

2023/24 – Alberta Community Partnership Intermunicipal Collaboration Grant Application

Managing Partner: Municipal District of Spirit River

Participating Municipalities: Town of Spirit River, Village of Rycroft

Project Title: Regional Recreational Services and Facilities Study

Project Timeline: Project Start Date (DD-MMM-YY) – Defaults to “01-Apr-23”

Project Completion Date (DD-MMM-YY) – Enter “31-Dec-26”

PROJECT OVERVIEW

1. This project produces (*check all that apply*):

- A regional service agreement, plan, framework, strategy or model
- A study (e.g., shared service feasibility study, etc.)
- An amended Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework and/or a new or amended Intermunicipal Development Plan
- Other (please specify)(*maximum 100 characters*):

2. a. Provide a description of the project.

- What is the purpose of the project?
- What activities will the partnership undertake to complete the project?
- What are the project's outputs and expected concrete results?

(Max 4,000 Characters)

The partnership between the Municipal District of Spirit River, the Town of Spirit River, and the Village of Rycroft is a collaboration with a history of shared municipal service delivery in areas such as regional land use, emergency management, transportation, water management, waste management, and recreation. The partnership recognizes the importance of regional recreational opportunities, and the impact it has on the health and well-being of the region’s residents, tourism opportunities, and economic stability.

Recreational service delivery is often dependent on volunteers, and its funding priority must compete with core municipal services like water, wastewater, waste management, and emergency services. While the delivery of core services is critical, it is understood that the viability and economic stability of the region also depends on quality of life that is enhanced through the availability of active recreational opportunities and amenities.

The purpose of the regional recreational services and facilities study is to proactively conduct a regional review of the current state of recreational assets (e.g., facilities, trails, campgrounds), programs, and services available in the region. This will also include analysis of trail system logistics and environmental impact assessment data, and assessment and identification of regional and municipal capacity to deliver recreational services deemed critical to the region’s sustainability and economic prosperity.

The partnership will undertake the following activities:

1. Stakeholder consultation to facilitate input from councils, administration, residents, and local groups and organizations to identify current and evolving regional recreation priorities and needs.
2. Complete a visual inspection and condition assessment of trail system and terrain that includes surveys, geometric design, utility and site evaluations, and environmental analysis.
3. Develop a regional recreational facility inventory, engineering analysis and condition assessment, energy efficiency assessment, integration of data to the regional GIS, and update recreation master plans.
4. Identification of resources needed to deliver recreational programs and services to ensure alignment with community needs and priorities.
5. Develop regional recreational service and infrastructure options and recommendations to address service delivery and programming gaps, and risk and liability issues.
6. Review the region’s Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF) and Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDP) to ensure alignment with strategic regional recreational service delivery and planning.

The purpose of the proposed regional recreational services and facilities study is to provide information and recommendations that will position the region to determine the current state of recreational service delivery and future infrastructure and operational requirements.

The expected project outputs are:

1. Regional recreational trail system data collection and analysis, surveys, geometric design, utility and site evaluations, and environmental analysis.
2. Regional recreational facility inventory and condition assessment.
3. Regional recreational service delivery options and recommendations which includes cost and funding models.
4. Updated 10-year capital plans.
5. Stakeholder consultation summary report.

2.b. Describe how benefits will be shared among the participating municipalities.

- How does the project address municipal and regional needs?
- Does the project benefit stakeholders beyond the partnership?

(Max 4,000 Characters)

The primary reason for this project is to ensure sustainability and the health and safety of the region's residents through a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to regional recreational amenities, services and infrastructure planning. Reliable infrastructure is also a critical component for attracting investments and supporting economic growth within the region. A robust study allows for a comprehensive review of supply, demand, cost and benefit, impacts on broader municipal planning and services, and alignment with strategic and regional plans.

Project recommendations that address the need for new or upgraded infrastructure, facilities and enhanced service delivery will better serve organized stakeholder groups and the general public, will promote access and flexibility of use for diverse ages, cultures and abilities, and ensure integration of regional recreational assets. This could include working with schools in the region to establish educational sports and exercise programs, connectivity of regional trail systems, activity programming for seniors, and alternate uses of the facilities to assist with disaster response.

