with view to improve, especially with young adults – review newspaper's role in this 	7
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business mentoring (& possibly internship) initiative, possibly focusing on youth/young adult businesses tapping into retired and established businesses 	7
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business communication/ networking sessions perhaps starting with aim to enhance communication, skills (e.g. using technology effectively, effective marketing, HR best practice, financing, business planning, etc.), publicizing what is available in the community 	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular communication forum between business community and council, possibly organized around themes of maintaining and enhancing infrastructure, energy, commercial land and building availability, high speed internet/satellite improvements, etc. 	14
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive 'buy local' program 	12
Research, Admin, & Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate incentives and identify strategy for attracting 'needed' businesses 	16
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attract visitors downtown from tourism sites (e.g. Trek Centre) possibly using events 	19
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategy to investigate and develop (or attract entrepreneurs for) top untapped opportunities (e.g. motel/hotel, high level restaurant, local history [including Palliser, mines, native history], linking many talented artists, auto dealership, multi-sport weekend, movie theatre, retirement opportunities) 	1

Action Group Summary

Following the priority setting exercise, participants formed six discussion groups in order to assess the viability of the three courses of action that were chosen.

The 'Reality Check' exercise revealed that the three initiatives had sufficient energy and resources to proceed. Highlights from the discussion/action groups are outlined below.

Reality Check 1. Downtown Revitalization	
Action Group Members: Dwayne Dallmann, Cathy Dallmann, Erin Melcher, Esther Leung, Betty Smith, Yvonne Smith, Darlene Boyd, Cody Shearer, Pat Wisener	
Question	Answer
Success —Describe what the successful action might look like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forming the committee ▪ Making contact with Monique Leblanc and Ken Losey and/or the town ▪ Doing our own research
Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making the downtown more visually attractive.
Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes, we could make a downtown revitalization committee made up of business owners and young people.
Leadership – Who has the skills to lead (organizations, individuals)? Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn't in the room right now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We do, by not hoping/expecting someone else to take the initiative, we can do it.
Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creating the committee could be done ASAP, the research into what is being done or what can be done will take longer
Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our own financial commitment yes, especially if corporate sponsors get involved.
Your recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take action
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monday March 30 at 7:30

Reality Check

2. Attract Visitors Downtown from Tourism Sites

Action Group Members: Jim Mather, Sharon Cockwill, Lynda Joyce, Maureen Howard

Question	Answer
Success —Describe what the successful action might look like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Form a group to generate a plan ▪ Visitors cross the tracks ▪ Visitors would spend money downtown ▪ Visitors would tell others positive things
Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Get visitors downtown for the benefit of the community ▪ \$ for merchants
Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of people ▪ CIB
Leadership – Who has the skills to lead (organizations, individuals)? 1 Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn't in the room right now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tourism people ▪ Current event organizers ▪ Linda Wright and Kim Samson, Sharon Cockwell, Rich Howard, Dwayne Dallmann, Sherri Fernley
Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Within a year ▪ Could be need for advertising dollars
Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building histories, murals and flowers downtown ▪ Farm/direct marketing, farmers' market ▪ Financial resources—needs research
Your recommendation	Take action and get more information
Next Steps	Meeting Thursday April 2nd

Reality Check
3. Strategy for Attracting Needed Businesses

Action Group Members: Dayna Dickens, Sharon Vallee, Louise Christie, Sharon McNiven, Ken Garinger, Dave Pletz, Randy Wolfe, Elaine Dixon, John Seaman, Tom Grant

Question	Answer
Success —Describe what the successful action might look like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify what community sees as needed businesses by polling/ research/consultation ▪ Research business development incentives, investor programs, and opportunities ▪ Develop business marketing scheme
Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attract needed businesses as determined by community research
Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Find local business leaders to collect research ▪ Create partnership between business organizations (ie VBDS Tourism, Chamber) and other community leaders
Leadership – Who has the skills to lead (organizations, individuals)? 1 Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn't in the room right now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VBDS ▪ Tourism ▪ CF Highwood ▪ Town and County Councils
Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research/ surveys should not take much time to conduct ▪ Look at incentives to complete survey ▪ This task could be done by part time or summer student
Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See #2 above
Your recommendation	Take action
Next Steps	Meeting after Easter (TBA)

