



**Information For Delivery Of Youth Services Report,  
Vegreville & District**

**Final Report**

*Prepared for:*  
**Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee of Vegreville & District**

*Prepared by:*  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to facilitate the collaboration and coordination of services for youth and young adults in Vegreville and District, as well as to identify service gaps and best practices, representatives from HRSDC, AHRE, the Town of Vegreville, and the County of Minburn formed the Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee. This Committee led a Community Engagement Process, which resulted in the creation of this report, *Information for Delivery of Youth Services Report, Vegreville & District*.

Findings contained in this report were derived from a review of relevant literature and statistics, as well as a series of consultations. Consultations were undertaken with a range of stakeholders, which included the following:

- Youth and young adults between the ages of 15 and 30 residing in Vegreville and the surrounding area;
- Service providers that provide relevant employment-related programs and services for youth and young adults;
- Local employers and stakeholders in the local industry; and
- Other relevant stakeholders.

Consultations with key informants and information collected during the literature review indicated that youth and young adults face a number of challenges associated with living in a rural location. Examples of these issues include the following:

- Youth and young adults lacking suitable employment and/or education opportunities, or who are looking to pursue social/recreational activities not found in rural areas, is leading to a net migration of youth and young adults to urban areas;
- The age composition of Vegreville and surrounding area is causing some youth/young adults to feel like they have no control or input into various aspects of the community;
- Rural locations often do not provide public transportation systems. In addition, some youth/young adults may be required to commute to Vegreville from the surrounding area for work and may find access to reliable transportation to be a challenge.
- Youth and young adults may find attaining employment in a small community to be a challenge in terms of the area's population size and how the community perceives their reputation or their family's reputation.

The research identified additional challenges/barriers faced by youth and young adults in the area, which are not necessarily exclusive to living in a rural location, and include the following:

- It was felt by many youth and young adults that some employers and members of their community held a negative perception of youth, which created a potential barrier to employment; and

- The prevalence of alcohol, drug, and tobacco use amongst youth and young adults is significant and substance abuse use may lead to problems associated with health and attachment to the labour force.

Youth and young adults have access to a number of employment services in Vegreville and surrounding area. These services are striving to adopt a partnership model, which serve a broad client base with varying needs (e.g. youth with or without a high school diploma and youth with mental and physical challenges). Examples of these services include:

- The federal government's Youth Employment Strategy, which offers Summer Career Placement;
- The Vegreville Regional Employment Centre
- The Labour Market Information Centre;
- Vegreville & Area Youth Connections
- Alberta Works;
- WJS Vegreville Resource Centre; and
- Programs offered through the Vegreville Association for Living in Dignity (VALID).

Youth gain knowledge about careers, education, labour market information and acquire job-hunting skills through programs such as Career and Technology Studies (CTS), which is offered to junior and senior high school students, and the Career and Life Management (CALM) program, which is offered to grade eleven students. Furthermore, there is a partnership between Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) and the local schools to provide a "Career Corner", which provides a centralized location for youth/young adults to access career-related resources including the opportunity for students and the community to meet with the Career Advisor from the Vegreville & Area Youth Connections program. Although steps have been taken to tailor the CALM program to meet the needs of the local community, the program is only accessible to those who do not dropout of high school and consultations with high school graduates indicated that further improvements could be made to the program. Consultations with youth/young adults further indicated that few were aware of programs or services offered outside of the high school.

Youth and young adults may also access career and labour market information through online resources such as:

- The Alberta Learning & Information System (ALIS) website;
- The Career Counselors Consortium website;
- Career Cruising website;
- Job Futures website;
- Jobs in Motion website;
- CAP Youth Employment Initiatives website; and
- Alberta Human Resources and Employment website.

There were several major issues identified through the research, which may negatively impact employment for youth and young adults in Vegreville & District. These issues include the following:

- Employment opportunities or desirable positions in the area;
- Relevant workforce experience;
- Education or appropriate skills;
- Access to reliable transportation;
- Employer attitudes and behaviours;
- Skills/information for career planning and job searching;
- Work ethic, attitudes and personal attributes of youth; and
- Need for a coordinating steering committee to address the issues and recommendations of this project

Other potential barriers youth and young adults face when looking for employment include being a single parent, issues related to family stability, disabilities or health-related challenges, and challenges associated with youth and young adults looking to acquire self-employment or employment in the trades.

In order to provide the Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee of Vegreville & District with possible next steps, the Consultant has developed a coordination strategy, a communication strategy and an evaluation strategy.

Recommendations for improved coordination and delivery of employment services for youth and young adults include the following:

1. The Vegreville & District Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee could be used as a basis for the creation of an ongoing youth/young adult employment coordinating body;
2. The youth/young adult employment coordinating body could receive input on programs and services from a youth and young adult advisory committee;
3. Development of an implementation strategy; and
4. The inventory of programs offered for youth and young adults should be adjusted and modified as programs become discontinued and new programs are introduced.

Recommendations for a Communication Strategy include the following:

1. Disseminate findings among stakeholders;
2. Publicize a summary report through the internet and other means;
3. Steering Committee should publicize its response to the report, including next steps; and
4. Key messages, which may be considered while putting forward an initial communication with stakeholders.

Recommendations for an Evaluation Strategy Plan include the following:

1. Consult with relevant stakeholders and create a coordinating body/steering committee;
2. Develop a logic model in consultation with the steering committee, and other stakeholders as necessary;
3. Develop an evaluation framework based on the program logic model;
4. Develop appropriate data collection tools; and
5. Analyze data collected and report on evaluation findings.

## SECTION:1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

The following section outlines the project background and objectives for the *Information for Delivery of Youth Services Report, Vegreville & District*.

### 1.1 Project Background

Youth and young adults in Alberta face relatively high unemployment rates, and are twice as likely to be unemployed than the overall population, with 9.9% of Alberta youth unemployed compared to 4.9% for the provincial population.<sup>1</sup> Given that approximately 15%<sup>2</sup> of the population of the Town of Vegreville and the surrounding County of Minburn are youth and young adults, it is reasonable for these communities to be concerned with youth/young adult employment and direct resources towards programs and services that facilitate youth labour force attachment. In addition, Statistics Canada 2001 Census data also indicated that females in the Town of Vegreville have more than twice the rate of unemployment than of males (6.9% vs. 3.2% respectively). By comparison, the unemployment rate between females and males in the County of Minburn was not as significant (4.1% vs. 3.5% respectively).

Modification to the Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy has included changes to allow increased flexibility in its employment interventions to youth. In order to respond to these changes, representatives from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE), the Town of Vegreville and the County of Minburn formed the Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee. This Committee led a Community Engagement Process in order to facilitate the collaboration and coordination of services for youth and young adults in Vegreville and District, as well as to identify service gaps and best practices. This process resulted in the creation of this report, *Information for Delivery of Youth Services Report, Vegreville & District*.

### 1.2 Final Report Objectives

The main objectives of this report are as follows:

- An identification of the assets, gaps, needs and priorities related to youth/young adults employment programming;
- Recommendations for the coordination and improvement of employment services for youth and young adults in Vegreville and the surrounding area, including an implementation strategy;
- A communication strategy to ensure that all relevant parties in the community and all levels of government are aware of the recommendations; and
- Recommendations for an evaluation strategy plan.

### 1.3

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, Alberta Labour Force Statistics, July 2003. For the publication, youth is defined as those aged 15 to 24, as opposed to the current project definition of 15 to 30.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada 2001 Census data

### **Consultation Methodologies**

Consultations were undertaken by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. with a range of stakeholders, including the following:

- Youth and young adults between the ages of 15 and 30 residing in Vegreville or the surrounding area;
- Service providers that provide relevant employment-related programs and services for youth and young adults;
- Local employers and stakeholders in the local industry; and
- Relevant stakeholders, including community members involved in initiatives oriented towards providing leadership training, education and/or employability skills to local youth and young adults.

The project addressed issues related to the Town of Vegreville and the surrounding County of Minburn, including the communities of Mundare, Andrew, Willingdon, Two Hills, Lavoy, Bruce, Holden, Innisfree and Ranfurly.

Consultations with stakeholders involved a variety of means. Information on the various stakeholders consulted for the project, as well as the means through which they were consulted, is presented in Table 1-2.

**Table 1-2  
Consultation Methodologies**

<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Number Of Participants</b>
Town Hall Youth Forum	19
Youth Interviews	7
Local Service Provider Focus Group	9
Service Provider Interviews	4
Local Employer Interviews	11
Interviews with Local Community Members involved in volunteer/community level Youth Programs and Initiatives	3
<b>Total Consultation Participants</b>	<b>53</b>

In addition to the consultations listed in Table 1-2, the Consultant undertook 12 additional informal consultations with service providers as well as representatives from government, Vegreville & District high schools, and outreach schools.

#### **1.4 Research Considerations**

The following report provides a background to the issue of youth/young adult employment in Vegreville and District, as well as a summary, by issue, of the major identified themes of the consultations and the literature reviewed.

The Consultant is recommending the following be considered while reviewing this report:

- The report is not meant to publicize or recommend any particular agency or service provider;
- This report reflects the findings of the consultations at the time that the research was undertaken;
- The opinions included in this report are of those individuals consulted during the research process, and may not necessarily reflect the opinions of all individuals within each group; and
- Some statistics used throughout this report are not current (e.g. Statistics Canada 2001 Census data) and as such, new trends may not be fully captured by the data and literature available to the Consultant at the time the research was undertaken.

## SECTION:2 RURAL YOUTH ISSUES AND REALITIES

The following section provides detailed demographic and contextual information specifically related to youth/young adult employment within rural areas and in Vegreville & District.

### 2.1 Rural Youth Migration

“Many rural communities are losing a large portion of their population between the ages of 15 and 29 to urban areas.”<sup>3</sup> Overall, there has been a considerable decline in youth populations in rural areas across Canada. For example, it is estimated that rural areas experienced a net loss of between 12% and 16% of 15 to 19 year-olds during the 1986-91 and 1991-96<sup>4</sup>.

Youth leave rural areas for many reasons, including lack of suitable post secondary education and employment opportunities, and interest in pursuing social and recreational opportunities not available in small towns. Youth often intend to return to their home communities following graduation, but many never do. For example, only 25% of those who leave rural communities actually return to the community at some point in their lives<sup>5</sup>.

As detailed in a report developed by the MLA Steering Committee on Rural Development<sup>6</sup>, education services, health services, recreation, and cultural programs become at-risk when a community’s population begins to decline. The loss of these services also reduces the number of professional positions available to young adults in that community, which in turn may lead to their migration to other communities. The loss of this young professional labour force may, as a consequence, contribute to a shrinking tax base. A weakened tax base may then further impact a community’s ability to maintain its existing infrastructure.

Anecdotal evidence, however, indicates a trend may be emerging whereby youth and young adults are relocating from urban centres, such as Edmonton, to rural areas, such as the Town of Vegreville. It is thought that these youth are attracted to employment opportunities as well as a lower cost of living offered in rural areas.

*“It will probably get better in the next while. More jobs [aside from] food services are opening up. There should be more technical jobs soon.”*

- Youth Interview Respondent

### 2.2 The Aging Population

The population in rural Alberta is aging faster than that of the rest of the province.<sup>7</sup> As detailed in Table 2-1, the percentage of the population in both Vegreville and the County of Minburn aged 45 and older is higher than the provincial average (44.0% and 41.7% compared to 32.7%).

<sup>3</sup> MLA Steering Committee. (2004, March). *Rural Alberta: Land of Opportunity*.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada 1996 Census data

<sup>5</sup> University of Alberta, 2004

<sup>6</sup> MLA Steering Committee. (2004, March). *Rural Alberta: Land of Opportunity*.

<sup>7</sup> MLA Steering Committee. (2004, March). *Rural Alberta: Land of Opportunity*.

**Table 2-1  
Population in Vegreville and District**

Age Group	Vegreville	County of Minburn	Alberta
Age 0-14	19.4%	21.5%	20.8%
Age 15-24	11.1%	13.1%	14.7%
Age 25-44	25.5%	23.8%	31.9%
Age 45-64	20.7%	26.3%	22.3%
Age 65+	23.3%	15.4%	10.4%
Total-all persons	100%	100%	100%
<b>Median Age of the Population</b>	<b>41.2</b>	<b>39.7</b>	<b>35.0</b>

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 Census

Youth and young adults interviewed in one-on-one interviews and from the town hall forum were aware of the age composition of Vegreville and the surrounding district and felt this greatly impacted the community. Several youth and young adults who participated in the consultations felt as though they were a minority and had the impression that they had little control or input into various aspects of their community.

*“Access to more recreational services would encourage more youth to stay in Vegreville. The services that are here seem to be for the very young or the old.”*

- Youth Interview Respondent

### **2.3 Vegreville & District’s Youth Population**

Overall, less than 20% of the population in Vegreville and District are between the ages of 15 and 29. Table 2-2, below, provides recent estimates of the youth and young adult population in the communities of interest to this report. According to the 2001 Census, the County of Minburn has the highest percentage of youth/young adults aged 15-29 (18.0%) when compared to Vegreville and other locations in surrounding region. However, this percentage is still below the national average of 20.3%, indicating that migration of youth/young adults from rural areas may be an issue for many of the communities listed below.

**Table 2-2  
Population of Youth and Young Adults in Vegreville and District**

	Vegreville	County of Minburn*	Holden	Willingdon	Mundare	Andrew	Innisfree	Two Hills	Total
<b>15-24 years</b>	595	435	40	15	35	30	15	85	<b>1,250</b>
<b>25-29 years</b>	280	145	15	7	27	25	10	54	<b>713</b>
<b>Total (15-29)</b>	875	580	55	22	62	55	25	139	<b>1,813</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	5,375	3,220	375	285	650	485	220	1,095	<b>11,705</b>
<b>% of Total Population</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	<b>18.0%</b>	<b>14.7%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 Census

\* Does not include the community of Innisfree

The youth/young adult population in Vegreville and District are impacted by common issues facing youth in other rural communities, which often results in a net migration of youth. Some Vegreville and District youth and young adults who participated in the forum stated that they wanted to stay in the area and establish a home and career following high school, however they felt forced to leave to pursue post secondary education or find work.

