

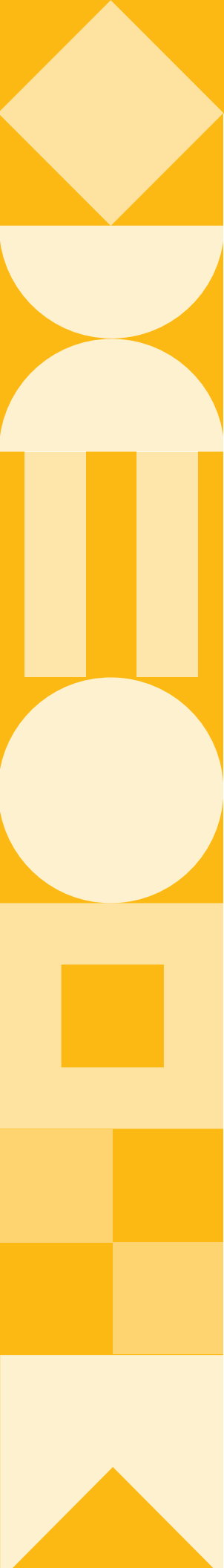


BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Resident Attraction and Retention

STRATEGY GUIDEBOOK

Created March 2021



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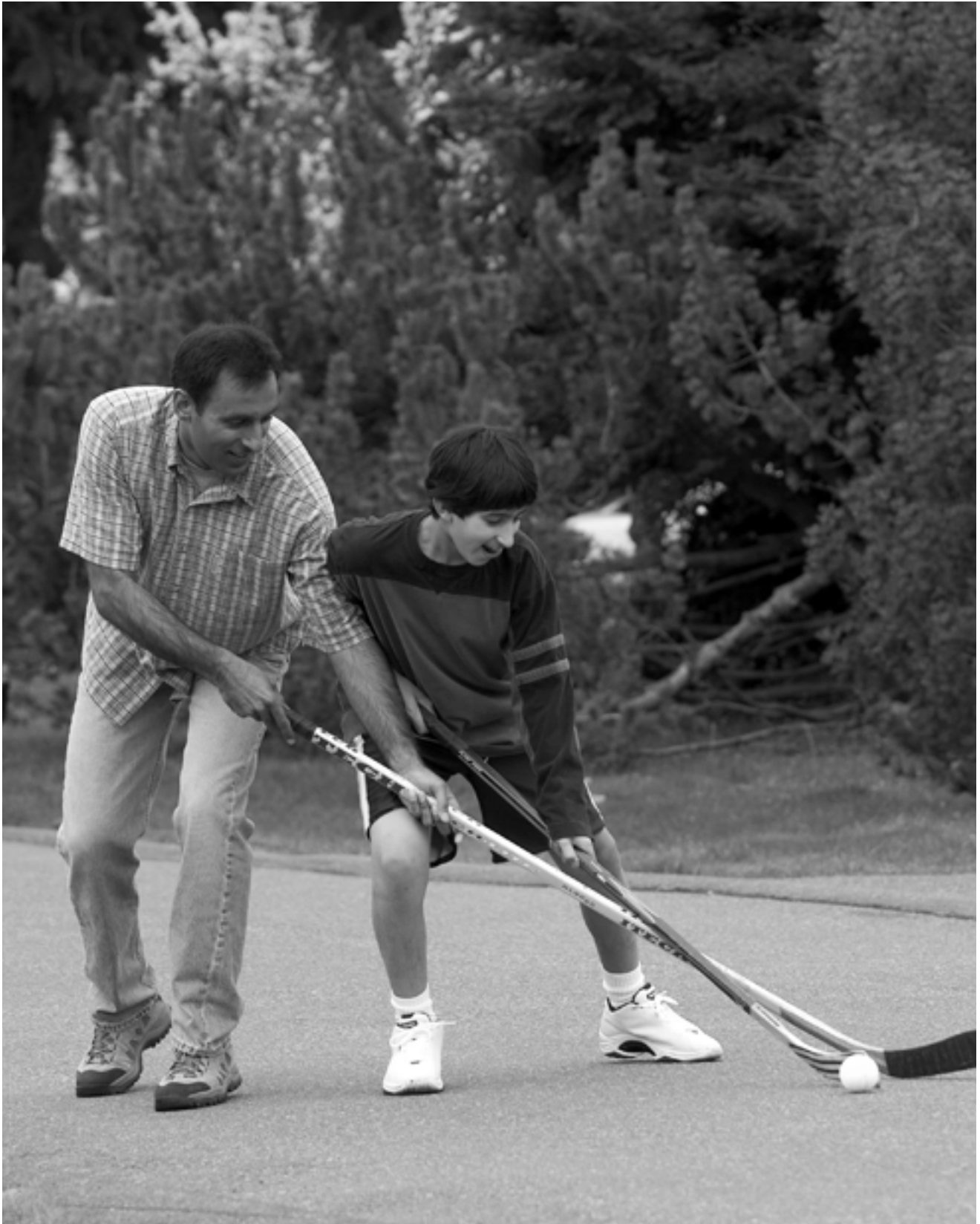
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Introduction

Purpose and Objectives of the Guidebook

The guidebook has been developed primarily for rural communities who have an interest or need for resident attraction and retention (RAR), but are not clear how to proceed or who may not have an in-depth understanding of the concept, processes or resources required. For those already possessing knowledge in the process, this provides a resource for exploring the approach from different perspectives.

The guidebook is designed to provide a series of tools, checklists, information, tips, and questions about the basics, which can then be applied to individual community circumstances. Each section provides information designed to help generate ideas that can be applied at the community level and demonstrates how it can be used to help initiate discussion. There are a number of community case studies that illustrate approaches taken in British Columbia to address RAR. These are meant to provide context and inspiration to the reader and are highlighted with the following icon:



The guidebook references communities in a broad sense and is inclusive of local government, Indigenous Communities, First Nations, and regions that represent a geographic area looking to work together for RAR purposes.

The guidebook has been created for British Columbia's (BC) Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operation(s), and Rural Development to support the understanding and effective application of RAR initiatives.

Why Conduct Resident Attraction and Retention?

Whether the priority of the community is to diversify the economy, increase the tax base, or build a new recreation facility, attracting and retaining residents will contribute to the sustainability of your community.

Attracting and retaining residents requires effort to find common ground, take advantage of opportunities, and balance competing interests. A RAR initiative ultimately represents a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions. Regardless of the scope of the activity, effective initiatives should be:

- Focused on the long-term
- Balanced between internal efforts designed to retain and attract residents
- Well planned yet biased toward action
- Inclusive
- Holistic and integrated into the community's and region's context
- Supported by the community
- Realistic and achievable given the community resources



Resident Attraction and Retention is more than a marketing campaign. It's also about making an attractive place to call home.

