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Impact Evaluation of the Canadian Coal Transition Initiative (CCTI) and Canadian Coal Transition Initiative – Infrastructure Fund (CCTI-IF) Final Evaluation Report

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500-363 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB, R3C 3N9
Phone: 204.987.2030 Fax: 204.989.2454
Toll-free (English): 1-888-877-6744
Toll-free (French): 1-866-422-8468
Email: admin@pra.ca

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Executive Summary

Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan) conducted an impact evaluation of the Canada Coal Transition Initiative (CCTI) and the Canada Coal Transition Initiative – Infrastructure Fund (CCTI-IF) in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The purpose of the impact evaluation was to assess the programs' relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness in meeting their objectives as the coal sector transitions to cleaner energy sources. The evaluation covered the initiatives from the inception of the CCTI on April 1, 2018 to January 23, 2025. The performance of the CCTI and the CCTI-IF in achieving their short- and medium-term outcomes in Alberta and Saskatchewan was assessed, as well as the likelihood of the programs achieving their long-term outcomes after funding ends.

Program profile

In 2016, the Government of Canada announced its plan to phase out coal-fired electricity by 2030 as part of its Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. This phase-out would significantly affect workers and communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. In response, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) established the Just Transition Task Force (JTTF or Task Force). The Task Force formulated ten recommendations, three of which led to the development of the CCTI and CCTI-IF.

CCTI: The CCTI included \$25 million for PrairiesCan to disburse to impacted regions and communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The CCTI concentrated on community-level economic diversification, where projects under the initiative were developed based on community-identified needs from PrairiesCan engagement with communities. CCTI-funded projects included feasibility studies and activities to assess and plan for community's needs, employment transition centres, and so forth. In Alberta there are 15 CCTI projects amounting to \$14,603,870 in funding, and in Saskatchewan there are a total of 29 CCTI projects amounting to \$8,928,373 in funding.

CCTI-IF: The CCTI-IF included \$105 million for PrairiesCan to disburse to impacted communities. CCTI-IF-funded projects focussed on improving a community's infrastructure. CCTI-IF project activities included construction of industrial parks, testing facilities, improved community centres, and so forth. In Alberta there are 14 CCTI-IF projects amounting to \$64,390,362 in funding, and in Saskatchewan there are 14 CCTI-IF projects totaling \$33,191,400 in funding.

Impacted regions in Alberta and Saskatchewan included:

#	Province	Region	Impacted mine
1	Alberta	Leduc County	Genesee
2	Alberta	Parkland County	Highvale
3	Alberta	Battle River	Paintearth
4	Alberta	Harvest Sky	Sheerness
5	Saskatchewan	Estevan	Estevan
6	Saskatchewan	Coronach	Poplar River Mine

Methodology

The evaluation included five data collection methods: document and database review, economic analysis, case studies of impacted regions (n = 6), interviews with PrairiesCan staff (n = 8), and a survey of stakeholders (n = 24). Limited end-user feedback was the main challenge for this evaluation.

Findings – Relevance

Program relevance in Alberta and Saskatchewan

- The CCTI and CCTI-IF programs were **highly relevant** in both Alberta and Saskatchewan.
- They addressed **economic development needs** in communities affected by the coal phase-out.
- However, concerns were raised about:
 - The **limited duration** of the programs.
 - **Insufficient integration** with other necessary social supports.

Economic context of targeted regions

- Six regions in Alberta and Saskatchewan were **economically dependent on coal mines**.
- These regions have experienced:
 - **Declining populations**.
 - **Shrinking tax bases**.
 - **Reduced workforce** at coal mines and generating stations, even before mine closures.
- The regions with **larger populations** tended to:
 - Have **less industry concentration**.
 - Be **more economically diversified**.
 - Have **greater potential for further diversification**.

Community engagement and project identification

- CCTI and CCTI-IF supported **community economic development projects** identified through:
 - **Community engagement** conducted at the start of the CCTI.
 - **Collaboration** between communities and PrairiesCan.
- Where feasible projects were not immediately apparent:
 - The CCTI funded **feasibility studies** and **economic strategies** guided development.