This study will inform a municipal service delivery framework with several regional benefits in the following areas.

- Understanding the condition and identification of required improvements to regional recreation facilities, such as energy efficient upgrades, is key to making sustainable decisions surrounding recreational-related improvements and realizing future cost savings.
- The partnership has experienced some growth and the region is a hub for the agricultural and commercial industries, as well as tourism. The project addresses coordination of sustainable recreational amenities and services that are vital to attracting and retaining community members.
- The partnering municipalities have numerous recreational facilities which are utilized by residents and surrounding MD residents which are critical to enhance quality of life for all residents in the region.
- Evolvement of new or enhanced policies that provide places for recreation, create tourist attractions, and protect the environment will bring investments into the regional economy.

This regional recreational services and facilities study is a collaboration and planning tool that will benefit all partners with identifying regional recreation infrastructure concerns, promoting efficient planning, and identifying cost saving strategies. Municipal cost savings, because of infrastructure and service sharing, will also provide residents with a higher quality of life.

This study requires regional awareness and will:

- foster ongoing relationship building;
- potentially identify future opportunities for the delivery of new and enhanced regional services; and
- promote collaboration and cooperation in planning matters of mutual interest.

PROJECT PRIORITY

3. Why are the project and the grant needed?

3.a. Describe how and why this project is a priority for the region. (Max 4,000 Characters)

A big part of the regional recreational services and facilities study is to properly assess infrastructure needs and programming that will form the basis for a long-term recreational infrastructure and service delivery strategy. Regional recreational amenities and services are struggling due to issues such as aging infrastructure, disconnected amenities, a lack of integration between recreation and tourism planning, and a declining volunteer base. Residents have expressed concerns that some of the recreation facilities (e.g., the outdoor pool) are not available for year-round use.

The partnership has identified regional recreation as an important service area for regional collaboration as it relates to joint service delivery initiatives, regional economic development and growth, and regional ICF and IDP planning processes and enhancements.

The absence of a comprehensive regional recreation services and facilities inventory and condition assessment has been identified as a significant gap in the regional ICF and IDP planning process, especially when planning for regional service delivery and infrastructure enhancements. This is particularly beneficial for the region as the Town of Spirit River and the Village of Rycroft are in close proximity within the MD which allows for convenient access and sharing of multiple recreational facilities. An analysis of regional recreational infrastructure will guide and inform conversations and planning for regional service delivery and other potential opportunities for sharing services. This study will provide an understanding of current uses, future needs and desires around recreation resources and services to support residents and stakeholder groups.

Regional recreation is a key element of partnership viability. The lingering financial and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and provincial economic slowdown has resulted in recreational service delivery gaps. This has had a direct impact on overall health and wellness as recreational services promote a healthy lifestyle and better quality of life. Recreation and related amenities attract new residents, businesses, and visitors to a region. Results of the study will support continued planning in the region and guide future investment in recreation and related amenities.

The regional recreational study will provide critical data in support of existing regional plans and operating priorities such as IDPs and a regional tourism strategy. These plans guide the regional vision for shared service delivery, land use, and resource management and sets policy direction for municipalities to achieve strong environmental, economic, and social outcomes. Of note, the regional IDP identifies a 50-year development strategy between the partners, with projected increased growth estimates and projections in order to accommodate future residential, commercial and industrial requirements which increases the need to thoughtfully consider how recreation will support a growing population.

In addition to the above, this project supports provincial and ministry objectives that include:

Municipal Affairs – Outcome 1: this project provides the framework for encouragement of economic growth through future construction projects that will employ Albertans, joint administration that could potentially reduce red-tape, and land use planning.

Municipal Affairs – Outcome 2: this project will provide critical data to support intermunicipal collaboration and enhanced delivery of regional recreation and land use.

Forestry and Parks (currently joined with Tourism and Sport pending updated business plans) – Outcome 2: this project supports the planning for tourism economic opportunities that will improve service delivery and apply integrated and capital planning to support infrastructure and service improvements.