As the make-up of rural communities change so does their need to adjust and find innovative ways to become a sustainable, vibrant community. Increasing permanent residents and businesses is important in maintaining a sustainable community. It is critical to focus on attracting residents that support the following components of a strong community:

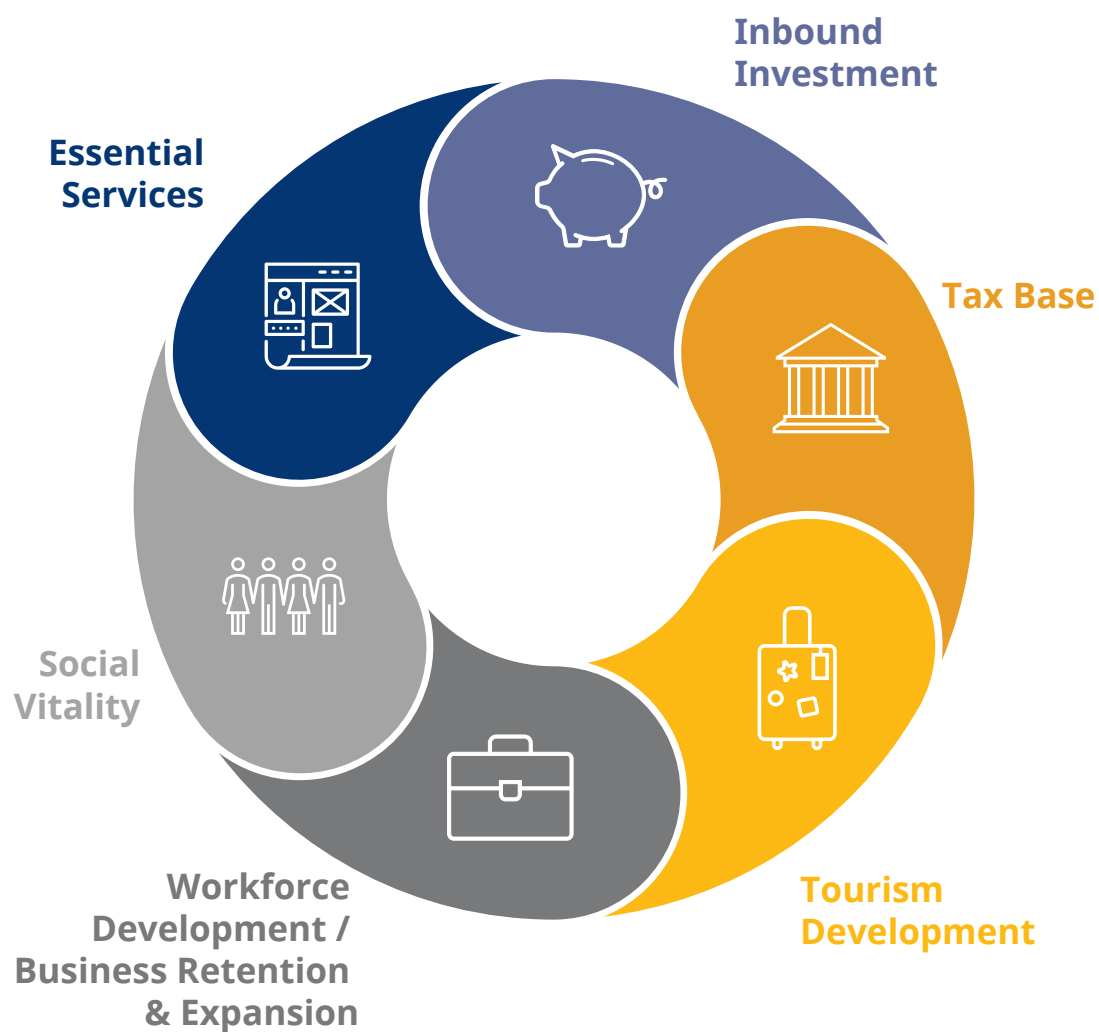


Figure 1: Components of a Strong Community



1. Essential Services – in this context we are referring to the necessary services to support current residents (e.g., hospitals and health care for the elderly, schools and after school programs for youth, etc.). This component is required before any other.



2. Inbound Investment – statistically, new residents are more likely to become entrepreneurs, often starting new businesses or purchasing an existing business. Inbound investment is important for the diversification and expansion of services that enhance quality of life and support the local economy.



3. Workforce Development/Business Retention and Expansion – increasing the number of skilled workers and professionals in your community will support current businesses and create business expansion opportunities in the community and region.



4. Tax Base – Governments and local administrators depend on their local tax base. Increasing the number of permanent residents will strengthen the ability to maintain and enhance public infrastructure and services.



5. Social Vitality - the arrival of new residents into a community introduces new energy, skills and ideas, and new members for social organizations. This builds on the existing social vitality of a community.



6. Tourism Development - through destination development and promotional efforts a community's brand is enhanced and will assist with community awareness, pride of place, and eventual resident attraction.



Developing your Resident Attraction and Retention Strategy

For many communities, developing a RAR strategy often receives less attention than the resulting marketing and promotion of the community. Many communities want to deliver actions immediately to alleviate pressure from residents or politicians. Also, strategy development can be perceived to be both complex and less necessary, and that actions can drive results. However, creating a RAR strategy need not be overly complex.

These are the steps to follow in creating a RAR strategy:

1. Build the Team
2. Define the Purpose
3. Analyze Your Situation
 - External and Community Level Influences
 - Critical Challenges and Opportunities
4. Convert Analysis into Strategy
 - Identify Targets
 - Establish Strategic Priorities
5. RAR Applied
6. Ongoing Implementation
 - Define Champion Agency or Team
 - Develop Evaluation Methods

This document provides a step-by-step process that a community can apply to their own realities to yield the greatest results. It is encouraged that the community reviews this process and adjusts where needed to reflect their community's degree of readiness. Many communities have been working on RAR for a long time. These communities might round out efforts where needed while some communities start at the beginning.