Next Steps

The most important element of successfully completing an action is the presence of strong community leadership and energy. The community must identify human resources to champion and lead each action. The facilitator asked that those in attendance identify working group members. The Community Sponsors will also continue to work with the working groups in order to follow through on the identified courses of action. Most working groups made a commitment at the meeting to schedule and attend a follow-up meeting.

Long-Term Actions

The following long-term actions were proposed in the Phase 1 Assessment Report, but were not voted on at the Focus and Action meeting on March 26.

Possible Long Term Actions (actions taking more than 12 months to complete)	
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Long-term strategy to develop locations/facilities that attract a variety of people and provide social opportunities for local residents of all ages (B8 – Vulcan scored the lowest of all BVI communities on this question, Opportunities, Focus groups) ▪ Investigate co-operative partnerships with colleges and universities (Focus groups, Opportunities) ▪ Strategy to increase Vulcan’s post-secondary training opportunities especially in technology & apprenticeships and better publicize, co-ordinate what already exists (Sections C & D)
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Long-term main street/downtown beautification initiative (Focus groups, Improvements) ▪ Use brand to strategically market to young adults & new residents (Section A)
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community leadership program that builds skills/knowledge but also links between youth, young adults, groups in community, new energetic people, business leaders and elected leadership (Sections E & F) ▪ Business succession planning – identify those business who aim to sell/retire in next 5-10 years with aim of recruiting/developing possible new owners (Themes, demographics)
Research, Admin. and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate multi-use recreational complex (pool, rink, fitness, bowling, etc.) (Improvements) ▪ Long-term strategy to maintain & enhance health care facilities (Focus groups) Investigate best practices from communities that have been successful with teenagers and young adults – jobs, keeping them happy, integrating into community (Section B)

Appendix 1: Attendance List

John Seaman
Tom Grant
Jim Mather
Randy Wolfe
Louise Christie
Sharon Vallee
Darryl Macdonald
Sharon Cockwill
Cathy Dallmann
Dwayne Dallmann
Rick Howard
Maureen Howard
Linda Joyce
Stephen Tipper
Gord Nelson
Sharon McNiven
Cody Shearer
Dayna Dickens
Pat Wisener
Erin Melcher
Monique LeBlanc
Colin Gosselin
Dave Pletz
Darlene Boyd
Esther Leung
Yvonne Smith
Betty Smith
Linda Fodor
Leslie Warren

Appendix 2: Examples of How BVI Communities Have Taken Action

Community 1

- Marketing Coordinator for the whole valley (to find emphasis/strengths, facilitate cooperation & networking)
- Make community “Horticultural Centre of B.C.”
- Clean up and develop the downtown area and community core
- “Buy Local” program
- Develop recreational potential (facilities, bike paths)

Community 2

- Formation of a community business group to look at possibilities
- Use community watershed story to create a community “brand”. (Market the story)
- Renovate community hall(s)
- Plan around ideal set-up of community art(isan’s) gallery
- Accommodation and camping facility development

Community 3

- Local economic development organization to offer more business courses in the area around needs of community business
- Opportunity identification session with young people (under 40)
- Customer service training

Community 4

- Create community foundation
- Increase cooperation between business, government, and citizens by working together on a project
- Opportunity Identification Sessions (one for youth and one for broader community)
- Buy local campaign or program

Community 5

- Buy local campaign
- Networking sessions more regularly among community groups and businesses
- “Did you know” citizen ambassador program
- Joint marketing session – best practices - with Chamber as catalyst