Need for continued support

- **Ongoing support** is essential to achieve long-term outcomes for both the programs and the communities.
- Both provinces need:
 - Continued investment to **build on existing projects**.
 - Support for **further economic diversification** to ensure **sustainable community development**.
- **Impacted regions in Alberta** have been **more effective** in meeting community needs **than impacted regions in Saskatchewan**, due to:
 - **Ongoing coal operations** in Saskatchewan.
 - **Smaller, more remote communities** in Saskatchewan, especially **Coronach**.

Parkland County, through CCTI funding, developed a **Wabamun Area Development Strategy**. The project included undertaking economic analyses, land use planning strategies, and stakeholder engagement to develop comprehensive land management plans. The analyses identified economically viable development for the Wabamun area as a whole. Parkland County, through CCTI-IF funding, upgraded a wastewater facility, developed a water feature, and redeveloped the waterfront park in Wabamun, which were economic opportunities identified in the CCTI project. This is an example of what continued support for communities that identified projects through the CCTI could look like.

Findings – Effectiveness

Programs effective for impacted regions

- CCTI allowed communities to assess and implement **economic diversification projects**.
- CCTI-IF allowed communities to undertake **needed infrastructure projects** that will lead to the achievement of immediate and long-term outcomes.
- Programs have achieved or are expected to **achieve most short-term and medium-term outcomes**.
- Alberta communities and Estevan are expected to **achieve long-term outcome** of impacted communities being able to grow and economically diversify — **less likely for Coronach** and other small rural Saskatchewan communities.

Outcome	CCTI	CCTI-IF
Number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) assisted	4,235	10
Economic analyses and feasibility studies conducted	43	5
Number of participants trained	5,745	-
Partners engaged	234	95
Businesses created, maintained, or expanded	1,341	329
Jobs maintained	841	1,988
Jobs created	163	600
<i>Data is as of January 23, 2025.</i>		

Factors impeding success of programs

- Long PrairiesCan **funding approval times**.
- COVID-19 pandemic.
- Inability of communities to **leverage additional funding** due to other funding opportunities not being available.
- Projects focussing on **immediate community needs** versus long-term economic development needs.
- The programs **ending in 2026** prior to the mines closing in Saskatchewan.
- **Engagement of PrairiesCan staff** and **flexibility of programs** aided the programs and projects in overcoming these negative factors.

Quarterly reporting

- Reporting viewed as **too frequent**, especially for CCTI-IF projects, but program staff and funding recipients were generally satisfied with the required reporting.
- **Suggestions** to improve reporting included:
 - **Capturing qualitative information**.
 - **Review quantitative measures** to ensure application to funded projects.

Findings – Efficiency

Efficient resource use

- **Knowledgeable and flexible PrairiesCan staff** ensure successful project completion.
- Funding recipients mainly kept their projects **within budget and on time** given the flexibility of the program (e.g., project amendments related to the COVID-19 pandemic).
- Potential **improvements** to resource efficiency:

- Improve **online application system** and **streamline application** process.
- Decrease **application review times**.
- Make it **easier to roll over funds** from year to year.
- Reconsider the **reimbursement process** — can hinder project delivery.
- More timely **funding news releases**.

Conclusions

The findings from this evaluation led to the following conclusions.

Conclusion 1: Economic development progress in impacted communities requires ongoing funding and added social supports.

Conclusion 2: The following process improvements should be considered for future economic development programs like CCTI and CCTI-IF:

- The time required for project approvals should be decreased to decrease delays in project start times.
- The time required for funding disbursements from PrairiesCan to funding recipients should be decreased as the delays in funding disbursements resulted in cash flow issues for some funding recipients.
- The amendment process for contribution agreements to roll funds from year to year was noted as restrictive and should be simplified as the need to roll funds from year to year for these programs was amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Reporting should meet the needs of the program by giving consideration to improving the balance between indicators needed for departmental reporting and those that are relevant to the programs and ensuring funding recipients are aware of the option for qualitative reporting.

1.0 Introduction

Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan) conducted an impact evaluation of the Canada Coal Transition Initiative (CCTI) and the Canada Coal Transition Initiative – Infrastructure Fund (CCTI-IF) in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The purpose of the impact evaluation was to assess the programs' relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness in meeting their objectives as the coal sector transitions to cleaner energy sources. The evaluation covered the initiatives from the inception of the CCTI on April 1, 2018 to January 23, 2025, focussing on the extent to which the short- and medium-term outcomes of the CCTI and CCTI-IF have been achieved. The evaluation is also expected to provide insights into the likelihood of achieving long-term outcomes after the funding period concludes.