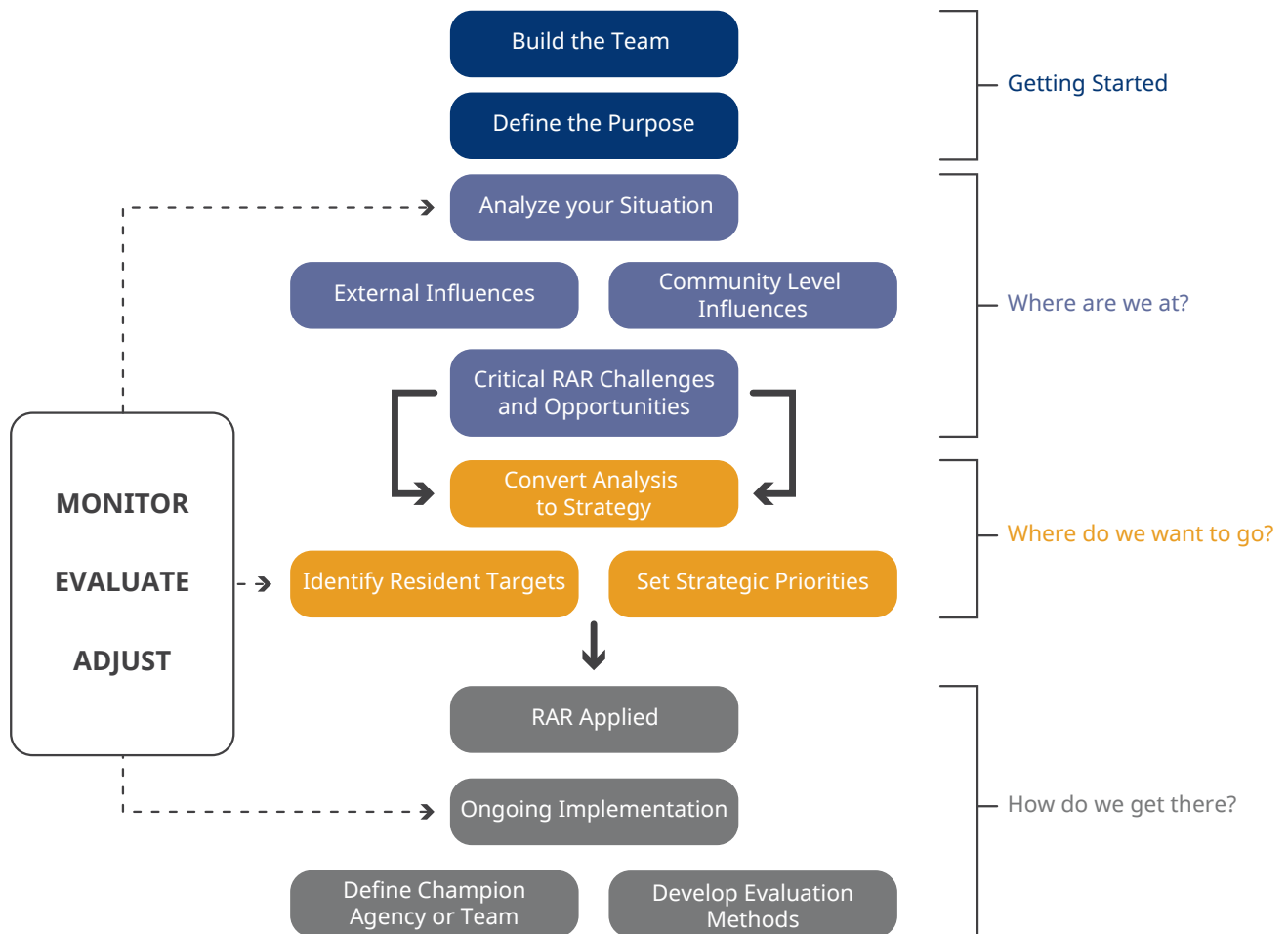


Figure 2: General Process for Developing Resident Attraction and Retention Strategy

Step 1:

Build the Team

When community efforts build on the resources, capabilities and influence of a range of partners to tackle complex challenges, they become powerful mechanisms to accelerate development.



**CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR**

Be inclusive in your team composition, inviting multiple perspectives and encouraging a diversity of thought.

Many communities appear to have the characteristics that support a RAR planning initiative but lack a team to ensure that a plan is put in place and implemented. The team can be an individual or group who believes change is possible and is willing to take the first steps that are needed to create interest and support.

Draw upon your understanding of your community and your network to identify individuals that are both supportive and non-supportive of the initiative. Invite interested people to take a leadership role and to become active participants in developing and carrying out the initiative. Keep in mind this is an open and ongoing process, so keep those who are not interested or supportive well-informed and continue to invite them to participate.

If you look at the community as a compilation of representatives from different sectors, a snapshot of potential participants typically includes, but is not limited to, formal and informal representatives from organizations that will be directly affected by the initiative, as illustrated in Table 1.



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Make sure to respect that each stakeholder group will move and commit to the Resident Attraction and Retention effort in different ways. Plan your approach accordingly.

Table 1: Typical Stakeholder Sectors and Organizations

GOVERNMENT	NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS	PRIVATE BUSINESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local elected officials and municipal staff that will have a role in implementation Indigenous and First Nations officials and staff District, regional, and provincial government staff from ministries charged with specific responsibility for programs related to resident attraction and retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations and associations providing services to newcomers and residents Organizations or associations focused on Local Economic Development issues Trade unions and other professional associations Post-secondary educational institutions Cultural organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major Employers Small, medium, and micro-scale enterprises including entrepreneurs Industrial, commercial, and residential land and real estate developers Banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions Business development support agencies, councils, and intermediaries Chambers of commerce and other business associations

Note: Not all these examples may be present, but this will provide a useful starting point to get a better sense of how these types of organizations are represented within your community.

Step 2:

Define the Purpose

Crafting and executing strategy is a community effort in which leaders from many different aspects of the community must share a common purpose.

The focus on purpose puts an emphasis on being able to effectively answer any questions around why your attraction and retention initiative is needed. The community will likely have some form of broader vision statement in a master plan or strategy (i.e. Official Community Plan, Strategic Plan, Economic Development Strategy, etc.) and the purpose of the resident attraction and retention strategy should contribute to achieving the community vision. It is important to focus on the characteristics outlined in table 2. Your purpose can only be effective when it is front of mind for everyone involved and can be transformed into actions that demonstrate progress.



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR

The purpose must be well understood and easy to articulate prior to engaging with other stakeholders.



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Document and record all steps of the journey to avoid any confusion of how or why the project was initiated and facilitate any transition in the team.



Table 2: Key Characteristics of an Effective Purpose

WHAT TO AIM FOR	WHAT TO AVOID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused and aligned on a clear goal that seems achievable • Clear in what you want to achieve but flexible in how you will achieve it • Easy to communicate to different audiences (use visuals when you can) • Creates a reference point that leadership can rely on to guide decisions • Balances long-term nature of RAR with the importance of achieving short-term goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vague in what will be achieved and how goals fit broader community objectives • Focuses too much on today's negatives or an unrealistic version of the future • So broad that it creates unrealistic expectations • Not challenging the community enough and is uninspiring. Or stretching the community too far and is deemed impossible

A key step in the planning process is to be clear about why you are doing a plan. It may seem obvious to some, but many plans fail because participants did not reach agreement on outcomes at the outset. It is critical to start with a shared understanding of the intent of the strategic planning process. If this is well articulated at the beginning, the people responsible for guiding the process can measure their success along the way and make the necessary adjustments.

Now that you have identified members of your team, consider the following questions to ensure the purpose is understood:

1. What do we hope to accomplish?
2. Who will use the plan?
3. What are the types of activities that will need to be undertaken to achieve the goal(s)?

Build off Previous and Existing Plans and Initiatives

Think back over the last five to ten years in the community and identify various planning efforts and activities related to RAR that can help define the purpose of your initiative. As you think about the existing plans in the community, ensure that the RAR initiative can be aligned to planning efforts and that it does not act in isolation. Before initiating your process, ensure that the RAR can be aligned to higher level strategic direction and that the results will contribute to broader community goals. Look at the interrelationships identified in Figure 3 which illustrates how RAR is connected to previous efforts.



Figure 3: Interrelationships and Alignments Between Community Planning Efforts

Review the following worksheet to think through existing plans, strategies, policies, or any other document that have been prepared in the community that you could learn from to support this initiative. This could be information in the plans to support your process, or learnings from those processes to inform any future improvements.



EXAMPLE WORKSHEET 1:

MAPPING PREVIOUS COMMUNITY PLANNING EFFORTS

REFLECTING ON PAST EXPERIENCES

Make a list of all previous planning efforts that may provide helpful information to the resident attraction and retention efforts.

Council Strategic Plan

Economic Development strategy

What elements of the process contributed to previous success?

Broad based community input.

Clear direction

What elements of the process contributed to previous challenges?

Activities were not clear on how to resource implementation.

Some of the key decision-makers were difficult to engage.

What elements are in place to support a successful planning process?

With it being driven from both the Council plan and Economic Development Strategy there is a commitment to budget and monitoring activity.

Based on previous efforts, what do you think is missing to support your initiative?

Finding the support for Local Government, service providers and private sector to work together.

What can you do to fill in the gaps you know are missing?

Meet with key players in advance and find desired outcomes we can collectively agree on.

Assessing your Level of Readiness

Before the team gets started, it is important to know how ready your community is to retain and attract residents. Community readiness refers to how ready a community is to act on an issue. That readiness can range from none to already having successful programs in place that are making progress on the issue. The team you have assembled will be best suited to understand the current context. Understanding your level of readiness allows you to tailor your approach to what RAR planning efforts the community is willing to accept and support. You can make steady progress if you take small steps forward, stretching the community, but not so far that it is beyond their current understanding of the issue.

Before you get started, you should ask yourself some key questions around the following elements of RAR:

1. What are the current efforts, programs, or policies in place to address resident attraction or retention?
2. How well are community members informed about local efforts and their effectiveness?
3. Are local leaders and other influential community members supportive of the initiative?
4. What is the general attitude of the community towards attracting or retaining residents?
5. Are there local resources (people, time, money, etc.) available to support the initiative?

With these questions, you will begin to understand what key community elements are missing and what needs to be worked on.

Step 3:

Analyze Your Situation

Context is not only important for meaning.
Context is important because it helps connect the
community with a strategy anchored in reality.