Community 6

- Improve cooperation and communication between stakeholders (business, council, residents)
- Promote tourism and cultural assets
- Buy local program

Community 7

- Joint marketing of products and services by business
- Education of community on benefits of new business
- Develop community brand / market the community
- Build community spirit through festivals / projects

Community 8

- Draft some short-term tourism actions & striking a tourism action group specifically around addressing high quality recreational opportunities
- Develop strategy to attract more capital / possibility of cooperative financing for services community identifies as needing / community identifies potential sources of equity in the community/ Meetings between area lenders and businesses to raise awareness of lending options
- Improve telecommunications / develop telecommunications plan (look at cooperative structure for bringing in high speed (fibre optics))
- Develop brand around beauty / work ethic / independent attitude / creativity / seclusion ('find us if you can' where arts & a pioneer spirit meet the mountains)
- Coordinated or cooperative marketing effort for local products or services (i.e. tourism operators, artisans)

Community 9

- Use landfill/methane/waste management as a catalyst for innovation, education & economic development
- Increase presence of night policing
- Work on a beautification/pride project that increases cooperation among business, residents and government
- Create volunteer attraction/retention/recognition and leadership identification program for community to combat burnout
- Improve customer service (training for front-line employees)

Community 10

- Improve the image of the town by revitalizing main areas and entrances starting with beautification and cleanliness.
- Develop a regional event to promote and unify the town.
- Buy local program.

Community 11

- Review and revise promotional strategy and identify local attractions, to increase tourism and population growth.
- Beautify main street (including public toilet improvements), to make the main town centre more attractive to visitors, travellers, and the community.
- Form a committee to consult with major industries to assess what those industries require of the community.

Community 12

- Develop a youth retention and engagement strategy to give youth a reason to return to the community.
- Targeted outreach marketing strategy to attract more people.
- Make the community a commercial hub for the arts, including a dual/multi facility for historical arts precinct and museum and a working space for artists and craftspeople.
- Buy local campaign.

Community 13

- Develop a loyalty shopping program to give consumers a reason and incentive to shop locally.
- Improve town entrance, to encourage highway travellers to visit the community and to create a pride in the town by local residents.
- Develop a marketing package to attract new residents and businesses.
- Revive “heritage river” and “gateway” concepts and provide recreation to the town i.e. fishing, camping, swimming, to get people talking about the town.

Community 14

- Buy local program
- Develop festivals and events, e.g. Italian festival, power boat competition
- Improve streetscape and capital works including parking/roundabout and bridge treatment.

Appendix 3: About CIEL

The Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership (CIEL) strengthens communities by helping them become more business-friendly, more culturally vibrant, and more sustainable. We also assist them in improving leadership and enhancing community involvement.

CIEL is a non-profit organization located in Nelson, British Columbia, in a region featuring many communities that are quickly having to make transitions to survive in a fast-changing global economy.

Our early work assisted small communities in the neighbouring mountain valleys. We developed innovative assessments coupled with strategic processes that helped communities focus, leverage assets and energy and, most importantly, jumpstart action. Then our ideas attracted the attention of communities farther afield, and we began working with communities across the rest of B.C. More recently we have been invited into communities across Canada, the U.S, New Zealand and Australia.

Our Communities Matrix – a one page tool for assessing stages of community readiness – has now been used in many countries across the globe. The Government of Canada contracted CIEL to research, develop and build a collaborative leadership program as an effective means of building capacity for rural communities in Canada.

CIEL continues to develop practical, engaging and innovative tools and processes that strengthen communities. In 2008, CIEL won the award for the region's most innovative organization from the Kootenay Association for Science & Technology.

Our network of facilitators and trainers allows us to be responsive to the needs of communities across the world. CIEL's conference presentations have inspired at the local, regional, state/province and international level. Our work has been featured on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Living Magazine and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Contact us to help build a custom solution to engage your community and move it to action.