Table 2-3 provides the proportions of males and females aged 15–29 in Vegreville and District. As shown below, there is an approximately equal balance of men and women in the youth/young adults populations in the region.

**Table 2-3**  
**Vegreville & District Youth and Young Adult Population By Gender**

Age Range	Youth Population	% of Total Youth Population
<b>Male youth total</b>	<b>923</b>	<b>50.7%</b>
Male 15-24 yrs	655	36.0%
Male 25-29 yrs	268	14.7%
<b>Female youth total</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>49.3%</b>
Female 15-24 yrs	600	32.9%
Female 25-29 yrs	298	16.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,821</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 Census  
Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

## 2.4 Education

As demonstrated in Table 2-4, the percentage of youth and young adults pursuing post-secondary studies in Alberta has been slowly increasing in recent years.

**Table 2-4**  
**Percentage of Alberta Students Entering Post-Secondary Education Within Five Years of Grade 12 Completion<sup>8</sup>**

Year	Percentage of Students
1999	59.2%
2000	59.9%
2001	60.5%

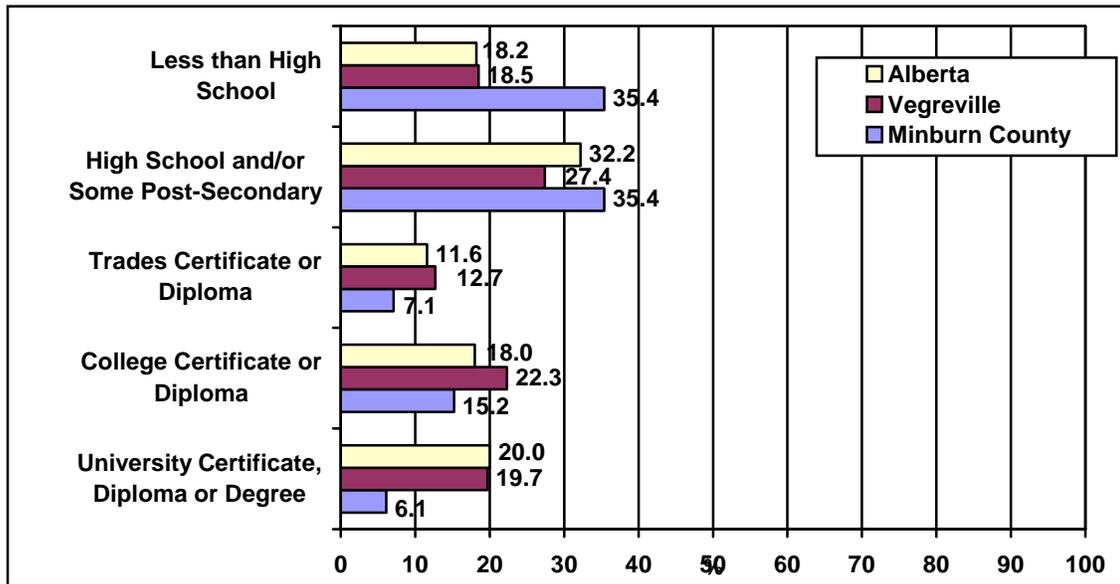
Source: *The Alberta Child and Youth Initiative (ACYI) 2000-2001 Annual Report.*

Higher participation rates in post-secondary studies are reflected in the proportion of young adults with post-secondary education in the Town of Vegreville. For example, 19.7% of young adults in Vegreville have a university certificate, diploma, or degree compared to 20.0% in Alberta overall. However, according to Statistics Canada, the County of Minburn has a lower percentage of young adults with a post-secondary education when compared to the Town of Vegreville and the provincial average (6.1% of young adults in the County of

<sup>8</sup> Refers to the percentage of grade 12 students in the specified school year (including those who have not received a diploma or certificate) who were offered admission to post-secondary in any of the following five years.

Minburn have a university certificate, diploma, or degree). This may be due in part to fewer employment opportunities for those with this level of training and education in the County of Minburn. Please refer to Chart 2-5 for details.

**Chart 2-5**  
**Highest Level of Schooling\* by Region**



Source: Statistics Canada 2001 Census Data

\*Percentage of the population aged 20-34

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding error.

Higher post-secondary completion rates in Vegreville, as compared to the County of Minburn, also may be the result of access. For example, post-secondary education is available in Vegreville via Portage College and NorQuest College and distance education is available through Athabasca University. In addition, youth and young adults in the area have been known to commute to Olds College, Lakeland College and various post-secondary institutions located in Edmonton.

Although there are several post-secondary programs available locally, the region may continue to experience a migration of youth and young adults to urban centres for the purpose of acquiring further education. A survey of rural Albertans undertaken in 2002<sup>9</sup> found that 27% of rural residents stated that a lack of educational opportunities was one major reason why young people leave small communities.

## 2.5 Associated Issues

Consultations undertaken with Vegreville and District youth, young adults, and service providers revealed a number of key challenges youth and young adults are confronted with living in their rural community. These issues, are explored in further detail in the following sections.

<sup>9</sup> Sorenson, 2002.

2.5.1

### Access to Reliable Transportation

Unlike urban centers, rural communities have few, if any public transportation systems. According to the Vegreville Transportation Service Society, bus transportation to Edmonton is available only through Greyhound. Locally, Vegreville has two independent taxi services and the Vegreville Transportation Service Society (VTSS) will soon have a “Community Handivan” available for persons with disabilities, which will be operated by a local service provider 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Vegreville Transportation Service Society offers subsidized taxi or Handivan fare vouchers<sup>10</sup> for seniors, persons with disabilities and low-income families. Those eligible may receive a book of 10 vouchers every 30 days. Subsidies are also offered through VTSS for those who need to travel outside of the community for medical care.

Access to reliable transportation is often viewed as a barrier to sustainable employment for many youth and young adults. The impact of reduced access to transportation was noted by several of the employers, youth/young adults and service providers interviewed for the consultation. Service providers also noted, that for many youth and young adults looking for work, the situation is a “catch 22”; those who are looking for employment cannot afford transportation, however, many positions that are available to them require it.

Furthermore, employment opportunities available to many of the youth and young adults are often concentrated in the larger communities, such as the Town of Vegreville. As a consequence, those living in outlying areas, such as Andrew and Mundare, must have reliable transportation in order to commute.

#### 2.5.2 “Small Town Syndrome”

A small town has characteristics considered unique compared to its urban counterpart. Although not all of these rural characteristics are viewed as negative, Vegreville and District youth and young adults who attended the town forum and participated in one-on-one interviews mentioned one major issue that was challenging for them. Many of the youth and young adults consulted felt as though they are “under a microscope” in a small community. Because of the small population size, there is the perception among youth and young adults that everyone knows one another and that when sending a resume in response to a posted position, often your reputation, or your family’s reputation, plays a role in whether you get that position, even before an interview takes place.

*“I think a lot has to do with how much money your family has and family reputation in this town.”*  
- Youth Interview Respondent

#### 2.5.3

<sup>10</sup> at varying rates depending on distance required for travel

### Negative Perception of Youth

“We tried hiring after-school kids, but they weren’t reliable. I won’t hire anyone under 18 anymore.”  
- Local Employer

When youth and young adults from Vegreville and area were asked how they felt they were viewed in the community, almost two-thirds of those who attended the town hall forum (12 out of 19 participants) felt that they were viewed negatively. When asked why, some said that it took longer for youth to build trust and others said it depended on the circumstances. Further examples of comments provided by youth and young adults during one-on-one interviews have been provided below.

*“It depends on who you ask. Maybe they are seen as troublemakers. People aren’t quite sure about them.”*

*“[They are viewed] fairly.”*

*“I think some of them are viewed as slackers and they need to do more, but it is hard because there isn’t much [work] available.”*

*“[They are viewed] poorly, unless they come from good families or good homes. The majority of the town is older and stuck in the old ways. They have higher standards than youth set for themselves.”*

#### 2.5.4 Alcohol, Drugs, and other Health-Related Issues

A few service providers and adult key informants involved with youth and young adults noted that there is a substantial amount of drug/alcohol use amongst the local youth/young adults in Vegreville and the surrounding area.

The opinions of these service providers and adult key informants is supported by research that indicates there are health-related and behavioural differences between youth and young adults living in rural and metro/urban areas. According to the study “Health status and behaviours of Canada’s youth: a rural-urban comparison”, there are several major differences between youth aged 12 to 17. For example,

- Prevalence of smoking is higher than average among girls in rural areas and in small towns;
- Prevalence of heavy drinking is slightly higher than average among boys in small towns;
- 17% of girls and 23% of boys in rural regions rated their health as “excellent” compared to 33% and 36% in major metro regions; and
- Boys in small towns have the highest prevalence of being overweight or obese.

## SECTION:3 YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN VEGREVILLE & DISTRICT

The following section provides an overview of the employment services available to youth in Vegreville & District.

### 3.1 Employment Services for Youth and Young Adults

*"I'd love to stay around here but if I can't find a job that keeps me happy, then I'll leave"*  
- Youth Forum Participant

One of the goals of the youth/young adult employment and career programming in Vegreville & District is to follow a partnership model whereby national or provincial programs are offered in partnership with a community-based service provider that tailors program specifics to the needs of a particular population. To date, Vegreville service providers have done considerable work to modify and adapt programs that have been developed federally by HRSDC, and provincially/locally through AHRE and Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS). Employment services that youth and young adults have access to in Vegreville and surrounding district are described in further detail below.

#### **Summer Career Placement**

Summer Career Placement (SCP) is part of the Summer Work Experience Program provided by HRSDC. This program provides wage subsidies to employers to provide incentive to create summer employment opportunities for secondary and post-secondary students. The program is delivered in partnership with various private, public, and not-for-profit groups and is administered through the HRSDC office in Edmonton.<sup>11</sup>

The Summer Work Experience Program also includes Hire A Student services (HAS). HAS informs students about employment opportunities in their communities, provides them with job search assistance, tools and techniques, and introduces them to local businesses as potential employees.

Currently, Vegreville and area employers are accessing HRSDC wage subsidies through SCP, however, Vegreville does not have a local Hire A Student office. Youth, young adults, and employers interested in accessing this HRSDC service may do so through contacting the Edmonton HAS office.

#### **The Labour Market Information Centre (LMIC)**

Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) located in the Vegreville Alberta Service Center has a Labour Market Information Centre (LMIC). The LMIC offers employment and training resources, which support job search and career decision making as follows:

- Job board and weekly job reports;
- Free computer access to prepare resumes/cover letters and to access the Internet;

<sup>11</sup> J. Beisiegel, personal communication, June 28, 2005.

- A large selection of workbooks and other free publications;
- Publications and clarification on rights and responsibilities in the workplace; and
- A collection of books and periodicals pertaining to the labour market and career development.

### **Alberta Works**

Alberta Works is delivered by Alberta Human Resources and Employment for the provision of Employment and Training services, Income Support, Child Support Services and Health Benefits. In Vegreville & District, Alberta Works offers career planning, resume writing, job search assistance and job placement, training on the job opportunities, exposure courses, and various short-term training and employment support services. As well, youth and young adults may access phone, fax, and Internet through the LMIC and referrals may be made to Youth Connections and/or the Vegreville Regional Employment Centre for additional services.

### **Vegreville & Area Youth Connections**

Youth Connections is an Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) program, which is offered in Vegreville by the Vegreville & District Family and Community Support Services (FCSS). Youth Connections has one coordinator, who provides services to Vegreville and surrounding area (Lamont, Andrew & Two Hills receive itinerant services through their Career Corner sites). Youth Connection's services are offered free to youth and young adults aged 16-24. FCSS has designed and developed the program to provide career and employment services for youth/young adults, parents, educators and employers based on the needs of the local communities.<sup>12</sup>

Services available for *youth/young adults* through Youth Connections include support and assistance, either one-on-one or in a workshop setting, with the Career Advisor. Examples of the services available to youth/young adults include the following:

- Resume and cover letter development;
- Job search assistance;
- Career and education/training planning;
- Development of skills to make you an exceptional employee;
- Job coaching;
- Help and guidance with evaluating and decision making; and
- Support and guide clients to establish opportunities for hands on learning through informational interviewing, job shadow, volunteering and un-paid work experience.

Services available for *employers* include creating "win/win" relationships between employers and youth/young adults ages 16-24. In order to facilitate creating these relationships, the following services are offered to employers:

- Free job posting service;
- Transfer of job postings to other job boards for increased exposure;
- Provision of guidance, resources and referrals to employers to assist them in attracting, recruiting, selecting and retaining employees; and
- Assistance with creating accurate and current job descriptions.

<sup>12</sup> T. Bernardo, personal communication, June 24, 2005.

Services for *educators* and *parents* are provided as a partnership, through which youth and young adults ages 16-24 are given the “tools to succeed”. Examples of these services include the following:

- Provision of resources and materials to assist with the delivery of career courses;
- Provision of in-class presentations; and
- One-on-one guidance for teachers and parents to support and strengthen the career and education process for youth and young adults.

Along with the services listed above clients can have free access to phone, fax and Internet for employment or educational purposes. In addition, the Youth Connections coordinator devotes time to the local high schools and outreach schools for one-on-one or group sessions with the students.

One of Youth Connection’s local partnerships is with the Elk Island Public School (EIPS). As part of this partnership, the Youth Connections coordinator has been invited to attend CALM teacher in-services work with teachers to improve the career curriculum, and plan and hold Career Corner meetings. Vegreville & Area Youth Connections has developed a Career & Education Planner Workbook, which is designed to be used as part of one-on-one career and education planning with clients. In addition, teachers have expressed an interest in the workbook and, in some cases, have applied it to their Career and Life Management (CALM) and Career and Technology Studies (CTS) classes.