Focus on Local and Regional Context

Creating an effective attraction and retention strategy requires identifying and assessing a community's assets in light of resident needs. However, be cautious when classifying and evaluating assets. What you consider an asset may not be relevant to attraction and retention efforts.

Table 3 represents an overview of the key asset categories that influence your ability to succeed in attraction and retention efforts. These assets help you to evaluate the quality of life in the community, which is a key factor in any decision about where to settle. This is not a comprehensive list and your community may have unique asset categories to consider that have not been included.

When using these categories to evaluate your community, consider the following:

- The importance and use of each characteristic will vary depending on your unique situation (e.g., community history, location, existing population characteristics).
- Not all characteristics are equally important for each community.
- What each characteristic means in your community (e.g., economic opportunity differs from community to community).
- Characteristics have multiple indicators (e.g., economic opportunity has multiple elements such as employment, self-employment, and investments).
- You can influence some characteristics while others will be subject to external influences outside of your control.



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR

Apply a holistic lens to analysis that considers all aspects of the community, not just those areas you understand the best.



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Do not act before analyzing your situation. Applying efforts on the wrong things will not get you further ahead.

Table 3: Identifying Your Community Assets

CHARACTERISTICS	ASPECTS TO CONSIDER
<i>Population</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has your population fluctuated over the last 10 years? What affected the change? • What is your demographic composition? Is it changing? How diverse are you? • What is your average age? Are you getting older or younger?
<i>Economic Opportunities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the different employment rates? Unemployed? Underemployed? • What is the average household income and how does that translate to local economic opportunity? • What is the average commute to work? • Is there a high-level of self-employment in the community? • What are the sectors driving the economy? Are these sectors stable? • What are the emerging sectors in the local economy, region, and Province? • What are the workforce needs of key industry sectors? • Is there equitable access to economic opportunities?
<i>Housing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there choices in the types of housing available? Can you purchase or rent? • What are the costs of housing? Are they a barrier relative to income levels? • Are there fair and equitable access to suitable housing? • Are there land development opportunities for the community to grow?
<i>Health and Wellbeing (physical and social)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there access to a hospital? Does it provide a variety of services? • Are there sufficient doctors supporting the community? • Does the community have elderly care facilities? • What emergency services do you have access to (e.g. Med-Evac, etc.)? • Are there other health services (e.g. physiotherapy, pharmacy, etc.)? • Is there access to nature, parks, and recreational trails? • Does the community have amenities and programs for health and fitness? • Are there organizations in place to support resident and newcomer inclusion? • Are there opportunities to volunteer? • Are there diverse faith-based organizations?

CHARACTERISTICS	ASPECTS TO CONSIDER
<i>Safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are crime rates? Is there a perception of safety? • Does the community have access to local and cooperative policing? • Are there programs supporting high-risk and vulnerable groups (such as youth)?
<i>Education and Learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the entire spectrum of education available (i.e. pre-K – grade 12)? • Are there high rates of secondary school completion? • Is there a diversity of courses offered? • Are there after-school academic bridging programs? • Are there out of school activities for youth, particularly teenagers? • Are there post-secondary opportunities? Are there linkages to external ones? • Are there diverse opportunities for adult education? Are they culturally sensitive? • Does the community have a library?
<i>Infrastructure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there quick access to an airport for travel? Is it international? • Does the community have reliable telecommunications? • Is the internet connectivity high-speed? Is the whole community connected to high speed? • Is there adequate transportation? Is the community walkable and bikeable? • Is there access to public transportation? Is it reliable and convenient?
<i>Culture , Heritage, and Entertainment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a diversity of arts, cultural, heritage, and entertainment opportunities? • Does the community have unique heritage buildings and history as part of its community identity? • Are there annual events that bring people together? Do you host festivals? • Are there year-round opportunities to participate in arts and cultural activities? • Are there public and commercial venues for performers and artists? • Are there local sports leagues for all ages?
<i>Community Reputation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a local sense of pride? • Are there gathering places and beautification efforts (i.e. Communities in Bloom) that help with placemaking? • How is the downtown regarded by residents and visitors (i.e. welcoming or scary)? • What is the reputation amongst visitors and neighbouring jurisdictions? • Are there positive portrayals of newcomers in the local media? • Are there branding and promotional efforts? Are they strategic and consistent?

Analyze your Current Situation

While there are several approaches for a community to conduct a situational analysis, one useful way is a SWOT Analysis.

The four characteristics of a SWOT analysis are outlined in Figure 4.



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR

Be realistic in exploring strengths and opportunities, and do not hide from the weaknesses and threats. Stay away from 'we cannot control that so it is not relevant' thinking.

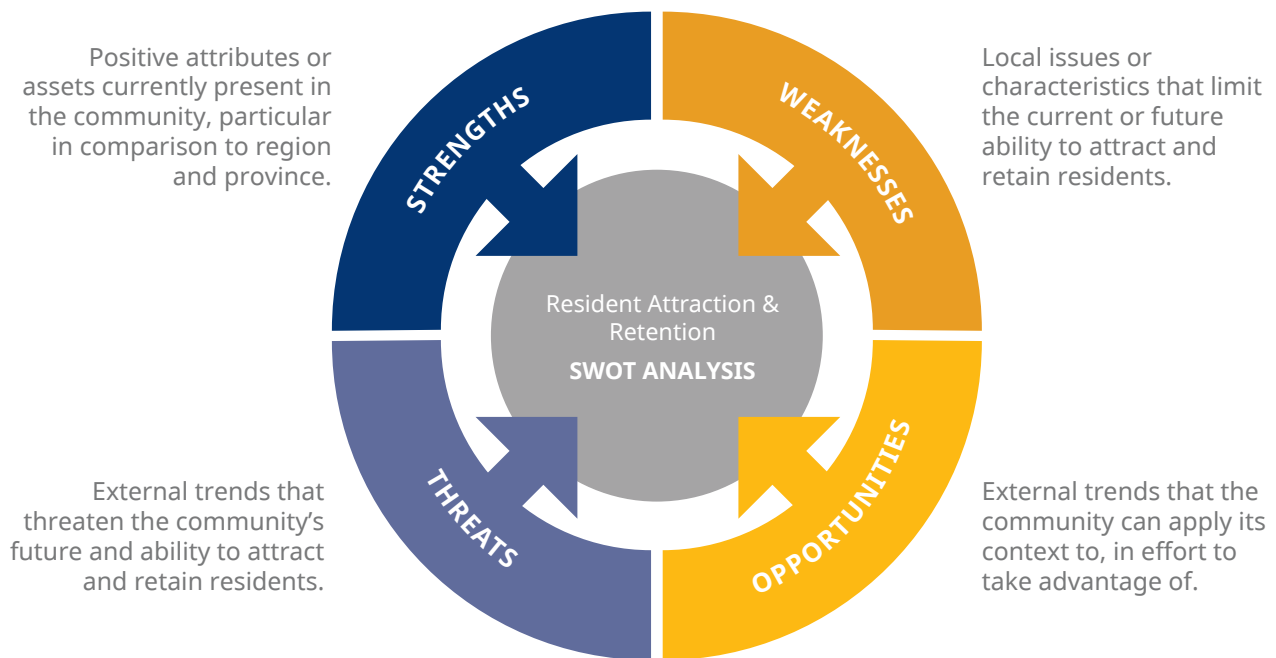


Figure 4: Characteristics of a SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis can help identify and understand key issues, but it does not necessarily offer solutions. You should be aware of the limitations as well as the benefits of a SWOT analysis before you decide to conduct one. Knowing what you can reasonably expect to achieve will make the SWOT analysis more useful and will save you time.