2.0 Program profile

This section of the report provides the background and context for the introduction of the CCTI and CCTI-IF, provides descriptions of the programs in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and concludes with a logic model for both programs that was developed as part of this evaluation.

2.1 Background and context

Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change

The international commitment to address climate change was significantly advanced at the 2015 United Nations' Climate Change Conference in Paris. Canada, along with 194 other countries, adopted the Paris Agreement, marking a historic collaboration in reducing greenhouse gas emissions (OAGC, 2022). This agreement highlighted the **necessity of a just transition for the workforce**, emphasizing the creation of decent work and quality jobs, aligned with national development priorities (OAGC, 2022).

In response to this global initiative, in 2016 the Government of Canada announced its plan to **phase out coal-fired electricity by 2030**. This decision was a key component of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. The Framework laid out a comprehensive strategy encompassing four main pillars: pricing carbon pollution, complementary measures for further emission reductions across various economic sectors, initiatives for adapting to climate change impacts and building resilience, and promoting innovation, clean technology, and job creation (ECCC, 2016). This phase-out would **significantly affect workers and communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia** (OAGC, 2022).

Task Force on Just Transition

Recognizing the adverse economic impacts this regulatory phase-out could have on communities and workers dependent on the coal sector, in 2018, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) established the Just Transition Task Force (JTTF or Task Force) on the Just Transition for Canadian Coal Power Workers and Communities (JTTF, 2018a). The JTTF was tasked with providing recommendations to facilitate a smooth transition for those affected by the phase-out, focussing on the composition of a just transition plan, as well as structuring subsequent phases of consultation and analysis of the just transition (JTTF, 2018a). The Task Force formulated ten recommendations (JTTF, 2018a):

1. Develop, implement, and publicly report on a just transition plan for the coal phase-out, led by a dedicated minister.

2. Include just transition provisions in federal environmental and labour legislation, regulations, and intergovernmental agreements.
3. Establish a research fund for studying the impacts of the coal phase-out and transition to a low-carbon economy.
4. Fund transition centres in affected coal communities.
5. Create a pension bridging program for workers retiring earlier due to the phase-out.
6. Develop a detailed inventory of labour market information for coal workers.
7. Initiate a comprehensive program supporting workers in securing new employment, including income support and skills training.
8. **Fund local infrastructure projects** in affected communities.
9. Set up a **dedicated funding program for community transition**.
10. **Engage directly with affected communities** to understand and support their local priorities.

Ultimately, recommendation 9 led to the development of the CCTI, which included activities to assist workers and communities impacted by the closing of coal mines in adapting to the changing economic landscape. As detailed further in this report, the CCTI in Alberta and Saskatchewan began with program staff engagement in the affected communities to understand their priorities and needs, aligning with recommendation 10. Finally, the CCTI-IF was introduced to fund infrastructure in affected communities, aligning with recommendation 8. The CCTI and CCTI-IF are described in more detail in Section 2.3 below.

2.2 Impact of the Coal Phase-Out

The phase-out of coal-fired electricity in Canada has significant implications for affected communities, their workforce, and the broader economic landscape. As of 2018, over 3,900 workers were directly employed in thermal coal mines and coal-fired power stations across more than 25 communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, with the majority situated in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In total, the coal-fired electrical generation phase-out will affect 29 generating units at 13 stations across Canada. This transition could lead to the loss of all coal mine jobs and up to half of the jobs at generation stations, resulting in social and economic impact on these regions. Due to coal-fired generators often being co-located with coal mines, the **rural/remote nature of these communities limits the number of other employment and industry opportunities** outside of the mines and generating stations themselves. Moreover, the **loss of tax revenues** in these communities will limit the ability to support the infrastructure and services needed to upgrade and attract new business and support necessary employment transitions.

Alberta and Saskatchewan

In 2019, coal generation accounted for roughly 36% of Alberta's electricity generation, and 41% in Saskatchewan (Canada Energy Regulator, n.d.-b, n.d.-a). The phase-out directly impacts communities residing in four broad geographical locations in Alberta (**Battle River Region, Harvest Sky Region, Leduc County, and Parkland County Region, which includes Paul First Nation**), with other outlying communities experiencing varying levels of indirect impacts. Similarly in Saskatchewan, the phase-out will directly impact a number of communities over two broad geographical areas (**Estevan and Coronach Regions**) as a result of mine and generating station closures.