#### ***Vegreville Regional Employment Centre (VREC)***

Alberta Human Resources and Employment contracts with Abilities Network for service delivery through the Vegreville Regional Employment Centre providing career and employment services for young adults aged 18 and older by referral from AHRE. The following Career and Employment Assistance Services (CEAS)<sup>13</sup> are available:

- Workshops for job search and job maintenance;
- Exposure courses;
- Resume production and exposure courses administration;
- Action plans for clients destined for Job Placement (JP) or Workplace training;
- JP – program delivery;
- Workplace training – program delivery;
- Job coaching (i.e. the counselors learn the skills of the job with the client and subsequently assist youth and young adults in learning the requirements of the job);
- Seminars, such as “Employer Expectations” and “Communications”, which provide information regarding work ethic, communications, punctuality, safe workplaces, etc.; and
- On-the-job support (e.g. providing workshops, assistance with communication issues, etc.).

AHRE through the Vegreville Alberta Service Centre provide career counseling and refer clients to VREC for an array of services that are flexible and personalized to meet the needs of the individual client in either workshop or one-on-one format.

<sup>13</sup> P. Kurylowich, personal communication. April 26, 2005.

Employment Counselors from the VREC send weekly job reports to interested parties, usually to employment counselors and job seekers, and maintain a public job board in the LMIC. Examples of services the VREC offers to employers include the following:

- Posting of AHRE job board, which lists all available jobs in the area;
- Develop relationship with employers, which includes keeping statistics on skill gaps, and reporting back to AHRE to assist in finding potential job resources;
- Booking and provision of funding for exposure courses (i.e. First Aid, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS));<sup>14</sup> and
- Workplace training.<sup>15</sup>

### ***WJS Vegreville Resource Centre***

Although services provided at WJS Vegreville Resource Centre are not specifically targeted to youth, it does offer resume and cover letter help on a fee for service basis to people over the age of 18 with developmental disabilities.

### ***Vegreville Association for Living in Dignity (VALID)***

Populations of youth facing barriers to employment also have access to targeted services. For example, the Vegreville Association for Living in Dignity (VALID) provides innovative employment program options for participants with mental and physical challenges: Recycling Services, Pot-O-Gold, and Centerpoint Café are employment training sites for VALID clients, while the Employment Preparation Program and Employment Placement and Support offer employment skills training, career planning and job search/maintenance services to individuals with mental and/or physical disabilities.

### ***Community Access Program (CAP)***

“The Community Access Program (CAP) is a Government of Canada initiative, administered by Industry Canada, which aims to provide Canadians with affordable public access to the Internet and the skills they need to use it effectively.”<sup>16</sup> Youth and young adults have access to a variety of online employment resources (i.e. job banks, the ALIS website) at the CAP sites, which are available at the following locations in Vegreville:

- Vegreville Public Library;
- VegMin Learning Society;
- Lions Golden Villa;
- Lamont-Two Hills Business Development Corporation office;
- Andrew Public/School Library;
- Mundare Town Office; and
- Lamont Town/County building.

In addition to the aforementioned locations, youth and young adults may also access online employment and career information resources through computers made available at Career Corners, Youth Connections, the Vegreville Regional Employment Centre, the AHRE Labour Market Information Centre, and the WJS Vegreville Resource Centre in Vegreville.

<sup>14</sup> Some exposure courses are offered through VegMin Learning, however, often youth and young adults are required to go outside of the Vegreville area to attend.

<sup>15</sup> Up to 70% or up to \$7 is reimbursed to the employer for up to 32 weeks of on the job training under the condition that the employer must then provide full-time employment to the employee.

<sup>16</sup> Industry Canada. Accessed June 29, 2005. [http://cap.ic.gc.ca/pub/about\\_us/whatiscap.html](http://cap.ic.gc.ca/pub/about_us/whatiscap.html).

### 3.2 Career-Related Education and Training

Representatives from Vegreville & District Family Community Support Services through Youth Connections and the Volunteer Action Centre, Vegreville Composite High School, St. Mary's School and the Next Step Outreach School have created partnerships through which information regarding the schools' work experience programs and career curriculums could be shared and improved. For example, in April of 2005, representatives from the aforementioned groups met to pool information regarding the individual work experience programs in the area. The meeting resulted in the creation of a booklet, which will provide future work experience students with information regarding who the participating employers are in the area, job expectations, and preferred skills. Ideally, employers will be providing youth with new and transferable skills and the one page space allotted to each employer within the workbook will provide youth with sufficient information allowing them to make an informed decisions regarding which employer will best suit their career needs and goals.

Provided below is a listing of various programs and courses offered through the education system within Vegreville & District.

**Careers – the Next Generation** is a program schools can access that help them place students in apprenticeship programs and gain work experience in the fields of trades and technologies, information and communication technologies and health services. The program is industry driven, however, it is administered and monitored through the schools. St. Mary's High School has previously utilized the health services aspect of the program. Additional information about Careers – the Next Generation can be found at <http://www.nextgen.org>.

**Career Corners.** Many local schools in Vegreville and Area have received funding through AHRE to develop and maintain a Career Corner. The career corner offers students with career and employment -related information such as information on occupations, post-secondary education, and career planning. The majority of the schools in the area have a career corner, including Next Step Outreach School (Lamont and Vegreville), Two Hills High School, and Vegreville Composite High School. St. Mary's High School will have their career corner in September 2005.

**Career and Life Management (CALM) class.** CALM is designed to provide students with the skills they require to make healthy choices, have healthy interactions with others, as well as assist them with lifelong career development.<sup>17</sup> Although the CALM program is mandatory for all high school students in the province, each school has some flexibility in regards to how it is implemented. For example, Two Hills High School have adapted their CALM class to put more focus on career-related aspects of the program and have moved topics related to health to other classes. The Andrew School follows curriculum, however, they bring speakers and experts, (i.e. staff from Youth Connections) in to provide assistance and expertise.

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<sup>17</sup> Alberta Learning. "Career and Life Management." 2002. Accessed June 28, 2005.  
[http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k\\_12/curriculum/bySubject/healthpls/calm.pdf](http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/bySubject/healthpls/calm.pdf).

**Career and Technology Studies (CTS).** CTS contains over 22 program strands, which are composed of over 650 courses. Many schools in Vegreville and District, including St. Mary's High School, Vegreville Composite High School and the Next Step Outreach Schools, offer this program. CTS can be tailored by each individual school to suit their students' and community's needs. CTS subject areas include job preparation, personal safety, working with others, communicating effectively, and demonstrating responsibility.

**Off Campus Education.** The local high schools in Vegreville & District and the outreach schools offer some form of off campus education, which includes work experience, green certificate and the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP).

The Work Experience Program allows a student to gain work experience through a local employer and earn credits towards their high school diploma. Prior to beginning their first work experience course, students are required to take the Career Transitions CTR1010 job preparation course for 1 credit. Each 25 hours worked earns the student 1 credit towards their diploma.<sup>18</sup>

The Green Certificate Program is administered by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and "provides trainees with opportunities to enter a variety of agriculture-related, structured learning pathways as a part of their senior high school program and to earn a credential leading to a career in agribusiness."<sup>19</sup> Students can specialize in a number of different areas, including Cow-Calf Beef Production, Field Crop Production, Swine Production, Sheep Production, and Dairy Production.

The RAP program allows high school students to simultaneously earn credits towards their high school diploma and towards an apprenticeship program. Students enrolling in this program may choose from 50 apprenticeship trades.

**Integrated Occupational Program.** This program was designed by Alberta Education to provide students who are having difficulties in the regular school system acquire skills that will allow them to successfully transition from school to the workplace. The program provides the students with practical living and occupational skills as well as assistance to those also in the RAP program. At Vegreville Composite High School, occupational courses offered in this program include Automotive Services, Construction Services, Business Services, Hair Care, and Commercial Food Preparation.<sup>20</sup>

**"Careers" class.** St. Mary's High School will be offering a Careers class to their grade 10 students as of September 2005. The class will incorporate modules of the CTS program, which may include job preparation, personal safety, and one additional module to be determined.

<sup>18</sup> Alberta Education. "Curriculum Handbook for Parents, Senior High School". 2004. Accessed June 28, 2005.

<http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/parents/handbooks/srpub.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development. "About the Alberta Green Certificate Program". 2003. Accessed June 28, 2005.

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/grc6643](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/grc6643)

<sup>20</sup> Elk Island Public Schools. Accessed June 28, 2005. <http://www.ei.educ.ab.ca/sch/vjs/Programs/IOP.doc>

**“Structuring for Success”** is a class offered through Two Hills High School. The class is mandatory for students attending the school and incorporates topics such as leadership, portfolio development, resume development, and career planning. As well, the program provides students with aptitude tests as part of their career planning and introduces them to the information available on the ALIS website.

**Career fairs.** Career fairs are another option schools in Vegreville & District use to disseminate career information to their students and to the community. The Vegreville Composite High School has taken on the responsibility in the past and this year they have partnered with St. Mary’s High School, AHRE and Youth Connections. The Andrew School does not have a local Career Fair, however, students have the opportunity to attend the one in Vegreville. According to a representative from the Two Hills High School their students have the opportunity to go to Edmonton Career Fair, as well as the career fair that will be held in September 2005 in St. Paul.

**Canada Career Week.** Canada Career Week is an annual event, which began in 1986 as a way to create career awareness across Canada. Locally, Canada Career Week activities are organized through a partnership of representatives from AHRE, Youth Connections, and the Vegreville Regional Employment Centre. This year’s theme is “Change is Constant” which will take place between October 30, 2005 and November 5, 2005. More information can be found at [www.canadacareerweek.com](http://www.canadacareerweek.com).

**Career and employment website** – Representatives from Youth Connections and the Elk Island Public School (EIPS) have collaborated to develop a template to enable schools or other career and employment service providers to add career and employment websites to their school or business website. The website contains information at both the federal, provincial and local level. The website includes information about careers, employment, creating resumes, job interviews, labour market information and information about schools and programs of study. The information contained will not be under copyright and will not be limited to the Elk Island Public School Board, and as such, it may be disseminated and tailored to meet the needs of other communities.

### **3.3 Best Practices in Youth Employment Service Delivery**

Youth and young adults were asked in the town hall forum and in one-one-one interviews about what services work best to help prepare youth/young adults for jobs and employment and what elements should go into a service to help youth and young adults when looking for or preparing for a job.

It was noted by several youth and young adults interviewed that opportunities for volunteering, work experience, and on the job training were ways youth/young adults could best be prepared for employment. In terms of services, many of the youth and young adults interviewed indicated that they preferred speaking to someone one-on-one. Respondents noted that the counselor should be experienced and have previous job and job search experience. Some youth/young adults interviewed indicated that they wanted information about how a potential job fits in with their long-term career goals. Other comments included providing workshops, either in schools or in the community to discuss careers, talk to someone who has experience in their field of interest for advice on how to find/keep a job, and assistance with resumes, interviews, job placement and increasing their employability.

Youth/young adults who participated in the forum were also asked what would help them become better prepared for the workforce. The majority of the comments from the youth and young adults were related to gaining work experience, either through work experience programs during high school, temporary work programs, or through apprenticeship or mentoring programs. When asked what elements they would like to see in employment services, comments provided by youth/young adults include the following:

- A central location in Vegreville with small satellite offices for surrounding communities. The location could have an online resource/website, which would provide additional access to youth/young adults, particularly to those who live outside of Vegreville.
- Access to computers and printers, phones, internet, fax machines, photocopiers;
- Up-to-date job postings from local employers only, accessible via the internet, a phone hotline and a bulletin board on-site;
- Liaison with schools to inform counselors of current, up-dated opportunities;
- Up-date resources such as books and resources on job searching;
- Opportunities to do aptitude and career suitability testing and exercises;
- Current information on post-secondary education: schools, entrance requirements, costs, etc. for institutions near Vegreville and across Canada;
- Flexible hours: open evenings and weekends to accommodate those in school or working during the day; and
- In-person assistance with resume writing, interview skills, and job search techniques.

### 3.3.1 Best Practices in Single-Window Service Delivery

During the town hall forum, many youth/young adults agreed that a centralized location within Vegreville where they could go to access employment-related services was their preferred option for service delivery. Intergovernmental single-window service delivery is an innovative best practice addressed in several key sources of literature reviewed. This type of single window approach leads to better communication and enhanced service delivery while simultaneously providing “easy access” to programming for clients.

With this best practice in consideration, Vegreville and District may consider one location, which will act as the hub for a service delivery network, where youth and young adults will be able to receive information and referral to other supports and programs within the community.

## 3.4

### **Barriers Accessing Targeted Programs and Services**

Youth and young adults may face a variety of barriers in accessing targeted programs and services, which will in turn impact the degree of effectiveness of available services. Of the youth/young adults interviewed for this consultation, two had indicated that they had accessed employment services in the past, while five had not. This may be due in part to issues such as lack of available transportation<sup>21</sup> or lack of awareness of services. When youth/young adults were asked during the forum how to best inform youth and young adults about available services, they indicated that there should be creative, eye-catching approaches to advertising, utilization of visible newspaper advertisements and brightly coloured posters or ads displayed in locations such as bulletin boards, grocery stores, and in the schools.

Circumstances regarding family stability may also indirectly affect the employment status of youth and young adults. In the Town of Vegreville and the surrounding area, there are local programs and initiatives addressing the needs of at-risk youth. For example, the East Central Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) offer Youth Outreach services to youth in unstable family situations. In addition, Youth Connections and Alberta Human Resources and Employment work in conjunction with the CFSA to provide assistance to those transitioning from government care and into the workforce.

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<sup>21</sup> As noted by employers as a top barrier or challenge when hiring youth and was identified as a challenge for youth by service providers.

## SECTION:4 IDENTIFIED ISSUES IN YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT EMPLOYMENT IN VEGREVILLE & DISTRICT

The following section discusses the major identified issues of relevance to youth employment programming, as discussed by youth/young adults, service providers, employers and other key stakeholders in the Vegreville & District consultation. These issues have been further elaborated from findings of the literature review.