Benefits of SWOT Analysis

- Understand your community better and address weaknesses and deter threats.
- Capitalize on opportunities and take advantage of your strengths.
- Develop targeted goals and a strategy for achieving them.
- It has little or no cost.
- Anyone who understands your community can conduct a SWOT analysis.

Limitations of SWOT Analysis

- For complex issues, you will need to conduct more in-depth research and analysis to make decisions.
- The analysis doesn't prioritize issues.
- It only covers issues that can be uniquely considered a strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat. It's difficult to address factors that could either be a strength or a weakness or both.
- It doesn't provide solutions or offer alternative decisions.
- It can generate many ideas without helping you choose which one is best.



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Assess the community from the following perspectives:

- A newcomer and what guided their decision to relocate
- Someone who has left the community
- Someone currently living in the community



Interpreting the Analysis

If your community has conducted a SWOT, or other analysis in the past, they should be consulted before undergoing a new analysis. As you consider the SWOT analysis, you will want to focus on those aspects that represent critical opportunities that drive competitive advantage and challenges to be overcome. You must be aware and accepting of the positive and negative aspects of the community before undertaking action that does not reflect your situation.

Review Worksheet 2 for an example of a SWOT analysis of the key elements for attracting and retaining residents.



EXAMPLE WORKSHEET 2:

SWOT ANALYSIS FOR RESIDENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION INITIATIVE

ELEMENTS	INTERNAL		EXTERNAL	
	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Population	<p>Well educated</p> <p>Strong labour participation rate</p>	<p>Population drop of 1.7% over last 10 years</p> <p>Ethnically homogeneous population</p>	<p>Increased in-migration of skilled workers into BC in recent years</p>	<p>People moving to urban areas</p> <p>Hard to attract immigrants to rural areas</p>
Economic Opportunities	<p>New business openings have increased by 42% over last 5 years</p> <p>Strong service organizations</p>	<p>Employment is cyclical and does not match student training</p> <p>High proportion of entry-level positions</p>	<p>Remote work is becoming more accepted</p>	<p>Macro-economic conditions are unstable</p>
Housing	<p>Cost of owning a house is 25% lower than BC average</p> <p>There is available land</p>	<p>Average rents exceed 30% of household income</p> <p>Lack of diversity in housing stock</p>	<p>Residents coming from urban areas can buy without a mortgage</p>	<p>Lack of lifestyle housing (i.e. apartments)</p>
Health and Wellbeing (physical and social)	<p>Local hospital had major renovation 2 years ago</p>	<p>Continuous turnover of doctors</p>	<p>Popularity of rural quality of life</p>	<p>Urban centres have access to specialized health care</p>

ELEMENTS	INTERNAL		EXTERNAL	
	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Safety	Low crime rates	No local RCMP detachment	Perception of high crime in urban areas	The RCMP are further reducing their regional presence
Education and Learning	Have both K-7 and 8-12 schools Strong library network	The satellite college campus closed this year	Moving to online learning and partnering with out-of-town institutions	Employers are asking for higher education
Infrastructure	Access to airport within 1.5-hour drive	Sidewalks in poor condition and not well connected	Working with neighbours for regional water supply	Potential for reduced funds from prov and fed government
Culture and Entertainment	Strong community theatre Artisan and crafter culture and programs	Challenging for newcomers to engage with existing networks	Funding being directed to rural arts and culture	Urban centres offer wider diversity of opportunities
Community Reputation	We have had 5 years in a row of record number of visitors	Get little free press as a rural community Modest budget for promotions	Tourism focusing on rural and outdoor experiences Social media broadens access to more people	Rural areas make the news for negative reasons

Note: that these are examples and do not represent an exhaustive list of possible strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.



Powell River – Investing in itself

Powell River has successfully transitioned from a single industry town that was reliant on forestry and the external macroeconomic trends that strongly dictated its success. The community identified that in order to successfully transition they must invest in sense of place and making the community a place that fosters an environment conducive to the attraction and development of human and financial capital.

The community knew that this was not going to happen overnight.

The Resident Attraction and Retention Plan was closely aligned and part of other community efforts such as the cultural master plan, tourism development, inbound investments and recreation. “We built off of the assets our community already had and focused on making them better. We knew we needed to spend the time and investment in improving the aspects of our community that would make us attractive and livable before we went straight to promoting the community” states Scott Randolph, Director of Properties, Development and Communications.

It has worked! Powell River has been successfully attracting and retaining residents not only from the west coast, but also from throughout Canada and internationally.

For more about Powell River:

www.powellriver.ca

Facebook: @cityofpowellriver

Twitter: @CityPowellRiver

Instagram: cityofpowell_river

To learn more about how Powell River is Selling a Small-Town Lifestyle to Attract Entrepreneurs and Investment see the Success Story at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/bc-ideas-exchange/success-stories/promoting-your-community/resident-attraction-campaign>

Identifying Critical RAR Opportunities and Challenges

Once the situational analysis has been completed the next step is to evaluate the information to identify the most important elements that the community wants to either address or build upon for their RAR strategy. Answering the following questions will help determine your community's critical challenges and opportunities to focus on, regardless of their complexity.

- Which of our strengths will give us an advantage in attracting and/or retaining residents?
- Which of our weaknesses need to be addressed for us to be successful?
- Which of the external opportunities best matches our community strengths?
- Which of the external threats have the greatest impact on our community?
- What influence can the plan and its stakeholders have on addressing complex issues?





EXAMPLE WORKSHEET 3:

CRITICAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CRITICAL RESIDENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

List the 5-10 challenges that are the most important for your community to consider in your Resident Attraction and Retention efforts.

1. Community reputation tied to resource based economic opportunities
2. Declining and aging population
3. Lack of 18 to 30-year-old residents
4. Housing inventory make-up (older, not a wide variety of housing options)
5. Limited resources by the community to engage in resident attraction promotions
6. Transportation (mobility) options are limited within community/region
7. Mobility is challenging for those without a license or access
8. Once someone relocates it is challenging to be included into activities
9. Heritage buildings in state of decline
10. High speed internet connectivity unavailable to all community members

CRITICAL RESIDENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OPPORTUNITIES

List the 5-10 opportunities that are the most important for your community to consider in your Resident Attraction and Retention efforts.

1. Superb quality of life in rural setting (standard of amenities)
2. Cost of housing is very affordable
3. Strong Health Care Services
4. Strong emotional ties of residents that left the community
5. Strong commitment of the key stakeholders to work together
6. Very safe community
7. Low class sizes in schools
8. Strong sense of community

Step 4:

Convert Analysis into Strategy

Converting analysis into strategy means using analysis to identify low-hanging fruit by targeting your efforts and using them to set realistic goals that attract and retain residents.

Establishing Strategic Priorities

It is best to think of strategic priorities as outcome statements. They flow logically from the development challenges and opportunities and identified purpose of your RAR efforts. While strategic priorities are intended to outline broad themes and intentions, they require strategic initiatives and action items to achieve results.

One way to identify priorities and actions is to ask yourself the following question: “through our consultations with residents, business owners and local leaders, what did they collectively, and consistently, suggest were the most significant changes they would like to see?” Some examples might be:

- Improved access to skilled trades people
- Introduction of more of an entrepreneurial spirit
- More families so that our schools are more secure
- Curbing of economic leakage
- Improved external image/brand of our community
- Attraction of new companies to the town

In evaluating these outcomes, you should look for ways to combine these thematically and create clear strategic priorities. It is recommended that you create 3-5 broad strategic priorities and think about what can be reasonably achieved over a 3 to 5-year timeframe.



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Maintain the perspective that what gets planned must get implemented to ensure the focus is grounded in what is achievable within your current reality.

Targeting your Efforts

Given the information around the current context of the community and the data that helps define the characteristics of the immigrant and migrant populations, how do you target your efforts in retaining and attracting residents that will be the best fit with what your community has to offer?