3.b. What is preventing the partnership from undertaking the project in-house or from obtaining the resources or expertise needed for the project? How will the grant be used to resolve these barriers?

(Max 4,000 Characters)

There are several factors affecting the partnership’s ability to undertake this project that include:

- Requirement for specialized knowledge and expertise that is not available within the municipalities related to professional engineering analysis and service delivery assessments. The grant will be used to obtain technical experts capable of completing the required work.
- Use of municipal funding for this project would place additional financial strain on municipal resources that are struggling to balance lower revenues and delivery of vital municipal services.
- The municipal employees already have strained time commitments and high workload expectations with the ongoing delivery of day-to-day municipal operations and do not have the capacity to engage in the learning curve and time expectations this project requires.

This project is of critical importance and the consequence of not going forward would mean that the partnership does not have a planning tool that would provide guidance to decision-makers and a framework for working cooperatively. This study is vital to evaluate recreational services and identify infrastructure needs to ensure enhanced and efficient delivery of recreation and related municipal services.

PARTNERSHIP AND PROJECT READINESS

4. a. Provide a brief description of each partner's roles and responsibilities with respect to the project.

- How will each participating member be involved in project planning, administration, and decision making?
- What arrangements and processes are in place or will be established to ensure the interests of each member will be met in project outcomes?

(Max 4,000 Characters)

The Municipal District of Spirit River is the managing partner on this grant application for the sole purpose of grant submission and future grant administration and reporting if grant is approved.

The grant project itself will be a fully collaborative process as it relates to project planning, administration, and decision making. This grant project will be managed through the partnership's established regional working group, the Intermunicipal Council Committee (ICC) whose membership consists of two councilors and the CAO from each municipality. All municipalities will be actively engaged in project progress and will have input and influence on project outcomes and recommendations to determine relevant issues and alignment with local goals and objectives.

Once the regional recreational services and facilities study is completed, the ICC will make presentations to councils to guide the service delivery decision processes and recreation policy.

Mechanisms that will support an inclusive process for the development of comprehensive recreational services and facilities study includes:

- frequent discussions to ensure agreement on data collection methods;
- input from senior administration;
- acknowledgement of shared values (e.g., reliable infrastructure for recreational services, environmental stewardship, economic diversification, and growth); and
- an agreed upon voting model.

4.b. How will conflict be resolved to ensure a successful outcome which meets the interests of all project participants?

- Provide details of any dispute resolution mechanisms in place or that will be established between the partners.

(Max 4,000 Characters)

The ICC, with representation from each regional partner, has been established to facilitate communication and discussion on areas of mutual interest or concern between the municipalities. In addition, an existing dispute resolution process can be initiated by municipal partners in the case of lack of agreement or unresolved objections. The intent of the dispute resolution process is to maximize opportunities for discussion to resolve areas of disagreement early in the process.

It is imperative that the regional recreational services and facilities study be understood and endorsed by all municipalities, so checkpoints to confirm clarification of process will be embedded in the project planning process. In the event that conflict occurs all efforts will be made to resolve the issue administratively. If required, the issue will be elevated in the following sequence: ICC, senior managers, joint meetings of all councils, provincial mediation.

4.c. Provide a concise overview of the project workplan and timeline.

(Max 4,000 Characters)

The partnership is proposing to hire a consultant to complete the following project workplan:

1. Preliminary assessment, data collection, and analysis.
2. Stakeholder consultation.
3. Regional recreational facility infrastructure condition assessment review and analysis, engineering analysis, energy efficiency analysis, hazard assessment, and development of cost models.
4. Regional recreational trail system data collection and analysis, surveys, geometric design, utility and site evaluations, and environmental analysis.
5. Development of regional recreational asset inventory, integration into the regional GIS, and update recreation master plans and supporting plans.
6. Regional recreation service and program review which may include the feasibility of a regional recreation director position.
7. Identification of regional recreational programming gaps, and conduct a risk and liability analysis.
8. Identification of regional recreational service delivery and infrastructure options with recommendations.
9. Update the 10-year capital plans.