### Issues and Barriers to Employment in Vegreville & District

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The major identified issues impacting youth and young adult employment in Vegreville & District include the following:

- Employment opportunities or desirable positions in the area;
- Relevant workforce experience;
- Education or appropriate skills;
- Access to reliable transportation;
- Employer attitudes and behaviours;
- Skills/information for career planning and job searching;
- Work ethic, attitudes and personal attributes of youth/young adults; and
- Need for a coordinating steering committee to address the issues and recommendations of this project.

Each of these issues is discussed in further detail in the following sections. The discussion includes a brief summary of the issues, identified programs and services in the Vegreville area, gaps, barriers and priorities, as well as recommendations to address the issue. The issues are not presented in any particular order and do not signify the importance of one issue over another. Each of the issues identified in this report were raised by a number of stakeholders, as well as other sources.

It should be noted that many service providers are actively taking steps to alleviate some of the issues and concerns that were raised in the consultations. The issues raised in the consultations may or may not factor in recent or ongoing improvements or changes to services for youth and young adults in Vegreville & District.

#### 4.1 Employment Opportunities or Desirable Positions in the Area

Many youth/young adults and some employers and service providers stated that there are limited employment opportunities available to youth and young adults and in Vegreville and surrounding area, and that of the jobs that are available, many of them are considered undesirable to most youth/young adults (i.e. unskilled labour/agricultural jobs, low starting wages, little opportunity for advancement). This was especially true for youth/young adults under the age of 25 with little practical work experience and/or post secondary training, youth/young adults with families, or those needing to travel to work. Minimum wage was not

felt to cover living expenses, especially given increasing living costs and few apartment rentals available in the area.

Of the youth/young adults who attended the forum, two felt that the job market for entry-level professional positions was limited for those who have completed post-secondary education or training, and that young adults face high competition for new positions that become available. A similar point was raised by youth and young adults in regards to starting a small business. Many of them feel that the local small business/service markets are saturated and if they want to pursue business ownership, they need to move either to Edmonton or to another urban center.

It was mentioned during the focus group with service providers that the low rate of minimum wage and entry-level positions was considered by to be a disincentive for beginning to develop a career. If wages are considered too low for positions that can lead to further career building, youth/young adults may consider moving from Vegreville to look for work that initially pays better but does not offer a long-term career path, or is not in their area of interest. For example, several employers interviewed noted that competition from high wages provided in the oil and gas industry was a challenge when looking to recruit for employment.

*“Young people often have an attitude against agricultural work. We can’t compete with the wages offered in the oil patch”*

- Local employer

It should be noted that service providers in Vegreville and District have commented that they have seen a change in the past year. For example, there has been an increase in the amount of positions available, especially summer opportunities, and employers are expressing that they are having a difficult time filling their positions. There has been, however, an increase in jobs available in the community that have required specialized experience, training and/or education. This has resulted in youth/young adults that do not have the required experience or training being unable to obtain some of positions available.

#### 4.1.1 Identified Programs and Services

There are several locations within Vegreville where youth and young adults have access to job postings, such as Youth Connections, the LMIC and the VREC. In addition, a number of programs and services are available in the local area to assist youth/young adults and in identifying and begin working towards specific skilled career paths, training for a skilled trade, or establishing a small business. These programs are listed below, in Table 4-1.

**Table 4-1  
Employment Programs and Services in Vegreville & District that Aim to  
Assist Youth and Young Adults Find Satisfying, Sustainable Employment**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Service Provider</b>	<b>Relevant Program Description &amp; Target Group<sup>22</sup></b>
Vegreville & Area Youth Connections Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vegreville &amp; District Family &amp; Community Support Services (FCSS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides assessments to help client determine their personality, skills, values and interests and how the match to occupations and employment.</li> <li>Assist with development of skills to help make youth/young adults exceptional employees.</li> <li>Educate the importance of researching the potential employer and position and how that matches their needs.</li> <li>Provides assistance to determine, establish and coordinate opportunities for work experience, informational interviewing and job shadowing.</li> <li>Development of cover letters and resume</li> <li>Training with interview skills, job search etc</li> <li>Provides entrepreneurial and labour market information</li> <li>Facilities offer free local job postings, phone, fax and internet</li> </ul>
Employment Preparation and Employment Placement Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vegreville Association for Living in Dignity (VALID)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers Employment Preparation Supports program that prepares individuals for employment by increasing their skill level in a variety of work environments.</li> <li>Employment Placement and Supports program focuses on individuals reaching their maximum potential in their work environment by removing barriers that limit their independence.</li> </ul>
Alberta Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Labour Market Information Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers services such career planning, resume writing, job search assistance and job placement, training on the job opportunities, exposure courses, and various short-term training and employment support services.</li> <li>Youth and young adults may access phone, fax, and Internet.</li> <li>Referrals may be made to Youth Connections and/or the Vegreville Regional Employment Centre for additional services.</li> </ul>

<sup>22</sup> Many of the programs listed here have multiple programs, objectives and/or target groups. This column provides a summary of programs/services that provide workplace experience or career building. As such, not all aspects of an organization or program may be included.

Program	Service Provider	Relevant Program Description & Target Group <sup>23</sup>
Alberta Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vegreville Regional Employment Centre (Ability Network)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers workshops, job board maintenance, exposure courses, resume production and exposure courses administration</li> <li>Action plans for clients destined to Job Placement or Workplace Training</li> <li>Job Placement program delivery</li> <li>Workplace Training program delivery</li> <li>On the job support</li> </ul>
Various programs and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WJS Vegreville Resource Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers resume and cover letter help to people over the age of 18 with developmental disabilities.</li> </ul>
Green Certificate Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administered by Alberta Agriculture, Food &amp; Rural Development</li> <li>Vegreville Composite High School</li> <li>St. Mary's High School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are placed in job placements supervised by experienced farm personnel. Course credits are earned for this work experience.</li> </ul>
Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administered by Alberta Education</li> <li>Implemented by Vegreville Composite High School, St. Mary's High School, Next Step Outreach Schools and employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows students to undertake recognized apprenticeship training while completing high school.</li> </ul>
Entrepreneurs with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lamont-Two Hills Business Development Corporation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists people with disabilities, age 18 and older, to establish a small business.</li> </ul>
Western Youth Entrepreneur Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lamont-Two Hills Business Development Corporation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides financial assistance to youth/young adults aged 18-29 who live in rural Western Canada to establish a small business.</li> </ul>
I Want to be a Millionaire Youth Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lamont-Two Hills Business Development Corporation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides basic business training and \$100.00 seed capital grants to youth age 12-18 to start a small business.</li> </ul>

Additional information regarding the various employment services available in Vegreville and District can be found in **Appendix C**.

#### 4.1.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, and Priorities

Youth and young adults consulted were typically unaware of the opportunities available to them outside of the high schools, especially in regards to finding employers that will take them on for work experience, job shadowing, or as skilled trades apprentices. In addition, youth/young adults from the consultations were generally unaware of the small business/entrepreneurial services available in the Vegreville area.

#### 4.1.3

<sup>23</sup> Many of the programs listed here have multiple programs, objectives and/or target groups. This column provides a summary of programs/services that provide workplace experience or career building. As such, not all aspects of an organization or program may be included.

### Recommendations

1. Actively promote self-employment and entrepreneurship to youth/young adults in Vegreville & District through high school coursework and programs offered by various service providers (e.g. New Venture Self Employment program, CALM, CTS, and Youth Connections).
2. Support and expand the self-employment initiatives offered by the Lamont-Two Hills Business Development Corporation to include youth/young adults from the entire County of Minburn. Aggressively advertise these programs to local youth by making use of existing forms of communication, such as school counselors, CALM class and CTS classes.
3. Create stronger networks and partnerships between local industry, school apprenticeship programs and government to create more skilled trades apprentice positions, particularly in trades with human resource shortages in the region, or in trades that are expected to experience growth in the future, such as Electricians, Carpenters and Automotive Service Technicians.
4. Create stronger networks and partnerships between local industry, government agencies, and local work experience programs to create more internships in professional and administrative positions. Increase awareness of available internships to youth through partnerships between schools, youth service providers, and employers. For example, the Green Certificate Program could be expanded to include internships in professions/administrative positions in businesses that support agriculture, such as lending institutions in agribusiness or retailers of agricultural equipment.

"[Mentorship, internship, apprenticeship training, nursing and teaching practicum's] can help rural employers attract and retain skilled people to maintain or expand their services or businesses."<sup>24</sup>

#### **4.2 Relevant Workforce Experience**

A commonly identified issue, which is acting as a major barrier to youth/young adults from obtaining or maintaining desirable employment in the Vegreville and surrounding District, was a lack of experience. Many youth and young adults involved in the town forum and participated in one-on-one interviews held the perception that employers were looking for new hires with experience and therefore shutting young people out of opportunities that would allow them to gain this experience.

Secondary research also indicates that a lack of experience, along with a lack of education, is the principal labour market barrier for young adults in Canada<sup>25</sup>. A national level consultation with stakeholders across the country found that many youth, employers and other Canadians say that the greatest challenge that young people face overall is getting their first job.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> MLA Steering Committee. (2004, March). *Rural Alberta: Land of Opportunity*.

<sup>25</sup> Human Resources Development Canada, 1999.

<sup>26</sup> Human Resources Development Canada, 2000.

*"I was lucky – I came from Edmonton and I spoke French so I got a government job. I think a lot of people lack experience"*  
 - Youth Interview Respondent

#### 4.2.1 Identified Programs and Services

Programs offering work experience allow participants to connect with employers and gain practical workforce experience. These programs provide initial introduction to a selection of occupations, and allow youth and young adults to understand what is expected of them in these occupations. Relevant programs and services available to youth and young adults in Vegreville & District that provide work experience and connects youth and young adults to employers are detailed in Table 4-2.

**Table 4-2  
 Employment Programs and Services in Vegreville & District that offer Youth and Young Adults Opportunities to Gain Workforce Experience**

Program	Service Provider	Relevant Program Description & Target Group <sup>27</sup>
Vegreville & Area Youth Connections Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegreville &amp; District Family &amp; Community Support Services (FCSS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides assistance to determine, establish and coordinate opportunities for work experience, informational interviewing and job shadowing.</li> <li>• Provides job coaching</li> <li>• Determines the employer needs and works with the client to develop the necessary skills required to meet the needs.</li> <li>• Referral of client to AHRE for further assistance</li> <li>• Assistance with un hiding the hidden job market</li> <li>• Facilities offer free local job postings, phone, fax and Internet.</li> </ul>
Green Certificate Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administered by Alberta Agriculture, Food &amp; Rural Development</li> <li>• Vegreville Composite High School</li> <li>• St. Mary's High School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are placed in job placements supervised by experienced farm personnel. Course credits are earned for this work experience.</li> </ul>

<sup>27</sup> Many of the programs listed here have multiple programs, objectives and/or target groups. This column provides a summary of programs/services that provide workplace experience or career building. As such, not all aspects of an organization or program may be included.

Program	Service Provider	Relevant Program Description & Target Group <sup>28</sup>
Careers – the Next Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegreville Composite High School</li> <li>• St. Mary's High School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This program can be accessed by schools to assist them in placing students in apprenticeship programs as well as gain work experience in the fields of trades and technologies, information and communication technologies and health services.</li> <li>• It is up to the individual schools to decide which fields the schools participate in.</li> <li>• Although the program is industry driven, the program is administered and monitored by the school.</li> </ul>
Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administered by Alberta Education</li> <li>• Implemented by Vegreville Composite High School, St. Mary's High School, Next Step Outreach Schools and employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows students to undertake recognized apprenticeship training while completing high school.</li> </ul>
Work Experience Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegreville Composite High School</li> <li>• St. Mary's High School</li> <li>• Next Step Outreach Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assists students in arranging job shadow/work experience opportunities in a variety of occupations and workplace settings</li> <li>• The schools have worked collaboratively to create a list of participating employers and develop a workbook to be used as a resource for all students entering the program</li> </ul>
Vegreville & District Recycling Depot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VALID and the Town of Vegreville</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides employment training and experience to persons with disabilities/developmental challenges</li> </ul>
Pot-O-Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VALID</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides retail employment training and experience to persons with disabilities/developmental challenges</li> </ul>
Centerpoint Cafe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VALID</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides food/hospitality industry employment training and experience to persons with disabilities/developmental challenges</li> </ul>

In addition to the identified programs and services that assist youth and young adults in gaining workforce experience, a limited number of programs exist to assist youth/young adults and other local entrepreneurs with establishing and managing a small business. These programs are summarized in Table 4-3 below.

<sup>28</sup> Many of the programs listed here have multiple programs, objectives and/or target groups. This column provides a summary of programs/services that provide workplace experience or career building. As such, not all aspects of an organization or program may be included.

**Table 4-3  
Programs and Services in Vegreville & District that offer  
Small Business/Entrepreneurship Support**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Service Provider</b>	<b>Relevant Program Description &amp; Target Group<sup>29</sup></b>
Entrepreneurs with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lamont-Two Hills Business Development Corporation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists people with disabilities, age 18 and older, to establish a small business</li> </ul>
Western Youth Entrepreneur Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lamont-Two Hills Business Development Corporation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides financial assistance to youth/young adults aged 18-29 who live in rural Western Canada to establish a small business</li> </ul>
I Want to be a Millionaire Youth Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lamont-Two Hills Business Development Corporation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides basic business training and \$100.00 seed capital grants to youth age 12-18 to start a small business</li> </ul>
New Ventures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vegreville Regional Employment Centre (Ability Network)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-employment program, which offers funding and training to those over age 18.</li> </ul>
Loans Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lamont-Two Hills Business Development Corporation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides non-traditional loans to those wishing to establish a small business. Applicants must have been previously declined from a bank and must have a viable business plan.</li> </ul>

#### 4.2.2 Identified Gaps, Needs and Priorities

Many of the youth and young adults who participated in the consultation felt that their lack of experience was a major barrier to their participation in the local workforce. While the identified programs do exist to assist youth and young adults in obtaining this experience, most youth/young adults from the consultations had not participated in these programs. A frequent response given for why they did not participate in the programs is that there is not enough choice available for work experience options, and the available work experience placements are not desirable or interesting. Additionally, some youth/young adults were not aware of the available programs and opportunities, especially those programs offered outside of high school.