The default response can be that we want to retain everyone and attract anyone. This, however, makes it difficult to focus your efforts and limited resources on the residents who offer the best potential return on those efforts. To avoid this, have a strong understanding of the characteristics of people more likely to settle in and contribute to your community.

People at various stages of life will explore where they live from very different perspectives. Think about the following household characteristics and what may affect their evaluation when considering where to settle:

- Recently married
- Partners with young children
- Single professional
- Recent retiree
- Senior citizen
- Visible minority
- Identifies as LGBTQ
- Remote work professional



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR

Use the results of your situational analysis as a building block for your strategy.



Everyone looks for different things in a community. Trying to be all things to all households, whether they are seeking to relocate or if they are already in the community, is not an approach that is achievable. As you better understand the characteristics of different household types, where does your community context align with the characteristics that different households are looking for in a community?

As you think about defining your targets, consider the following aspects that can help you focus actions:

- **Geographic:** Identify where the potential residents are located (other communities, provinces or internationally). A potential resident's geographic location will provide indicators relative to fit and match between what a community offers and what fits their lifestyle.
- **Demographic:** Residents are targeted by their individual or household characteristics based on the match of those characteristics with your community's strengths.
- **Psychographic:** Attitudes, beliefs, and emotions guide much of what we do, including the community we live in. They influence individual decisions. As you understand your situation think about how you can use that context as a marketing tactic to appeal to your target households who value what you have to offer.

Using the results of your situational analysis, consider the critical challenges and opportunities through the lens of how you should be targeting your efforts to attract and retain residents. Use worksheet 4 to identify the best fit between the motivating factors for different household types and your community strengths and opportunities.



Prince George – Move-up Prince George

The City of Prince George knew that in order to be effective with their resident attraction efforts that they needed to be strategic about who they targeted and designed their efforts accordingly. As part of their community assessment, it was identified that there was a need for skilled trades. Upon further analysis they created a target profile of not only someone who was considered to have a skilled trade, but there also needed to be a match between their needs and wants and what the community of Prince George had to offer. Based on this target profile the geographic markets of the BC Lower Mainland, Alberta and Ontario's industrial cities such as the City of Hamilton were selected as focus areas for their attraction efforts. "It is important that your community make a long-term commitment to your resident attraction and retention efforts. With your community partners being key in the implementation."

**MELISSA BARCELLOS, EC.D. MANAGER,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE**

*For more about Prince George efforts:
moveupprincegeorge.ca*





EXAMPLE WORKSHEET 4:

TARGET HOUSEHOLDS

TARGETS	PROFILE (DESCRIPTION)	RATIONALE (WHY ARE THEY A TARGET)	KEY MOTIVATORS
Family aged couples	<p>25-45 yrs old</p> <p>Early stage of family life with children</p> <p>Active lifestyles</p> <p>Located in Urban Centres: Vancouver, Calgary, Kelowna or Kamloops</p>	<p>This life stage is looking for safety and family opportunities in an affordable community</p> <p>Lifestyle is an authentic match to our offering</p> <p>They are living in an urban centre environment where they are financially and socially uncomfortable</p>	<p>Rural safe active lifestyle</p> <p>Can achieve reasonable economic prosperity but is looking to balance it with lifestyle</p>
Free footed professionals (Hidden Professionals)	<p>Professional couples</p> <p>Can work from home or remote locations</p> <p>Dependent on internet connectivity and ability to travel</p> <p>Active lifestyles</p>	<p>Able to capture economic opportunity from anywhere</p> <p>Lifestyle is an authentic match to our offering</p>	<p>Arts, culture, entertainment is key</p>

Step 5:

Resident Attraction & Retention Applied

Attracting and retaining a skilled labour force is a critical yet complex issue for rural communities, emphasizing the need for communities and businesses to work together.

Putting a sound and pragmatic understanding of a target market at the centre of resident attraction and retention is a critical piece in any effort. To develop an effective strategic plan to entice newcomers to relocate, it is valuable to appreciate and understand a newcomer's decision-making process. See Figure 5 below for an outline of the settlement decision process.



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR

RAR is a true team effort. No single organization can succeed alone.



Figure 5: Newcomer Decision Making Process and Key Elements

Thoughts About How Resident Retention Differs from Attraction

Retention is an important and sometimes overlooked component of a successful RAR strategy. It is critical that a community balances its efforts.

These are some key retention considerations:

- Communities that conduct an objective and authentic situational analysis and aligns this with target markets have fewer issues with retention.
- Life stage and psychographics, and other characteristics of your target market are key in determining a match between the needs of the individual and the community.
- Retention is also about the successful integration and inclusion of new residents. Look for ways to include newcomers in all aspects of your community.
- Many newcomers look for the presence of an established ethnic/cultural community.
- The existence of economic and education opportunities is critical.
- Use the findings from the strengths and weaknesses in the situational analysis to inform community planning efforts. For example: if housing has been identified as a critical resident attraction and retention challenge then make sure analysis is provided as input to the proper community plans (for example Official Community Plan or the Local Government Council Strategic Plan).

Refer to worksheet 5 to illustrate example activities to consider as you explore each step in the decision-making process.



THINGS TO CONSIDER

“More than half left their original community of destination due to insufficient or inadequate employment and/or education opportunities.”

An Analysis of Immigrant Attraction and Retention Patterns Among Western Canadian CMA's.



EXAMPLE WORKSHEET 5:

OBJECTIVES TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN TARGET HOUSEHOLDS

HOUSEHOLD DECISION STEP	COMMUNITY OBJECTIVE	COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES
Step 1 - Personal Motivation	External Promotions/ Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Website • Social Media (Facebook, Instagram etc.) • Community Profiles • Employment Postings
Step 2 - Extensive Information Search	External Promotions/ Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inbound Investment Promotions • Economic Development led Business Prospectuses
Step 3 - Evaluation of Communities	Assist potential newcomers and help facilitate their Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassador programs • Community relocation guides • Community recreation guides • Community tourism promotions • Community social media resident groups
Step 4 - Physical Relocation	Ensure the successful onboarding of resident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Relocation Guides • Resident Relocation Team
Step 5 - Post Relocation	Improve the degree of resident inclusion once they relocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome packages • Welcome events • Networking programs • Volunteer opportunity database and matching • Employer database • Sports and recreation groups website

Drafting your Actions

Now that you have identified the target households that represent the best fit for your community, you will create a series of achievable actions to support your attraction and retention efforts. Defining actions is wholly dependent on your local context understood through your situational analysis.

Your actions will emerge from your purpose, situational analysis, and the areas you have defined to target your efforts. Avoid trying to adapt what worked in another community to your own if the context is not the same. While the individual actions will be unique to your community, each action should answer the following questions:

- What strategic priority and objectives will this support?
- What are the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental risks?
- Who will carry out these actions?
- When will these actions start and how long are they likely to take?
- What resources are needed to carry out these actions?
- Do we need any partners?
- How do we rank potential actions? Cost, achievability, impact? Who sets the priorities? The answers will vary based on local dynamics.

To ensure that the action plan stays relevant as the community and your team changes and grows, reevaluate to ensure that it meets the following criteria:

- **It is Complete:** does it list all the actions in all the relevant parts of the community (i.e. if your analysis has indicated a need for skilled labour, does your action plan effectively engage the businesses that have helped define that need)?
- **It is Clear:** it is obvious who is going to do what by when (i.e. this is not just assumed by the organization putting this together, but if the action requires a partner that is obvious to everyone involved).
- **It is Current:** it accurately reflects the results of the current work (i.e. it can anticipate emerging opportunities and barriers based on clear understanding of the local context).

As you proceed through the previous steps, example worksheet 8 illustrates a way to effectively document each of your actions.



