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Good Afternoon,

For those I have not yet connected with this year – a very belated Happy New Year!

Attached is the latest update from our office for your information. We are excited about the projects we are participating in and appreciate all opportunities to collaborate with the stakeholders in our region. I would also like to ask the CAOs and legislative managers to please forward this update to their respective council members. Also, if you don't already, please follow us on social media to hear all about our latest news.

Thank you in advance and I wish you all a happy and successful 2025,



Ursula Sherwood

(She/Her)

Executive Director

Community Futures Highwood



Office Line: 403-995-4151 ext.4

Direct Line: 403-842-0389



ursulas@cfhighwood.net



www.cfhighwood.net



14 McRae St, Okotoks, AB



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Update Happy New Year!

JANUARY 2025



HIGHWOOD HUSTLE & HEART

On October 3, 2024, we hosted our bi-annual Highwood Hustle & Heart event at the stunning Eau Claire Distillery. It was a wonderful evening dedicated to celebrating our amazing clients and looking back on a fantastic year at Community Futures Highwood. The night featured great company, a delicious charcuterie spread, and the perfect opportunity to connect with our vibrant business community.

You can read more about the [2024 Highwood Hustle & Heart here.](#)



WELCOME ARDIS!

We are thrilled to welcome Ardis Agustsdottir to the Community Futures Highwood team! Ardis joined us in August 2024 as our Community Economic Development Coordinator and is an incredible addition to our office.

She draws on a rich background in administrative support, project management, and customer service to drive impactful initiatives that support local economic growth.



COLLABORATIONS

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK



We partnered with the Okotoks Chamber on the Small Business Week Conference. Our team hosted 'Working ON vs In Your Business', a collaborative workshop that encouraged communication and problem solving between entrepreneurs.



STARTING A BUSINESS IN DIAMOND VALLEY

On National Entrepreneurs Day, we hosted "Starting a Business in Diamond Valley" in partnership with the Sheep River Library and the Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce. This event featured a panel of seasoned entrepreneurs from the Diamond Valley area and was specifically tailored for new businesses and start-ups. Attendees had a unique opportunity to gain valuable insights and guidance from successful business owners who have firsthand experience with starting a business.

PROJECTS

DIGITAL SERVICE SQUAD PROGRAM

In September 2024, we wrapped up our Digital Service Squad (DSS) program, a dedicated initiative aimed at empowering local entrepreneurs with the digital tools and skills needed to thrive in today's market. Through this program, entrepreneurs received free access to personalized digital support, hands-on marketing training, and more.

The Digital Service Squad reached a remarkable milestone by serving a total of 178 individual businesses, offering each one valuable tools and knowledge to thrive in an increasingly digital marketplace. While the program has come to an end, its lasting impact on the local business ecosystem will continue to be felt for years to come.

Community Futures Highwood continues to offer ongoing digital marketing workshops as well as marketing plan support.

EXITNAVIGATOR

We're thrilled to announce that our grant application, in partnership with CF Lethbridge and CF Centre West, for the ExitNavigator project has been approved. The program will be launched on February 1st and rural entrepreneurs will have access to a professional business exit coach who will provide confidential, personalized one-on-one assistance, guiding them through each step of the exit planning and sales process. In addition workshops and planning books will be offered.

Given the high number of entrepreneurs wanting to retire, the resources this project provides will be an essential tool for those looking to exit smoothly and strategically.

COMMUNITY FUTURES LAUNCHPAD

A collaboration of 18 CF offices in Alberta, that is working on an online training platform specifically for CF clients. These courses will be available free of charge until March 31, 2026.

"Your Business - Your Plan" is now live, and 2 more courses are in active development: "Ignite Your Business" and "Talent & Teams".

UPCOMING EVENTS

BUILDING YOUR BRAND

We are excited to announce the launch of in-person workshops at the Community Futures office. Our upcoming January workshop, "Building Your Brand: Creating a Solid Strategy," will provide business owners with essential insights into developing cohesive and impactful brand identities, supported by strategic research and real-world examples from leading companies.

For registration information [you can visit our Eventbrite page here.](#)

Thank you for your ongoing support of our organization. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to our [Executive Director.](#)