Secondary research also points to the fact that a lack of work experience is a primary barrier for youth in Canada. This is especially true given the general lack of specific occupational training provided through the Canadian secondary educational system. As a result, evaluations of employment programs point to the effectiveness of employment programs for youth that provide concrete work experience (see, for example, Human Resources Development Canada, 1999).

#### 4.2.3 Recommendations

Major recommendations on the issue of work experience include the following:

<sup>29</sup> Many of the programs listed here have multiple programs, objectives and/or target groups. This column provides a summary of programs/services that provide workplace experience. As such, not all aspects of an organization or program may be included.

1. Promote the work experience booklet developed by the partnership between high schools, Youth Connections, and other representatives, by service providers outside of the high schools (i.e. the Vegreville Regional Employment Centre and the Labour Market Information Centre).
2. Increase the range and type of work experience opportunities in various industries and occupations. As well, encourage youth/young adults to participate in work experience placements in sectors that are expanding or experiencing human resource shortages in the region. Specific elements that may assist with this recommendation include:
  - Marketing of youth/young adults to employers, as some employers may be hesitant to work with youth (especially drop-outs or at-risk youth). Employer training to overcome negative stereotypes associated with youth/young adults may need to be included;
  - Consider incentives for employers who participate in such programs, especially with “at-risk” youth or youth/young adults who have not completed high school. These incentives could be non-financial such as community recognition award, community dinner or advertising and promotion;
  - Ensure that work experience opportunities are scheduled during school hours, or have some monetary compensation for after-school hours. Many youth/young adults stated dissatisfaction with unpaid work experience programs that require them to work in the evening or during weekends, when they could be doing paid work or other activities; and
  - Promotion of volunteerism to youth and young adults as an option towards gaining valuable work experience.
3. Build stronger networks between work experience opportunities (non-school based programs) and the agencies or schools that have the facilities to communicate directly with youth and young adults (i.e. high school guidance counselors and Youth Connections). Advertise programs in youth-specific campaigns.
4. Programs such as **Skills Link**, which is provided through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), may be beneficial to youth and young adults in the area. According to the HRSDC website, the Skills Link program “helps youth facing barriers to employment – such as single parents, Aboriginal youth, young persons with disabilities, recent immigrants, youth living in rural and remote areas, and high school dropouts – obtain the knowledge and develop the broad range of skills and work experience they need to participate in the job market.”<sup>30</sup> The **Skills Link** program would be beneficial to youth and young adults who are looking for work experience information/support.

#### 4.3 Education or Appropriate Skills

A commonly identified issue acting as a major barrier to youth and young adults finding or maintaining employment was a lack of sufficient education. This issue included the lack of marketable/employability skills, lack of a high school diploma, and poor access to post-secondary education or occupation-specific training.

<sup>30</sup> Government of Canada. Skills Link. Accessed June 29, 2005. <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/epb/yi/yep/newprog/skillslink.shtml>.

Consultations undertaken with youth, young adults, service providers and employers indicated that the employability skills perceived as important by service providers and youth were not always consistent with what employers indicated were important for them. For example, while many youth considered reading and writing abilities as an important employability skill, employers and service providers did not consider these as most important. Further, while behaving appropriately was considered important among employers and service providers, it was not considered as important among the youth and young adults consulted. Refer to Table 4-5.

**Table 4-5**  
**Employability Skills Identified as Important for Youth and Young Adults to Learn in Order to Prepare Them to Enter the Workforce - Top Five**

Youth	Service Provider	Employer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading/writing abilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with others</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to work with others in teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaving appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaving appropriately</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solving skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral communication skills</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict resolution skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solving skills</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solving skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to work with others in teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking skills, working in teams</li> </ul>

Low education attainments affect youth/young adults seeking a variety of positions, since there is a tendency towards increased credentialing across occupations and industry. Youth and young adults felt that all the “good jobs” in Vegreville required post-secondary education, and that employers offering positions related to basic labour or services were increasingly expecting young adults to have a high school diploma.

In relation to youth and young adults without a high school diploma, some service providers in the region noted that they felt that the educational funding priorities of the Province were increasingly turning from upgrading (to achieve a high school diploma) to specific job training. This was felt to ignore the increasing demands of employers for higher minimum levels of education from new employees.

Literature indicates that, in Canada, the unemployment rate for young people who drop out of secondary school before getting their certificate is twice the average rate. One study found that “only those who gain some post-secondary education (with or without certification) or a university degree have a lower-than-average probability of being unemployed. Throughout the period studied [1986-1996], their unemployment rate was about half that of unskilled young adults.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, the earlier that youth leave the educational system, the less likely they are to succeed in the labour market.

#### 4.3.1 Identified Programs and Services

A variety of initiatives exist in Vegreville to provide education and guidance to youth and young adults on post-secondary education and occupational training opportunities. The available programs and resources identified by the research are detailed in Table 4-4 below.

<sup>31</sup> Gross, 1998, pg. 16.

**Table 4-4  
Programs and Services in Vegreville & District that Provide  
Services Related to Education and Training to Youth and Young Adults**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Service Provider</b>	<b>Relevant Program Description &amp; Target Group<sup>32</sup></b>
Various Learning and Employment Foundations programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Portage College</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers programs in college preparation, pre-technology certificates, and pre-trades certificates to all adult learners</li> </ul>
Vegreville & Area Youth Connections Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vegreville &amp; District Family &amp; Community Support Services (FCSS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides one-on-one sessions, workshops, presentations about how to explore, research and access information to help with education/training planning, information on required qualifications for various jobs and post secondary programs</li> </ul>
Green Certificate Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administered by Alberta Agriculture, Food &amp; Rural Development</li> <li>Vegreville Composite High School</li> <li>St. Mary's High School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are placed in job placements supervised by experienced farm personnel. Course credits are earned for this work experience.</li> </ul>
Registered Apprenticeship Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administered by Alberta Education</li> <li>Implemented by Vegreville Composite High School, St. Mary's High School, Next Step Outreach Schools and employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows students to undertake recognized apprenticeship training while completing high school</li> </ul>
Work Experience Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vegreville Composite High School</li> <li>St. Mary's High School</li> <li>Next Step Outreach Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists students in arranging job shadow/work experience opportunities in a variety of occupations and workplace settings</li> <li>The schools have worked collaboratively to create a list of participating employers and develop a workbook to be used as a resource for all students entering the program</li> </ul>
Career and Life Management (CALM) course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offered by local high schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One aspect of CALM is to assist students in identifying possible career choices and assist with career planning, provide strategies on how to transition from school to work, learn about available training programs, learn employability skills, etc.</li> </ul>
Career and Technology Studies (CTS) course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offered by local junior high and high schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CTS is an program schools can access and provide in addition to the CALM program.</li> </ul>
Advancing Futures Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided by Alberta Children's Services (ACS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A bursary program eligible to those who currently are, or who have been under the care of ACS and are interested in obtaining a high school equivalency through adult education, earning a degree/diploma from an Alberta post-secondary institution, learning a trade and/or earning a license or certificate.</li> </ul>

<sup>32</sup> Many of the programs listed here have multiple programs, objectives and/or target groups. This column provides a summary of programs/services that provide employment related education/training. As such, not all aspects of an organization or program may be included.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Service Provider</b>	<b>Relevant Program Description &amp; Target Group<sup>33</sup></b>
Career Corner and other career related education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegreville Composite High School</li> <li>• Next Step Outreach School</li> <li>• St. Mary's High School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A program developed by the guidance department to increase awareness and communication of career information to students.</li> </ul>
High School Completion options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next Step Outreach School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows flexible, individualized learning options for drop-outs to complete high school</li> </ul>
Various programs and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VegMin Learning Network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers non-credit adult learning</li> <li>• Free tutoring is offered to adults requiring literacy, numeracy, and ESL training to all community members in need</li> </ul>
Vegreville Public Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegreville Public Library</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers emergent literacy programs</li> </ul>
"Way of Life"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Odette Boily – The Station Café</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life skills and social skills training</li> </ul>
Family literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Association for Lasting Success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers family literacy programs</li> </ul>

#### 4.3.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities

Youth and young adults from the town hall forum stated that they were not always aware of the limitations that they face in the job market without significant education. For example, there was the perception among these that many jobs in labour or the trades do not require high school diplomas, which is increasingly not the case. Employers interviewed in the consultation felt that many applicants for jobs did not have the minimum of a high school education, and did not recognize the need for their high school diploma. Further, employers noted that many youth do not understand the value or need for high school diploma for trades and related jobs, and lack basic communication and/or mathematical skills.

Although there is some post-secondary education available to students in the Vegreville and surrounding District, some young adults choose to leave the community to pursue further studies. Other young adults, however, were not able to leave the community to access programs that would allow them to undertake further education. Thus, these young adults felt that the need for an income was a higher priority than undertaking education, especially those who were independent or supporting families. This cycle can result in young adults becoming "trapped" into low-paying and unskilled work, which acts to discourage from pursuing long-term employment in one position or organization.

An identified barrier from the literature directly impacting the success of young adults in moving from secondary school into the workforce is Canada's relatively disjointed approach to occupational training and school to work transitions<sup>34</sup>. According to Marquardt (1999), the Canadian approach is based on a generalized system of education, which leads to a young workforce with fewer skills, and frequent and often long spells of unemployment. In contrast, Germany, which has a well-developed system of industry partnerships, on the job training

<sup>33</sup> Many of the programs listed here have multiple programs, objectives and/or target groups. This column provides a summary of programs/services that provide employment related education/training, As such, not all aspects of an organization or program may be included.

<sup>34</sup> Marquardt, R. 1999.

mechanisms, and occupationally specific education, has youth unemployment rates that have been systematically below the adult rates since the mid 1970's.<sup>35</sup>

Findings from the literature and community consultations indicated that major needs and priorities include:

- Developing additional means to deliver post-secondary education locally or assisting local youth/young adults in accessing educational opportunities either locally or in Edmonton;
- Supporting and promoting drop-outs/at-risk youth/young adults to complete a high school diploma; and
- Second chance education and occupational training may require other supports including transportation, daycare for single parents, drug and alcohol treatment, and other supports for at-risk youth.

#### 4.3.3 Recommendations

Major recommendations related to education that were generated from information obtained from the consultations and literature review include the following:

1. Emphasize the increasing educational expectations of employers in existing programs aimed at communicating workforce expectation to Vegreville and area youth, including CALM, CTS, and work experience;
2. Emphasize the workforce/employability skills required by local employers through existing programs at communicating with Vegreville and area youth and young adults, including CALM, Career Corner, and the Vegreville and area Youth Connections;
3. High school drop-outs should be encouraged to complete their high school diploma through existing and potential initiatives. This could include:
  - Promote and expand local upgrading programs, such as attaining a high school diploma through the Next Step Outreach schools;
  - Increase local service providers awareness of the "Accumulated Credits" option through Alberta Education, which provides "Discretionary Credits" that can be awarded for maturity.<sup>36</sup>; and
  - Foster the promotion of programs that would remove barriers local at-risk youth and young adults face in returning to school, such as daycare, housing and addictions.
4. **Skills Link** may also be beneficial to youth and young adults looking to acquire workplace skills and training.

## 4.4

<sup>35</sup> Cooke, L. 2003; Gross, D. 1998.

<sup>36</sup> These credits are awarded on a scale, which is based on the age of the applicant.

### **Access to Reliable Transportation**

An issue that was commonly identified throughout the consultations was difficulty with transportation. Although the Vegreville Transportation Service Society provides fare subsidies for taxi services, the lack of access to reliable, dependable transportation was considered a barrier for many youth/young adults in terms of trying get to job interviews, employment services or programs, and to the workplace once employment has been obtained.

Specific difficulties identified by youth, young adults, service providers, and employers during the consultations included a lack of affordable public transportation, limited or no access to a personal vehicle, and insufficient income to pay for gasoline and other costs associated with owning a car.

#### **4.4.1 Identified Programs and Services**

As noted in Section 2.4.1, Vegreville has two taxi services and Community Handivan for persons with disabilities and the Vegreville Transportation Service Society offer subsidized fare vouchers<sup>37</sup> for seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income families.

#### **4.4.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities**

Vegreville and District has no public transportation system and limited taxi facilities. The low population in the area makes it unlikely that a public transportation system will be developed in the near future. As such, the community needs to look at its pre-existing assets to generate solutions to this issue.

#### **4.4.3 Recommendations**

Major recommendations that were identified through the consultations include the following:

1. Develop an affordable shuttle system going to and from Edmonton on a daily basis that will allow youth and young adults to access post-secondary education or work experience/training opportunities and continue to reside in Vegreville and area.
2. Organize community car pools. Service providers, youth/young adults with vehicles, and other community volunteers could come together to create a car pool system that is mutually cost-shared and operates during standard as well as shift work hours.

### **4.5 Employer Attitudes and Behaviors**

Employer attitudes were identified as a common barrier to finding or maintaining employment. Examples of these attitudes that were identified through the consultations include:

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<sup>37</sup> Provided at varying rates depending on distance required for travel.

- Youth, young adults, and some service providers felt that employers are often judgmental of individuals based on community reputation of the youth/young adults, their friends, and/or their family.

*"I think it is all about who you know, it is a buddy-buddy system, it is not about how you work"*  
- Youth Interview Respondent

- Youth from the consultations felt employers were sometimes discriminatory based on preconceptions regarding youths' age or appearance. Youth attending the town hall forum felt that employers often did not hire youth simply because of their age. This was felt to be especially true when youth did not have a conservative look (i.e. facial piercing, dyed hair). Often, youth said that they did not have "the look" that employers were looking for. This was often due to not having developed a wardrobe suitable for employment or job interviews, not being considered attractive enough for restaurant staff or retail positions, or not understanding how to present themselves to employers.
- Many youth attending the town hall forum felt that they were often subjected to unsafe practices at the workplace, and that they were targeted by employers due to their vulnerability as young and inexperienced staff.
- Employers often will not take the time to allow youth and to learn on the job. It was felt by some youth that many employers were setting up youth for failure in new positions through a lack of on-the-job training. Many youth felt that they were not given enough training or instruction when beginning new positions, and were therefore not allowed a fair chance at succeeding at their jobs.