Quesnel – It's in Our Nature

The City of Quesnel wanted to address the brand of the community dependent on the forest industry and its mills. The apprehension around potential mill closures is forcing us to think, plan and act differently. It was strongly believed that “There is so much more to Quesnel than people think.” Quesnel is a community largely undiscovered, and hence unknown or misunderstood. The development of a new brand laid the groundwork for the community's transition.

To craft their brand, they undertook efforts to understand who their key audiences were both internally and externally and their needs and wants from the City of Quesnel. In response to the shared audience needs, four brand attributes have been identified:

- **Trailblazing** - First Nations settled where the Fraser and Quesnel rivers meet, and ever since these forks have supported and nurtured a trailblazing spirit.
- **Sustainable** - Sustainable isn't easy. It takes vision and hard work. It takes a commitment to the land and to the community. Our sustainability is rooted in First Nation history of deep connection to the land.
- **Accessible** - In Quesnel, everything is close. Work to home. Home to nature. Possibility to opportunity. Your life, not just your house, is affordable. Affording you both time and means to reap reward and recreation.
- **Fun** - Safe, caring and kind, of course. Family and community centered. Passionate and accepting. This is a place that is connected to the lakes and the land, even when we are at home and at work.

In order to successfully implement the new brand Quesnel committed to five (5) strategies:

1. Build brand foundations
2. Launch the brand
3. Enhance social media communications
4. Ongoing brand building
5. Long term brand building

**AMY REID, MANAGER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM
CITY OF QUESNEL**

For more about City of Quesnel branding efforts:

<https://www.quesnel.ca/city-hall/major-initiatives/re-branding-initiative>





Kaslo – Escape the City Contest

Like many rural communities, Kaslo lacked the marketing capacity to reach out to urban markets and promote itself, even though it has much to offer busy young city dwellers who may struggle with the expensive real estate, traffic woes, and big-city stress. BC Rural Centre's communication director brought together an advisory committee that included Kaslo mayor Suzan Hewat and Chamber of Commerce president John Addison. The school principal, other NGO leaders, and community activists also got involved, with BC Rural Centre providing vision and missing capacity to run the social media campaign and contest.

The contest, inviting young urbanites to explain why they were interested in a move from the big city to a small town like Kaslo. The contest went viral, reaching audiences across Canada and all the way to San Diego. The contest committee was inundated with entries, some in writing, others in video, all of them stating they would love to trade in their current lot in life for a saner existence in Kaslo. After extensive video interviews, the contest committee chose two families from Calgary and Victoria as winners. The winners received a travel stipend, four nights at the Kaslo Hotel, meals, and would be immersed in the local scene.

"This is a world-class destination. World-class people, world-class artisans, everything here is world class. It's impressive!"

CONTEST WINNER

Both families left impressed, vowing to return – permanently.

For more about Village of Kaslo efforts:

www.kaslo.ca

See this BC Ideas Exchange story for further discussion:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/bc-ideas-exchange/success-stories/supporting-business-entrepreneurship/kaslo-infonet-society>



EXAMPLE WORKSHEET 6:

KEY COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE ACTION PLAN

GOAL:

Target and promote newcomer engagement in opportunities that enhance the local economy

OBJECTIVE:

Promote ongoing business support for retention of newcomers (investors/entrepreneurs/employees)

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITY:

Immediate, 1 year

LEVEL OF RISK

Low

MAP OUT EXISTING SERVICE PROVIDERS

finance, 1-1 capacity building, training targeting business supports and employment

Key Considerations and Risks

Potential challenges (financial, economic, social, political) in undertaking this objective

1. Requires collaboration and support from external technical resource sources (banking, networking, training, etc.)
2. Require local business community commitment
3. May require financial contribution from businesses for intensive support

Expected Results

Why we are doing it?

1. Strengthens local business vitality and confirms sustainability within key economic sectors
2. Strengthen the community's image of a thriving community to conduct business
3. Improve local employers with employee attraction efforts
4. Separate our community from our competing communities

ACTIONS REQUIRED	LEAD CHAMPION	PARTNERS CHAMPION	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Working Group • Create PR tools – communicate to community of the efforts and encourage engagement • Create e-mail distribution list of all local businesses • Develop Inventory of service providers (financial, 1-1, training) • Create an electronic SME Service Inventory Tool • Work with strategic partners to promote the inventory • Annually review inventory and adjust tool 	Chamber of Commerce	Chamber of Commerce	Budget: \$2,500 Skills: Research (primary and secondary), graphic design, writing, understanding of SME sector

BUDGET

\$2,500

YEAR 1:

\$2,500

YEAR 2:

\$0

YEAR 3:

\$0

YEAR 4:

\$0

YEAR 5:

\$0

Step 6:

Ongoing Implementation

A great deal has been written about how to develop strategies, however implementation remains a challenge. Many strategies are never fully implemented because they did not link strategy and actions with resources.

Shift the Focus to Implementation

The pay-off for investing the time and energy comes as you implement your strategy. Implementation, however, has its own set of challenges and must be well-planned and managed if it is to succeed.

What does that look like and how is it done? There is no formula or complicated approach to making your attraction and retention efforts an essential part of your operations. As you evaluate your path forward, focus on the following areas:

1. Develop implementation agency or team
2. Evaluate your resources
3. Evaluate, monitor, and adjust

The agency and its ownership of the initiative is critical to successful implementation. The six (6) essential functions the agency should play are:

1. Facilitating the creation of an overall strategic direction
2. Facilitating dialogue between partners
3. Managing data collection and analysis
4. Handling communications
5. Coordinating community outreach
6. Assisting with mobilizing funding

Implementation requires strong leadership, a committed team, and a structured approach to support your efforts. The team does not need to be the same people that have been involved in all the previous planning efforts. Certainly, circumstances like those created by the global COVID-19 pandemic have shown that flexibility and change are realities that must be built into any initiative.



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR

Be clear about the resources you have and need. Be flexible and prepare to adapt your efforts as things change.



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Maintain a collaborative and multi-sector focus, sustaining broad buy-in from across the community.

Members of the implementation team are recruited based on the skills and knowledge they bring to the table. The team must also represent stakeholder agencies and groups critical to achieving success. Each member will be responsible for linking the team to their resources (committees, organizations, or individuals who are knowledgeable in this area). The role of the Implementation Team is to identify problems and solutions and then create and oversee action teams.

As you think about how to move forward with your implementation, consider your internal structure and team through the following questions:

- Is there a potential for team burnout if we ask the same people who helped build the strategy to stay engaged in implementing the strategy?
- Have we cultivated potential new team members throughout the planning process who could play a meaningful role in supporting implementation?
- If we make changes to the team or the organizational structure, is there the potential that previous efforts are wasted and/or we create confusion around the purpose? Think about what you can do to mitigate this before making changes to the team.
- Is there the potential for conflict if we make changes that introduce opportunities for new voices who disagreed with previous elements of the planning process and want to bring their own agenda into the implementation phase? Think about what you can do to mitigate this before making the changes.
- Will making changes damage the legitimacy or credibility of what you have built in the community through the planning process? How can you think about a communication strategy to support the transition that could mitigate the potential impacts of the change?

Furthermore, the implementation team's connection to the community is key to the success of any effort. The team's connection to the community must be genuine and ongoing. Team members should engage in consistent stakeholder engagement around emerging opportunities and help local partners overcome challenges. Some ways the team can ensure consistent engagement are:

- A corporate or community call program in which stakeholders are regularly contacted and opportunities and challenges are logged and followed up on.
- A consistent community calendar of events coordinated by the implementation team, shared with and including stakeholders.
- An accessible and transparent community asset map that stakeholders can contribute to through the implementation team.