The following timelines are high level estimates and may overlap and be modified as project proceeds:

1. Data collection and analysis (April – May 2024)
2. Stakeholder consultation (ongoing)
3. Recreational amenity infrastructure condition assessment review and analysis, engineering analysis, energy efficiency analysis, and hazard assessment. (June – October 2024)
4. Development of regional recreational asset inventory, integration into the regional GIS, and update recreation master plan and supporting plans (e.g., ICF, IDP, 10-year capital plans). (November 2024 – March 2025)
5. Regional recreational programming gaps, and a risk and liability analysis. (April 2025 – June 2025)
6. Regional recreational service delivery and infrastructure options with recommendations (July 2025 – March 2026)
7. Recreation facility infrastructure upgrades and improvements cost models. (April – June 2026)
8. Presentations to councils (July – December 2026)

4.d. Describe risks and risk mitigation strategies that may impact progress of this project if funded by an ACP grant.

(Max 4,000 Characters)

Risks associated with this project include:

1. Weather impact on timely collection of data – this will be mitigated through the inclusion of an ample amount of time in the project timeline.

2. Availability or completeness of municipal input and asset data – this will be mitigated through clear communications between the consultant and municipal representatives to ensure project data needs are managed effectively and solutions to address data gaps are addressed in a timely manner.
3. Availability of funding for related recreational resources and infrastructure upgrade requirements – this will be mitigated through the regional recreational services and facilities study itself that will provide councils with critical information when deliberating over resource budgets and priority capital projects.
4. Asset condition may create an increased funding pressure for asset repair or maintenance – this will be mitigated through the detailed asset condition data that will provide councils critical information when deliberating over annual budgetary considerations.

INTERMUNICIPAL COLLABORATION - BUDGET

5.a. What are the expenditure estimates provided under the Project Budget section based on?

- Include details on the anticipated project resources, service providers, or contractors.

(Max 4,000 Characters)

The partnership has collaborated with MPE Engineering Ltd. to identify high level project requirements. MPE Engineering has the technical and local expertise and have provided a preliminary quote in support of this project. Costs are estimates based on similar regional projects.

The partnership will follow required procurement practices should this project be approved for funding.

5b. Provide a comprehensive, **itemized breakdown** of all your estimated project costs and expenditures in the table below. Insufficient or incomplete project cost information will impact the evaluation of your grant application.

- Use the [+] button to add line items to specifically identify the types of consultant activities and vendor costs (advertising, printing, venue rental).
- Only list the project cost information associated with the scope of work under this grant request.
- Capital expenditures are not eligible under the IC component.

Item Description	Estimated Item Cost
Data collection and analysis	\$35,000
Stakeholder consultation	\$15,000
Recreational facility infrastructure engineering analysis, energy efficient analysis, hazard assessment, environmental impact assessment, and development of cost models	\$62,500

Development of regional recreational asset inventory, integration into the regional GIS, and updates to supporting plans	\$27,500
Regional recreation service delivery and program review	\$30,000
Regional recreational programming gaps, and risk and liability analysis.	\$15,000
Regional recreational service and infrastructure options and recommendations report	\$15,000
Total Project Costs	\$200,000

**The grant maximum under the Intermunicipal Collaboration component is \$200,000.*

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING PROJECT INFORMATION

6. Provide any other additional project details not included in the responses that will further inform ministry staff in understanding the benefits of your project. (Max 4,000 Characters)

Recreation facilities and services benefit every Albertan, supporting physical, mental, and social well-being while attracting visitors and contributing to the provincial economy.

The funding is critical, especially now with additional challenges we are facing with responding to uncertain fiscal pressures such as ever-increasing operational costs and supply chain issues. The focus on regional cooperation that is supported through this grant will strengthen the partnership and put us in a stronger position to face these circumstances together.

The partnership is making a significant commitment to this high priority project and support for this project would be a clear indication that the Government of Alberta is truly committed to supporting economic growth and sustainability in rural areas.