#### 4.5.1 Identified Programs and Services

A document entitled "A Guide to Rights and Responsibilities in the Workplace" is available to employers and employees through the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website<sup>38</sup>. However, employers/employees would need to be aware this document exists, and would need access to the Internet in order to retrieve it online.

*"I don't use the Internet much or read websites, but I always read the mail that comes to the shop."*  
- Local Employer

An employer may receive a needs assessment and coaching on working with persons with barriers to employment through Vegreville & Area Youth Connections and AHRE.

<sup>38</sup> A copy of the guide is available at the following link: [www.alis.gov.ab.ca/pdf/cshop/rightresponse.pdf](http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/pdf/cshop/rightresponse.pdf).

In recent months, there have been various opportunities for employers to attend Employment Standards workshops in Vegreville. These workshops have been offered as “brown bag lunch sessions” by Alberta Human Resource and Employment at the Alberta Works Vegreville Alberta Services Centre and most recently by the VegMin Learning Society as a one-day workshop.

#### 4.5.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities

To facilitate the entry of youth and young adults into the workforce, employer attitudes should allow for workplaces to be more youth-friendly. Thus, changing employer attitudes towards youth and young adults may be an important component of improving their labour force attachment.

One-on-one consultations with service providers in the Vegreville area indicated that there are seminars specifically designed for youth to inform them about employers’ expectations on the job and tips on how to effectively communicate with employers, however, there are no such programs designed for employers to teach them what to expect when employing youth or how to effectively communicate with them. Further, the research did not identify any community level programs or services that assist youth in obtaining work-related clothes or equipment. Examples of this need include agricultural, industrial or construction jobs that require steel-toed work boots, or retail/food service positions where employers expect new employees to pay for uniforms.

#### 4.5.3 Recommendations

Major recommendations generated from community consultations included:

1. Increase employer awareness of the range of wage supports available to them. Employers stated that wage supports programs are effective incentives for them to consider employing young and inexperienced employees who may lack experience.
2. A program or seminar could be designed for employers regarding what they can expect when employing youth and young adults and techniques for effective communication.
3. Although information is available online and through the LMIC, more can be done to inform youth and young adults of their rights in the workplace. As well, youth/young adults need to know how to apply and access their rights as workers. Career education and information services should include labour laws and employment standards, as well as address the issue of how to seek the enforcement of labour laws. This information could be communicated to youth through existing programs, such as CALM, CTS, and Career Corners.
4. Develop marketing materials emphasizing the advantages of working with youth and young adults, such as their enthusiasm to grow and develop with companies, computer and technology knowledge, energy levels, flexible schedules, and ability to learn quickly. This information could be distributed to Vegreville & District employers through service providers, such as Youth Connections and the Vegreville Regional Employment Centre.
5. Develop employee recognition awards that identify and profile specific youth/young adults who make a difference to their workplace or community. The local

newspapers could also be encouraged to promote the positive contributions of youth and young adults, to improve the image of youth in Vegreville & District.

6. Employers need to be encouraged and recognized for hiring youth and young adults. This encouragement and recognition could include:
  - Providing recognition to local employers who hire and support youth/young adults through community awards, community dinners, or other form of recognition; and
  - Developing tools for employers to link with youth/young adults and to be educated about working with youth/young adults. For example, local service providers could facilitate the development of a sensitization workshop for employers, delivered by local youth.

#### **4.6 Skills/Information for Career Planning or Job Searching**

Many of the youth/young adults interviewed were unaware of the career planning programs and services available to them. Those youth who were still attending high school were aware of the information provided through CALM and Youth Connections, however, they did not know about many of the other local community services available to them outside of the school. Thus, youth expressed an interest in receiving career planning and job search skills training, including how to write a resume, how to look for job openings and how to perform in an interview but were unaware of existing programs that taught these skills.

##### **4.6.1 Identified Programs and Services**

A number of courses, programs, and services offer career planning and job search training in Vegreville & District. For example, some career planning/exploration is undertaken in all local high schools through the Career and Life Management (CALM) program. This program is a mandatory course in which all area youth attending high school would participate.

As well, employment counseling, (such as career exploration and goal setting) is also offered through service providers, such as Youth Connections. Youth and young adults may also access career and labour market information through online resources, which are located through the following websites:

- The Alberta Learning & Information System (ALIS);
- The Career Counselors Consortium;
- Career Cruising;
- Job Futures;
- Jobs in Motion;
- CAP Youth Employment Initiatives; and
- Alberta Human Resources and Employment.

A list of available options in the area that provide relevant services includes the following table.

**Table 4-6  
Programs and Services in Vegreville & District that Provide Services to Youth and Young Adults Related to Career Planning and Job Searching**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Service Provider</b>	<b>Relevant Program Description &amp; Target Group<sup>39</sup></b>
Various programs and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegreville Composite High School</li> <li>• St. Mary's High School</li> <li>• Next Step Outreach School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers – the Next Generation</li> <li>• Career Corner</li> <li>• Career and Life Management (CALM) class</li> <li>• Career and Technology Studies (CTS)</li> <li>• "Careers" class</li> <li>• Career fairs</li> <li>• Work experience programs</li> </ul>
Vegreville & Area Youth Connections Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegreville &amp; District Family &amp; Community Support Services (FCSS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides assessments and activities to help client determine their personality, skills, values and interests and how the match to occupations and employment.</li> <li>• Teach a "hands on" process of how and where gather information, to research, decision making and making a plan to achieve goals through the use of the Career &amp; Education Planner Workbook</li> <li>• Educate the importance of researching the potential employer and the local labour market and how that matches their needs.</li> <li>• Provides assistance to determine, establish job placements</li> <li>• Development of cover letters and resume</li> <li>• Training with interview skills, job search etc</li> <li>• Provides job search assistance, local job postings, resume writing and interview skills workshops, labour market resources, and access to phone, fax and Internet.</li> </ul>
Career and Life Management (CALM) course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offered by local high schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes sections in the course on career planning and job seeking.</li> </ul>
Vegreville Public Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegreville Public Library</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers literacy based programs and peer-group programs to all community members.</li> </ul>
Alberta Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour Market Information Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers services such as resume development, interviewing skills, job search techniques, and career planning.</li> <li>• Some information that is specific to youth/young adults (for example, pamphlets on post secondary education and career planning).</li> <li>• Referrals to Youth Connections, Vegreville Regional Employment Centre and other resources as appropriate.</li> </ul>

<sup>39</sup> Many of the programs listed here have multiple programs, objectives and/or target groups. This column provides a summary of programs/services that provide career planning and job search services. As such, not all aspects of an organization or program may be included.

Program	Service Provider	Relevant Program Description & Target Group <sup>40</sup>
Alberta Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegreville Regional Employment Centre (Ability Network)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers workshops, job board maintenance, exposure courses, resume production and exposure courses administration.</li> <li>• Action plans for clients destined to Job Placement or Workplace Training.</li> <li>• Job Placement program delivery.</li> <li>• Workplace Training program delivery.</li> <li>• On the job support.</li> <li>• Referrals to Youth Connections, Labour Market Information Centre and other resources as appropriate.</li> </ul>

#### 4.6.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities

While local services exist for career and education planning and job search skills, a gap was identified in promoting these services in ways that reach the intended youth/young adult targets. Some of the youth and stakeholders consulted also felt that more could be done for career planning as early as junior high school. These stakeholders mentioned that early information on career planning for youth would help to plant the seed for further career exploration and planning.

Although career and employment services for youth and young adults are highly regarded in the community, there is an overall consensus between service providers and those involved in the school system that there are limited resources, particularly in terms of staffing. For example, there is one Career Advisor and Program Coordinator, who provides services specifically for youth and young adults between the ages of 16 and 24, at the Vegreville and Area Youth Connections office. However, it was noted that the Coordinator is responsible for providing services for Vegreville and its surrounding District and requires time to be spent at the local high schools, outreach schools, as well as the Youth Connections office. As a consequence, it was felt by some key informants, that there was not sufficient time available for intensive supports that may be required for some youth and young adults.

In addition, youth in the Vegreville and District consultations articulated shortcomings of the Career and Life Management (CALM) program that they felt minimize the efficacy of the program. These youth felt that the CALM program could provide more comprehensive goal setting exercises, detailed, up-to-date information on available careers, and how to access the "hidden" job market. In addition, those youth that drop out of high school do not undertake the CALM program, so additional efforts are needed to provide information and services to this group.

#### 4.6.3

<sup>40</sup> Many of the programs listed here have multiple programs, objectives and/or target groups. This column provides a summary of programs/services that provide career planning and job search services. As such, not all aspects of an organization or program may be included.

### Recommendations

Recommendations for improving career planning and job search skills training for youth and young adults in Vegreville & District that were identified through the consultations include the following:

With this best practice in consideration, Vegreville and District may consider

1. It was suggested by youth and young adults in the town hall forum preferred the idea of a single location where career and employment services can be accessed. This central location, which will act as the hub of a service delivery network, would provide youth and young adults information, services, information, and referrals to all associated employment and career-related services in the area. This network could bring together resources from local schools, community service providers, provincial government agencies, and federal government agencies to provide career planning and services in a more coordinated manner and increase youth/young adult awareness of available services. While many services are available in the Town of Vegreville, many youth and young adults who participated in the forum also felt that there could be small, satellite locations in the surrounding communities, and, with the understanding that this may not be possible/realistic, they would like to have information posted online, which provides access to information available at the central Vegreville location.
2. The CALM and CTS programs may not be effectively teaching all students the skills and information they need in their future careers. As many students believe they will be or are attending post-secondary school within five years of high school graduation (approximately 60%), assistance with resume writing, interviewing skills, and other information may be something they perceive they do not require. There therefore may be a need to reemphasize these skills when young adults are ready to learn them. This may require increased advertising of services available to young adults in the community after graduation.
3. More emphasis could be placed on the importance of goal setting and career planning, through programs such as CTS and career fairs, at the junior high school level.
4. Interviews undertaken with school guidance counselors and staff at the Next Step Outreach school indicated that the counseling provided by Youth Connections was very beneficial to the students, however, there is currently one advisor for all of Vegreville and District and more time for one-on-one sessions with students would be beneficial. Funding and resources should be available to ensure that career advisors are available to meet the demand by students and young adults.
5. **Skills Link**, may be beneficial to youth and young adults who wish to acquire additional skills/information for career planning and/or job searching.

#### **4.7 Work Ethic, Attitudes and Personal Attributes of Youth and Young Adults**

There is the perception that many youth and young adults lack the “traditional” work ethic and hold unrealistic expectations of obtaining high paying, professional jobs directly following school.

*"I think the youth have to realize they can't start at the top and receive \$25.00 - \$30.00 an hour. Experience costs money. They need a reality check, and real world experience in what is realistic. The need to not listen to the one exceptional story of someone just out of school making \$40.00 an hour and think that is standard for everyone."*

- Local Employer

Employers and service providers interviewed in the Vegreville and District consultations perceived several issues related to the work ethic of youth and young adults in the area, which in turn, may impact their ability to attach to the labour force, including:

- Irresponsible behaviour, such as arriving at work late or not showing up;
- Unwilling to "start at the bottom" and work hard to learn the business and advance accordingly;
- Putting in minimal effort on the job; and
- Lack of commitment to the workplace and frequently quitting/moving to another job.

Further, some service providers noted that youth and young adults may face barriers due to low self-esteem, lack of confidence, or a lack of developed communication or interpersonal skills. These issues impact their ability to find jobs, access available services or programming, or sustain employment. Self-esteem and lack of confidence issues may be especially significant for multi-barriered or more marginalized youth or young adults.

#### 4.7.1 Identified Programs and Services:

The CALM program and services such as those provided through Youth Connections and the Vegreville Association for Living in Dignity (VALID)) provide advice and coaching on how to successfully transition into the workforce. VALID also provides employment preparation and employment placement supports. In addition, the "Way of Life" program offered by Odette Boily provides life skills and social skills training to youth in the area.

#### 4.7.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities:

Many programs or services were felt to be too impersonal for some youth and young adults who attended the hall forum, and did not offer an accommodating or welcoming environment for youth.

Employers who were interviewed during the consultation identified attitudes of youth and young adults as a roadblock for successfully hiring and keeping young staff. These included problems understanding career progression and problems with attendance. Further, employers and service providers overall felt that youth/young adults lacked a clear understanding of what is expected of them in the labour force and that youth/young adults sometimes have difficulty in communicating and marketing themselves to employers.

To address barriers caused by low self-esteem and weak interpersonal skills, stakeholders stated that programs should build trust and rapport with youth/young adults. Comprehensive follow-up to ensure long-term trust and relationships are maintained was also considered to be important.

#### 4.7.3 Recommendations:

Major recommendations that were identified through the consultations included the following:

1. Youth and young adults may be unaware of all of the services and programs available to them to improve interpersonal or communication skills. Promotion of these services could be facilitated through additional advertising within the community and the schools.
2. Employment programs currently available in the community could be expanded to include more one-on-one counseling (through increased staff/resources). Service providers articulated that funding levels have not increased sufficiently for them to meet expenses, including providing appropriate salaries and benefits to staff. Service providers were also felt to require more operational funding to ensure they can keep staff during the funding break periods. Longer-term funding for service providers and programming will encourage retention of new staff to help foster long-term relationships with the community.
3. Components of the **Skills Link** program may be beneficial to youth and young adults looking to improve their interpersonal and/or communication skills

#### 4.8 Need For a Coordinating Steering Committee

In order to address the issues and recommendations of this project, an ongoing coordinating body is required. This body would work across government agencies to address the findings of consultations undertaken for this project.