Grand Forks – The Place to Grow Your Business

As is the case in most of rural BC, small businesses play a crucial role in Grand Forks and the surrounding region: they employ local citizens and are an economic engine that enables cash to flow through the regional economy. In addition to contributing to the uniqueness of Grand Forks, they build a sense of community.

With the support of its funding partners, the Grand Forks Downtown Business Association (DBA) developed the “Grand Forks: The Place to Grow Your Business” initiative. The DBA is proactively seeking business investment opportunities in their downtown core.

The DBA targeted retail businesses that will add to the vibrancy, shop local culture and pedestrian-friendly feel of our downtown core. The initiative invites those that wish to take advantage of the prepaid six (6) months lease program, contingent on signing a minimum two (2) year lease.

As a result, media has portrayed Grand Forks as being a vibrant, resilient, and picturesque community. We are excited to have two (2) new business partners who believe that Grand Forks is the place to grow their business.

For more about the City of Grand Forks efforts:

www.grandforks.ca

www.investgrandforks.com

Evaluate Team Resources

Typically, resourcing focuses on finances. However, communities across BC have become adept at achieving RAR with little or no budget. By using the in-kind contributions and coordinating existing efforts of team members and stakeholders, a community can take significant steps in retaining and attracting residents.

The BC Government's Regional Managers can be a great resource. Contact them to discuss your projects <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/support-organizations-community-partners/regional-economic-operations>.

Evaluate, Monitor, and Adjust

It is critical that the culture of your implementation efforts is built around continuous evaluation and adjustment of the proposed plan. Of course, evaluating efforts can be difficult, particularly in understanding which tactic led to what result. The purpose of evaluation is to track measurable outcomes while providing the knowledge of how to adjust efforts for greater impact.

The qualities of good evaluation metrics are:

- **Quantifiable/Measurable:** Making sure your measures are objective and not subjective.
- **Logical:** It should take someone little effort to understand how you performed on a measure. Easy-to-read charts and dashboards which can be quickly consumed are helpful.
- **Directly Attributed:** Choose metrics that your efforts directly affect.
- **Repeatable:** Metrics should hold true over the longer term. Progress on the measure over time should be trackable to identify trends.
- **Timely:** Metrics should be looked at regularly (bare minimum annually, and at the most monthly).



Some possible metrics for RAR Strategy implementation:

- **Promotional Efforts** - Such as websites; social media can track number of visits and length of stay on websites.
- **First Impressions Assessment** - Monitor changing perceptions of newcomers to your community through conducting annual surveys of first points of contact for newcomers such as realtors and employers.
- **Community Engagement** - Are new residents engaging in local events?
- **Size and Composition of Workforce** - Is the workforce growing and diversifying to meet local labour demands?
- **Housing Market Statistics** - New home starts, home sales, rental market availability.
- **Population** - Track annual population total and changes in demographics.

See Worksheet 7 for an example of what metric would be applied using a previous example.



EXAMPLE WORKSHEET 7:

METRICS FOR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

METRICS

Work collaboratively to promote the region as a place for sound investment by newcomers.

- *Number of local partners that utilize the communication matrix*
- *Number of promotional efforts being utilized as a result of the collaboration*
- *Trace number of visitors to online promotion efforts*

Note: For more potential metrics, visit the BC Government Toolkit on performance measurement: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/plan-and-measure/performance-measurement-toolkit

Final Considerations

Use this guidebook as a starting point. Use the ideas presented here, along with your own learning from other tools and resources (and your own lived experience) to continue to grow and change along with your community. While no single approach or series of actions can ever be proclaimed as the “right way to do things”, the following tips can be helpful reminders throughout your journey to stay focused on what you can do to influence others to make your community their home, and your neighbours decide they want to stay:

- 1. Find what makes you unique:** Vancouver has little trouble communicating its value to the rest of the world, but many smaller communities have yet to genuinely uncover their strengths. Effectively attracting and retaining residents must find a way to appeal to their preferences. Recognizing you can not be all things to everyone, pinpoint your unique strengths and invest in local assets that allow you to market those strengths.
- 2. Tell your story:** craft a compelling narrative about who you are as a community. It is important to continually find new and innovative ways to highlight local assets and engage everyone in the community as a local champion and official storyteller.
- 3. Focus efforts on building a quality sense of place:** in the past, decisions about residence were made around employment or proximity to family. While still components of a decision, the changing nature of the world has allowed workers to become increasingly mobile and the quality of the place has become a key determinant of where people choose to live.
- 4. Build your “sticky” factor:** do not overlook the retention part of attraction and retention. Continue to put efforts toward developing a community where citizens are fully invested and engaged in co-creating their home. Tap into the local expertise and lived experience of the citizens to put their energy to work to create a shared accountability for building a strong reputation as a great place to live.





Appendix:

Fillable Worksheets



WORKSHEET 1:

MAPPING PREVIOUS COMMUNITY PLANNING EFFORTS

REFLECTING ON PAST EXPERIENCES

Make a list of all previous planning efforts that may provide helpful information to the resident attraction and retention efforts.

What elements of the process contributed to previous success?

What elements of the process contributed to previous challenges?

What elements are in place to support a successful planning process?

Based on previous efforts, what do you think is missing to support your initiative?

What can you do to fill in the gaps you know are missing?



WORKSHEET 2:

SWOT ANALYSIS FOR RESIDENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION INITIATIVE

ELEMENTS	INTERNAL		EXTERNAL	
	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<i>Population</i>				
<i>Economic Opportunities</i>				
<i>Housing</i>				
<i>Health and Wellbeing (physical and social)</i>				

ELEMENTS	INTERNAL		EXTERNAL	
	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<i>Safety</i>				
<i>Education and Learning</i>				
<i>Infrastructure</i>				
<i>Culture and Entertainment</i>				
<i>Community Reputation</i>				

Refer to **page 23** of the workbook for an example of Worksheet 2: SWOT Analysis for Resident Attraction and Retention Initiative



WORKSHEET 3:

CRITICAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CRITICAL RESIDENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

List the 5-10 challenges that are the most important for your community to consider in your Resident Attraction and Retention efforts.

CRITICAL RESIDENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OPPORTUNITIES

List the 5-10 opportunities that are the most important for your community to consider in your Resident Attraction and Retention efforts.



WORKSHEET 4:
TARGET HOUSEHOLDS

TARGETS	PROFILE (DESCRIPTION)	RATIONALE (WHY ARE THEY A TARGET)	KEY MOTIVATORS

Refer to **page 33** of the workbook for an example of Worksheet 4: Target Households.



WORKSHEET 5:

OBJECTIVES TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN TARGET HOUSEHOLDS

HOUSEHOLD DECISION STEP

COMMUNITY OBJECTIVE

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Step 1 - *Personal Motivation*

Step 2 - *Extensive Information Search*

Step 3 - *Evaluation of Communities*

Step 4 - *Physical Relocation*

Step 5 - *Post Relocation*



WORKSHEET 6:

KEY COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE ACTION PLAN

GOAL:

OBJECTIVE:

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITY:

LEVEL OF RISK

MAP OUT EXISTING SERVICE PROVIDERS

finance, 1-1 capacity building, training targeting business supports and employment

Key Considerations and Risks

Potential challenges (financial, economic, social, political) in undertaking this objective

Expected Results

Why we are doing it?

ACTIONS REQUIRED	LEAD CHAMPION	PARTNERS CHAMPION	RESOURCES

BUDGET**YEAR 1:****YEAR 2:****YEAR 3:****YEAR 4:****YEAR 5:**



WORKSHEET 7:

METRICS FOR STRATEGIC PRIORITY

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

METRICS

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Note: For more potential metrics, visit the BC Government Toolkit on performance measurement: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/plan-and-measure/performance-measurement-toolkit