In 2018, there were six operating mines in Alberta (**Genesee, Highvale, Paintearth, and Sheerness**) and Saskatchewan (**Estevan, Poplar River Mine**), and eight generating stations with 24 generating units. It stood that, in the prairies, around 2,914 full-time equivalents (FTEs) (1,805 in Alberta, and 1,109 in

Saskatchewan; about 1,600 at mines, and 1,300 at generating stations) across seven different communities would be affected by the phase-out (OAGC, 2022). **Alberta has retired or transitioned its thermal coal mines** and coal-fired generating stations, and all generating stations were converted to natural gas by the end of 2024 (Capital Power, 2024). However, all of **Saskatchewan's facilities are still operational**.

Common concerns from workers and their communities impacted by the phase-out include (JTTF, 2018b):

- Local jobs are limited and moving or commuting long distances should be a last resort;
- New jobs are not always the same quality as lost jobs;
- Leaving families to retrain or get additional education is emotionally and financially draining;
- It is not clear what skills are transferable, and which need to be upgraded or gained;
- They are not sure what jobs to retrain for; and
- Employers rarely hire workers close to retirement.

2.3 Program descriptions

CCTI

Budget 2018 announced \$35 million over five years (2018-2023) for the CCTI. Of this, \$25 million was allocated to Western Economic Diversification (WD, now PrairiesCan) and \$10 million to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), with a focus to fund skills development and economic diversification activities to assist workers and communities in adapting to the changing economic landscape. Of the \$25 million (including Operations and Maintenance [O&M] costs), 62% (\$15.5 million) was allocated to Alberta and 38% (\$9.5 million) was allocated to Saskatchewan, based on analysis assessing the economic, community, and employment impact in the regions.

PrairiesCan concentrated its efforts under the CCTI on **community-level economic diversification**. Projects under this initiative are developed based on community-identified needs, with PrairiesCan consulting at the local level. This engagement included participating in workforce adjustment committees, community information sessions, town and Band Council meetings, and economic development board meetings, ensuring an understanding of community needs and perspectives.

To qualify for CCTI funding, project investments included capacity building, entrepreneurship support, business start-up and expansions, or supply chain development, all which intended to cater to the diverse needs of the communities.

Examples of CCTI projects included feasibility studies and activities to assess and plan for a community's needs, or employment transition centres that provide skills training, business retention, mentoring, and other employment services. In Alberta there are 15 CCTI projects amounting to \$14,603,870 in funding, and in Saskatchewan there are a total of 29 CCTI projects amounting to \$8,928,373 in funding (see Appendix A for a list of all CCTI projects funded in Alberta and Saskatchewan).

CCTI-IF

Following the eighth recommendation of the JTTF, Budget 2019 provided an additional \$150 million over five years (2020-2025) for infrastructure needs in impacted communities through the CCTI-IF, with PrairiesCan and ACOA receiving \$105 million and \$45 million, respectively, including O&M costs. Of the \$105 million, 65% (\$68.55 million) was allocated to Alberta and 35% (\$36.45 million) was allocated to Saskatchewan.

The CCTI-IF was designed to promote activities that enhance the economic diversity of impacted communities and their members as they transition away from coal-fired electricity generation. This objective resonates with the mandates of PrairiesCan that focus on strategic investments in projects that support innovation, business development, and community economic growth. Initiatives such as the development of industrial parks emerged from discussions with the communities, reflecting a tailored approach to their needs.