##### 4.8.1 Identified Programs and Services:

Vegreville & District currently does not have a coordinating body specifically addressing employment services for youth and young adults. Currently, Alberta Works counselors and contracted agencies discuss issues pertaining to delivery services for youth and young adults as well as funding opportunities. This information is then shared during Vegreville Interagency Group meetings and Vegreville Employment and Labour Market Forum meetings.

##### 4.8.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities:

Research undertaken for this project demonstrates the need for an ongoing steering committee to address the recommendations and identified issues of the *Information for Delivery of Youth Services Report, Vegreville & District*.

##### 4.8.3 Recommendations:

A steering committee could be set-up to facilitate the coordination of services for youth and young adults on an ongoing basis. This coordination could involve the development of a youth and young adult advisory committee to assist in the coordination and development of services to youth and young adults in Vegreville & District. Further details regarding the development of this committee can be found in Section 5.1.

#### 4.9 Other Identified Issues

While the previous sections identified some of the major themes of the consultations with supporting findings from the literature, there were other issues that were seen as barriers to youth and young adults in the labour force. Some of these issues are briefly discussed below.

##### ***Single parents face additional pressures and demands that pose barriers to employment.***

The literature suggests that single parents have additional considerations when considering employment. In addition to challenges identified previously, such as poor access to reliable transportation and lack of relevant workforce experience, single parents also must consider the availability of childcare, the costs associated with childcare in relation to their potential single income, among others. The Government of Alberta has a number of programs to assist those without or with low income remain in the workforce, such as the Alberta Child Health Benefit, Day Care Subsidy, and earnings exemptions.<sup>41</sup> Provision of the Alberta Child Health Benefit is designed to encourage those to enter the workforce who may otherwise remain on social assistance in order to access health benefits for their children.<sup>42</sup> Regarding earning exemptions, a person receiving financial assistance may increase their earnings by working and “only a portion of their employment earnings are taken into account when their benefits are calculated.”<sup>43</sup>

##### ***Family Stability Issues May Create Increased Barriers to Workforce Attachment***

Service providers indicated that youth and young adults who have been at one time, or who currently are in the care of Alberta Children’s Services, might require additional assistance in their attempts to attach themselves to the labour force.

In order to help combat some of the challenges youth and young adults who been under the care of Alberta Children’s Services (ACS) may face, ACS provides an education bursary called the “Advancing Futures” award. This bursary is available to youth and young adults between the ages of 16 and 22 who have had child welfare status for at least 18 months while between the ages of 13 and 18. In addition to the financial assistance provided by the bursary, the student has the opportunity to become part of a “support team” which will provide mentorship and emotional support throughout the process.

##### ***Youth and young adults with Disabilities or other Health-related Challenges Face Severe Barriers to Labour Force Attachment.***

Service providers noted that there is a small population of youth and young adults with disabilities and chronic health issues who are under-served by employment related

<sup>41</sup> National Child Benefit. *National Child Benefit Progress Report: 2001*. 2002. Retrieved July 18, 2005.

<http://www.nationalchildbenefit.ca/ncb/NCB-2002/a5-AB.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Nichols Applied Management. *Survey of Recipients of the Alberta Child Health Benefit: Final Report*. 2003. Retrieved July 18, 2005. [http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/achb/pdf/ACHB\\_final\\_2003.pdf](http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/achb/pdf/ACHB_final_2003.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Alberta Human Resources and Employment. *About Income Support*. Accessed July 22, 2005. <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/isp/>.

programming in the area. Identified disabilities and illnesses affecting some youth and young adults in the Vegreville area include physical disabilities, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Asperger's Syndrome, and chronic depression.

Youth and young adults who are battling with addictions, or with addictions in their past, were felt to face significant barriers to employment. Some service providers noted that they felt that there were insufficient programs that provide long-term treatment. As well, addiction problems are often "talked about" in the local community and an individual with an addiction may face discrimination from local employers after the individual is in recovery.

### ***Barriers to Self Employment***

Youth and young adults seeking self-employment may face barriers particular to those seeking entrepreneurship as a career. Barriers for these youth and young adults may include a lack of support or preparation for self-employment as a career option from families or the secondary school system, barriers to bank loans for business start-ups, perceived lack of credibility in the business community, pervasive stereotypes around entrepreneurship, and others. By ensuring that entrepreneurship is consistently presented by the educational system, and training and employment programs, it increases the perception of self-employment as a viable career option.

Current programs in place to assist youth and young adults become self-employed can be found in Section 4.2.1.

### ***Barriers to Employment in the Trades***

Sector studies undertaken by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., 2003, for example) has identified the critical need for young workers to fill skill and labour gaps in occupational areas related to the trades. Additional consultations with staff at Apprenticeship and Industry Training<sup>44</sup> have also indicated that there is a shortage of youth and young adults entering the trades both provincially, and nationally.

Previous research undertaken by the Consultant indicates that youth are not being attracted to the trades, due in part to the poor overall image of the trades among youth and a lack of formal promotion of school-to-work transitioning into the trades. In addition, research indicates there is a lack of trades-related information for youth, and especially for Aboriginal youth (R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., 2003).

Although the RAP program does exist within all schools in Vegreville & District, this program traditionally has been administered by School Counselors, many of whom have limited time to devote to the overall program. The coordination of this program then becomes challenging for local high schools in terms of further promoting trades to youth as an acceptable alternative to other post-secondary options, such as attending university.

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<sup>44</sup> Further information about trades training in Alberta can be accessed through the Apprenticeship and Industry Training website at [www.tradesecrets.org](http://www.tradesecrets.org).

## SECTION:5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COORDINATION, COMMUNICATION, AND EVALUATION STRATEGIES

The recommendations detailed in the following sections are a result of the project findings and incorporate standard evaluation practices. The recommendations for coordination, communication and evaluation may be used by the Vegreville & District Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee to undertake further research activities related to the current project.

### 5.1 Recommendations for Improved Coordination and Delivery of Youth and Young Adult Employment Services

As evidenced in the research findings, the issues impacting employment in Vegreville & District for youth and young adults are inter-connected and as such, coordination and communication is required among service providers and key stakeholders. With that in consideration, the Consultant proposes the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1: The Vegreville & District Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee Could Establish a Coordinating Body to Initiate a Plan/Process to Implement the Recommendations from this Report.

A coordinating body of stakeholders within and across government agencies could help to coordinate funding and improve services for youth and young adults. The coordinating body could involve a range of stakeholders accounting for many different aspects of youth need (e.g. completing high school education, accessing career information, supports for people with disabilities, and health-related information). As well, members of the Interagency Group and the Vegreville Employment and Labour Market Forum could be approached to join members of the current Vegreville and District Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee to cooperatively address and implement the recommendations from this report.

Research undertaken by the Consultant for the *Edmonton Region Plan for the Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007* on behalf of the Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee indicated that a new coordinating body could have some link to the Alberta Child and Youth Initiative (ACYI), as it is a provincial cross-ministry initiative designed to deal with children and youth issues in Alberta. The ACYI includes representatives from Alberta Human Resources & Employment, Alberta Justice, Alberta Solicitor General, Alberta Children's Services, Alberta Community Development, Alberta Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development, Alberta Learning, and Alberta Health and Wellness.

Recommendation #2: The Youth/Young Adult Employment Coordinating Body Could Receive Input on Programs and Services from a Youth and Young Adult Advisory Committee.

It is considered by many that involving the target group is critical when designing and implementing a program, service, or initiative that will be effective and sustainable. Taking this best practice into consideration, the Consultant is recommending the creation of Youth Advisory Committee.

Under the direction of an adult advisor, the committee would meet several times per year and could consist of up to 10 members of varying ages and from various locations within Vegreville & District. The Committee's activities do not necessarily need to focus solely on employment, but may branch to include other topics such as education and recreation.

*"Young people can clearly define the challenges they face. They are a source of innovative ideas for both business and service development. Many want to stay in rural areas and can identify what needs to be done to keep them there."*

- MLA Steering Committee Report on Rural Development

Recommendation #3: An Implementation Strategy could involve a number of key steps.

The development of an implementation plan will be an important step in ensuring that comprehensive and effective employment services are offered to youth and young adults in Vegreville and the surrounding district. To this end, the Consultant recommends the following steps be taken to develop an implementation plan:

1. The Youth Engagement Steering Committee should determine if its membership/participation should be adapted or supplemented in order to develop a "coordinating body" to implement the recommendations of this report. This coordinating body should be used to develop a long-range implementation plan. While deciding about the future coordinating body's form and membership, the Consultant is recommending the following to be taken into consideration:
  - Is the current membership appropriate to address the overall recommendations of the research in terms of the government agencies represented?
  - Is the current membership from each of the relevant agencies appropriate?
  - How should potential new members be approached for inclusion in the future?
2. A review of the current report's recommendations with all members of the coordinating body to identify priorities, "next steps", and strategic goals.
3. Preparation of coordinating body's response to recommendations, including which recommendations will be addressed.
4. Establish timelines and funding arrangements for implementation of response activities.

Recommendation #4: The Inventory of Programs Offered for Youth and Young Adults Should be Adjusted and Modified as Programs become Discontinued and New Programs are Introduced.

The Consultant recommends that the Steering Committee oversee the modification of the inventory of programs offered for youth and young adults in Vegreville & District, as necessary. An up-to-date and comprehensive inventory would facilitate the identification of gaps or duplication in services, as well as act as a first step in the possible coordination of

services for youth and young adults through a service delivery network. Information collected could include the available programming, the level of funding, eligibility criteria, target clients, and other information.

## **5.2 Recommendations for a Communication Strategy**

The Vegreville & District Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee recognizes the need to disseminate findings and recommendations from the current study among all relevant parties in the community and all levels of government. The Consultant has developed the following recommendations for a communication strategy. This communication strategy is in addition to the roundtable planned for the project, which will provide validation and initial reaction to the project conclusions and recommendations.

### **Recommendation #1: Disseminate Findings Among Stakeholders**

The Steering Committee could distribute a summary report of the Final Report to identified stakeholders. The Consultant could work with the Committee to provide the names of stakeholders consulted throughout the current project, as well as resources available to identify other relevant stakeholders.

### **Recommendation #2: Publicize a Summary Report Through the Internet and other Means**

The Consultant recommends providing access to the final Report or a summary report through the Internet. For example, the report could be posted on all Steering Committee agency websites.

Report findings could also be publicised through venues such as the Vegreville Interagency Group. A copy could be sent to all appropriate stakeholders.

### **Recommendation #3: Steering Committee Should Publicize its Response to the Report, Including Next Steps**

Once the Steering Committee has had the opportunity to review the report and its recommendations, a formal response to the report should be drafted and disseminated. The purpose of this response is to ensure that the stakeholders and general public is made aware of how the information contained in the report will be used, what the Steering Committee sees as key points or recommendations, and what the next steps will be.

### **Recommendation #4: Potential Key Messages**

In putting forward initial communication messages, the following messages may be communicated consistently with stakeholders:

- The Steering Committee is fully intending to move forward immediately with the lessons learned from the consultations in order to work to improve the coordination of services for youth and young adults in Vegreville & District.
- The current research and report is the product of a private research company, R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., and as such is a tool for use by the Steering Committee, as well as for other stakeholders, rather than a document produced by any or all of the constituent members of the Steering Committee. The

recommendations are put forward by the Consultant as possible options to pursue, and may or may not be addressed by future Steering Committee activities.

- The research was not intended to be comprehensive, and did not mean to exclude the input of any stakeholders.
- The Steering Committee will continue to engage the participation of the Vegreville & District community as it moves forward.
- The issues and recommendations of this research were developed with the significant input of youth, young adults, and local service providers.

### **5.3 Recommendations for an Evaluation Strategy Plan**

The Vegreville & District Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee plans to utilize evaluation to determine whether the implementation of current and future programming has made a substantial difference to youth and young adults in Vegreville & District.

It is recommended that a summative evaluation be conducted approximately one (1) year post-program implementation. The details specific to the evaluation activities will be dependent somewhat upon the program(s) being evaluated, however, the following general evaluation activities are recommended:

1. Develop a logic model in consultation with the newly formed youth and young adult coordinating body/steering committee, and other stakeholders as necessary. The logic model would contain the following:
  - Overall objectives of the program;
  - Inputs into the program (e.g. funding, supports, guidelines for best practices);
  - A description of the activities/outputs; and
  - A description of the anticipated short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes.
2. Develop an evaluation framework based on the program logic model. The framework would detail the following:
  - The outcomes to be measured;
  - The evaluation issues to be examined for each outcome;
  - Outcome indicators; and
  - The sources of data/methods for collection.

The evaluation issues to be examined would be developed in consultation with stakeholders. An example of an evaluation framework can be found in Appendix A.

3. Based on the outcome indicators and the methods of data collection outlined in the evaluation framework, appropriate data collection tools would be developed. Examples of the tools that may be utilized include surveys, key informant interview guides, and focus group moderator guides.
4. Analyze data collected and report on evaluation findings.

The Consultant recommends that in order to facilitate an evaluation for specific initiatives/programs developed through the Steering Committee, the following steps be undertaken:

1. Concurrent with the establishment of specific initiatives, the Steering Committee should develop specific data requirements that will be useful for later use in evaluation. Data should be collected throughout any implemented activities, to allow for its use in subsequent evaluative activities.
2. Baseline data should be collected prior to the implementation of a new program/initiative in order to accurately report on the impacts/outcomes of the program/initiative. For example, participants may be asked a number of questions prior to participating in a specific program (e.g. intake survey) at which point their contact information, along with their consent for further participation, could be collected in order to complete a follow-up survey, focus group, etc.

**APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**

### Example Evaluation Framework

Outcome	Evaluation Issues	Indicators	Methods/Data Sources
<b>Formative Evaluation</b>			
Initiative/Program Design and Implementation	Has the program/initiative been implemented as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Activities/outputs detailed in the logic model have been incorporated</li> <li>➤ Training supports are provided to program staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Site visit</li> <li>➤ Administrative data/document review</li> <li>➤ Key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders</li> </ul>
	Are there mechanisms in place to identify community need or gaps in community service delivery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Availability of tools or processes to review community and client need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Site visit</li> <li>➤ Administrative data/document review</li> </ul>
	Are there processes in place to evaluate, monitor and/or report on the results of the implementation of the program/initiative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There are processes in place to collect information to support evaluation and ongoing program monitoring (e.g. processes for data collection, data collection instruments, collation, tabulation and reporting)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Site visits</li> <li>➤ Administrative data/document review</li> <li>➤ Key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders</li> </ul>
	Does the program/initiative address existing need in the community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There are mechanisms in place to assess community need (e.g. surveys, interviews)</li> <li>➤ The program/initiative has positively influenced service delivery in the community</li> <li>➤ Programming meets the needs of clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Site visits</li> <li>➤ Administrative data/document review</li> <li>➤ Key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders</li> <li>➤ Pre/Post surveys of clients</li> <li>➤ General population survey</li> </ul>
<b>Unintended Outcomes</b>	Are there emerging challenges or opportunities resulting from the implementation program/initiative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Outcomes resulting from the implementation of the program/initiative differ from what was anticipated</li> <li>➤ The community has emerging needs that are not addressed by the program/initiative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders</li> <li>➤ General population survey</li> <li>➤ Client survey</li> </ul>

Outcome	Evaluation Issues	Indicators	Methods/Data Sources
<b>Short-Term Outcomes</b>			
Development of a youth and young adult employment service delivery network	Is the employment service delivery network accessible to youth and young adults in the community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The delivery areas of program provide service to all communities within Vegreville &amp; District</li> <li>➤ The public's level of awareness of the program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Administrative data/document review</li> <li>➤ General population survey</li> </ul>
Increase in the scope of programming available to clients in response to identified service gaps	How and to what extent does the program/initiative contribute to the development of programming that addresses services gaps in employment programs for youth and young adults?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Client satisfaction with the comprehensiveness and availability of programs and services provided by the program/initiative</li> <li>➤ Client satisfaction with the opportunities they have to provide input into programming</li> <li>➤ Demonstrated link between client's needs and available programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ General population survey</li> <li>➤ Focus groups with clients</li> <li>➤ Client survey</li> <li>➤ Pre/Post surveys of clients</li> <li>➤ Key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders</li> <li>➤ Administrative data/ document review</li> </ul>
Availability and accessibility of services	To what extent has the program/initiative succeeded in increasing availability and accessibility of employment programs for youth and young adults?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Program's location(s) and hours of operation are viewed as convenient and accessible</li> <li>➤ Client satisfaction with accessibility to services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Administrative data/document review</li> <li>➤ Key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders</li> <li>➤ Client survey</li> <li>➤ Pre/Post surveys of clients</li> </ul>
An increase in partnerships among community services providing information and resource services for youth and young adults	To what extent has the program/initiative succeeded in developing and maintaining partnerships with youth/young adult- and employment-related community services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Extent to which partnerships have developed with community service providers as a result of the program/initiative</li> <li>➤ Partnerships identify and overcome barriers to success</li> <li>➤ Mechanisms are in place to manage client information</li> <li>➤ Mechanisms are in place to manage conflict between partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Survey of community service providers</li> <li>➤ Administrative data/document review</li> <li>➤ Key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders</li> <li>➤ Site visits</li> </ul>
An increase in the number of youth and young adults who participate in employment programs	Who are the youth and young adults reached by the program/initiative? Are they part of specific groups? Are there marginalized youth who are not participating in the programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reported client satisfaction with the comprehensiveness and availability of programs provided to them</li> <li>➤ Demographic characteristics of the clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Survey of clients</li> <li>➤ Administrative data/document review</li> </ul>

Outcome	Evaluation Issues	Indicators	Methods/Data Sources
<b>Medium-Term Outcomes</b>			
An increase in the proportion of clients who report improved employability skills	What did the program/initiative do to promote employability skills in youth/young adults?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Client reported improved knowledge of employability skills</li> <li>➤ Client reported improved knowledge of how various employability skills relate to the job market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Client pre-post survey</li> <li>➤ Focus Groups</li> </ul>
An increase in the proportion of clients who report increased knowledge of career choices available to them	To what extent has the program/initiative increased youth/young adults' knowledge of careers choices available to them? To what extent has the program/initiative increased youth/young adults' knowledge of how to attain their chosen career?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number and percent of clients who report an increased knowledge of careers choices</li> <li>➤ Number and percent of clients who report an increased knowledge of how to attain their chosen career</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Client pre-post survey</li> </ul>
Identification of best practices in service delivery to youth/young adults	To what extent have best practices in service delivery to youth/young adults been identified and implemented? Are there barriers to implementing best practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The extent to which best practices in service delivery to youth/young adults are identified</li> <li>➤ The extent to which best practices in service delivery to youth/young adults are implemented</li> <li>➤ Stakeholders report barrier(s) to implementation of best practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Administrative data/document review</li> <li>➤ Site visits</li> <li>➤ Focus Groups</li> <li>➤ Key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>Long-Term Outcomes</b>			
A increase in the number of youth/young adults who find sustainable employment after accessing the youth employment program	To what extent did the program/initiative contribute to the number of youth/young adults who find sustainable employment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number and percent of youth/young adults who find sustainable employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Administrative data/document review</li> <li>➤ Client pre-post survey</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX B: BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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**APPENDIX C: YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT EMPLOYMENT  
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

Name	Phone Number	Address	Clients Served	Programs Offered
Girl Guides of Canada	632-3038	N/A	Girls aged 5 to adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaches girls to be independent, reach their potential, be confident, and be caring by offering different activities</li> <li>Teaches leadership, initiative, and personal development</li> </ul>
First Vegreville Scouts	632-7380	N/A	Youth aged 5 to 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps improve boys' and girls' camping, outdoor, social, and leadership skills</li> </ul>
AWANA Boys and Girls Club	632-2261	Vegreville Alliance Church 4606 55th Ave. Vegreville, AB T9C 1G3	Youth aged 8 to 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once a week Christian boys and girls program with games and teaching</li> <li>Junior varsity for ages 13 to 15 with activities and Christian instruction</li> </ul>
Vegreville 4-H Multi Club	632-2673	Box 366 Vegreville, AB T9C 1R4	Youth aged 9 to 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaches social, work, and communication skills through projects such as Sheep, Crafts, Senior Opportunities, Clothing, Food, and Small Engines</li> </ul>
Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron #341	895-2289	Mundare, AB	Youth aged 13 to 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages youth to become active and responsible members of their communities</li> <li>Teaches life and work skills such as teamwork, leadership, and citizenship</li> <li>Helps with self-confidence, taking initiative, and decision making</li> </ul>
Vegreville & Area Youth Connections Program	632-3966	FCSS Office, Lower Level 4829 50 St. <u>Mailing Address:</u> Box 640 Vegreville, AB T9C 1R7	Youth aged 16 to 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Services include Career &amp; Education Planning, Job Search Assistance, Job Postings, Resume/Cover Letter Production, Interview Skills, Labour Market Resources, Work Experience, Job Shadowing, Entrepreneurial Information, Informational Interviews, Training/Workshops, Fax, Phone, Internet</li> <li>Services for Employers, Educators and Parents</li> <li>Referrals to AHRE Labour Market Information Centre and Career Consultants, Vegreville Regional Employment Centre and other resources as appropriate</li> </ul>

Name	Phone Number	Address	Clients Served	Programs Offered
Local High Schools and Outreach Schools	N/A	N/A	High school students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Career and Life Management (CALM)</u>: a compulsory course for high school graduation that covers the areas of Personal Choices, Resource Choices, and Career and Life Choices</li> <li>• <u>Career and Technology Studies</u>: an additional career related program offered by Alberta Education. Schools may chose the program strands and courses they offer to their students, such as job preparation, working with others, and personal safety.</li> <li>• <u>Green Certificate Program</u>: an optional off campus education program that gives students the opportunity to enter agriculture-related learning pathways as a part of their senior high school program and to earn a credential leading to a career in agribusiness. Students learn on the job, under the direction of experienced farm personnel and under the supervision and administration of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD) and Alberta Learning.</li> <li>• <u>Registered Apprenticeship Program</u>: an optional off campus education program that allows students to take apprenticeship training while completing their high school diplomas.</li> <li>• <u>Work Experience</u>: an optional off campus education program. Local schools have pooled their lists of employers who want to participate in work experience for students and share the booklet with all students entering the program. The student will be able to read about the business including hours of operation, job duties, personal skills, transferable skills, and required competencies.</li> <li>• <u>Integrated Occupational Program</u>: this program is offered to high school students who have difficulties completing other school programs. In order to prepare these students for the workplace, the program provides occupational courses, such as automotive services, construction services, and hair care in addition to their regular coursework.</li> <li>• <u>Career Corners, Career Fairs, and Canada Career Week</u> activities</li> </ul>

Name	Phone Number	Address	Clients Served	Programs Offered
Vegreville Composite High School	632-3341	Box 1348 Vegreville, AB T9C 1S5	High school students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a “Career Corner” to centralize career resources</li> <li>• Grade 12 individual interviews to discuss post secondary options</li> <li>• Post-secondary scholarship information night for students and parents</li> <li>• Visits from various post secondary institutions</li> <li>• Scholarship binders</li> <li>• Job shadow opportunities</li> <li>• Career Cruising and Bridges/Choices computer software</li> <li>• Promotion of “It’s a Matter of Choice”</li> <li>• Promotion of NAIT Trades Camp and U of A Exploration Experience</li> <li>• Resume writing/portfolio after school workshops</li> </ul>
Next Step Outreach School	632-7998	50 Avenue Vegreville, AB <u>Mailing Address:</u> Box 696 Vegreville, AB T9C 1R7	Youth aged 16 to 20 who cannot attend or have not had success in traditional high schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows students flexibility in completing their high school diploma</li> <li>• Students use Alberta Distance Learning Centre and school-developed materials to individualize their timetables and programs</li> </ul>

Name	Phone Number	Address	Clients Served	Programs Offered
Lamont-Two Hills Business Development Corporation	657-3512	PO Box 547 Two Hills, AB T0B 4K0	Some programs are specifically targeted to youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Investment Fund Loan Program</u>: helps existing viable businesses within the County of Lamont, County of Minburn, County of Two Hills, and Strathcona County that have been turned down by at least two other financial institutions</li> <li>• <u>Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program</u>: helps people over the age of 18 who have mental or physical disabilities to start up their own business</li> <li>• <u>Western Youth Entrepreneur Program</u>: provides financial assistance to youths (18-29) who live in rural Western Canada to start businesses</li> <li>• <u>I want to be a Millionaire Youth Program</u>: gives youth (12-18) basic business training and \$100 in seed capital to start their business</li> </ul>
VegMin Learning Network	632-7920	4923 50 St. Vegreville, AB T9C 1R4	Not specifically targeted to youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides non-credit programming for adults in Vegreville and the County of Minburn</li> <li>• VegMin Literacy offers free tutoring to adults needing help with reading, writing, math or English language skills</li> <li>• Provides access for the public to the Internet through several Community Access Computers</li> </ul>
Vegreville Public Library	632-3492	Box 129 Vegreville, AB T9C 1R1	Not specifically targeted to youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services by age group and interest</li> <li>• Internet access, literacy-based programs, and peer-based groups</li> <li>• New library will have pre-teen and teen area and hire high school (grades 9-12) and college students</li> </ul>

Name	Phone Number	Address	Clients Served	Programs Offered
Vegreville Association for Living in Dignity (VALID)	632-2418	4843 49 St. Vegreville, AB T9C 1K7	Not specifically targeted to youth  Serves people with developmental challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers Employment Preparation Supports program that prepares individuals for employment by increasing their skill level in a variety of work environments such as janitorial, retail, catering, recycling and volunteering</li> <li>• Employment Placement and Supports program focuses on individuals reaching their maximum potential in their work environment by removing barriers that limit their independence</li> <li>• Pot-O-Gold provides individuals with the opportunity to prepare themselves for employment in a retail setting</li> <li>• The Vegreville and District Recycling Depot is a partnership between VALID and the Town of Vegreville. It provides individuals with employment preparation support skills</li> <li>• Centerpoint Cafe is allows individuals who work there to have the opportunity to experience and prepare themselves for work in the catering/food/hospitality industry</li> <li>• Outreach service provides individuals the opportunity to live, work or volunteer in their communities while receiving the individualized supports required to meet their needs</li> </ul>
Labour Market Information Centre	632-5453	24 Husky Plaza Mall 5341 50 Ave. Vegreville, AB T9C 1P8	Serving youth aged 18 - 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers services such as resume development, interviewing skills, job search techniques, and career planning</li> <li>• Has some information that is specific to youths (for example, pamphlets on post secondary education and career planning)</li> <li>• Referrals to Youth Connections, Vegreville Regional Employment Centre and other resources as appropriate</li> </ul>

Name	Phone Number	Address	Clients Served	Programs Offered
Vegreville Regional Employment Centre (Ability Network)	632-5453	Husky Plaza Mall 5341 50 Ave. Vegreville, AB T9C 1P8	Serving youth aged 18 - 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers workshops, job board maintenance, exposure courses, resume production and exposure courses administration</li> <li>• Action plans for clients destined to Job Placement or Workplace Training</li> <li>• Job Placement program delivery</li> <li>• Workplace Training program delivery</li> <li>• On the job support</li> <li>• Referrals to Youth Connections, Labour Market Information Centre and other resources as appropriate</li> </ul>
WJS Vegreville Resource Centre	632-2332	PO Box 734 Vegreville, AB T9C 1R8	Not specifically targeted to youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers resume and cover letter help to people over the age of 18 with developmental disabilities</li> <li>• Fee for services</li> </ul>
Portage College	632-5420	39, Husky Plaza Mall 5341 50 Ave. Vegreville, AB	Adult learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers Learning and Employment Foundations programs in College Preparation, Pre-Technology Certificates, and Pre-Trades Certificates</li> </ul>