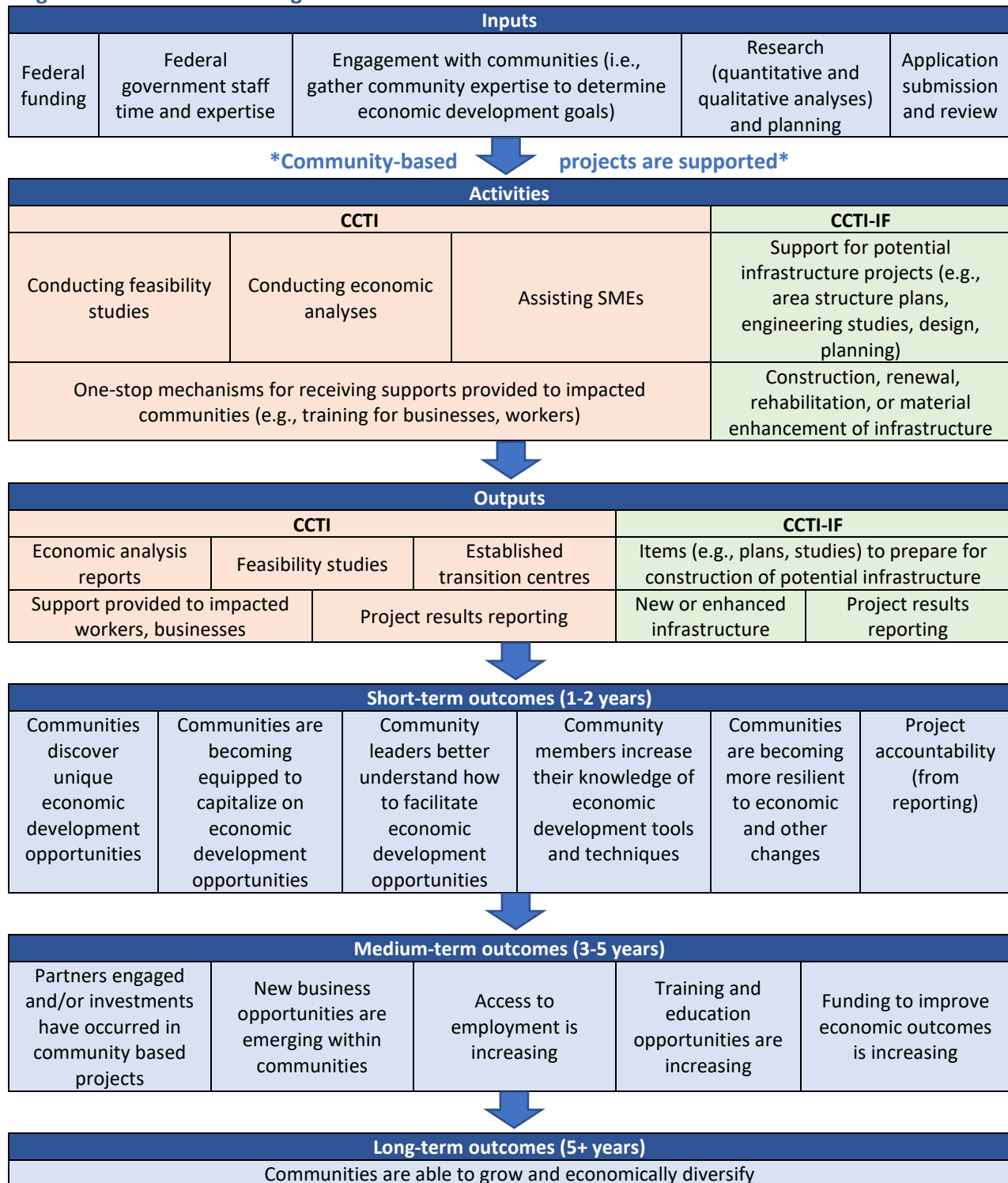
To qualify for CCTI-IF funding, project activities were required to **improve a community's infrastructure**, such as investments in construction, renewal, rehabilitation, and material enhancements.

Examples of CCTI-IF projects include the construction of industrial parks to develop and attract manufacturing and other commercial services, testing facilities for new clean energy solutions, improved community centres and facilities that help attract businesses, and buildings or equipment that support the starting or scale-up of businesses. In Alberta there are 14 CCTI-IF projects amounting to \$64,390,362 in funding, and in Saskatchewan there are 14 CCTI-IF projects totaling \$33,191,400 in funding (see Appendix A for a list of all CCTI-IF projects funded in Alberta and Saskatchewan).

2.4 Logic model

A logic model for the CCTI and CCTI-IF was created for this evaluation. The logic model highlights the inputs, activities, and outputs of the programs that will lead to their expected short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes. Note that both programs have the same inputs and expected short-, medium, and long-term outcomes (highlighted in blue). The activities and outputs of the programs differ and are therefore separated in the logic model, with CCTI activities and outputs highlighted in orange and CCTI-IF activities and outputs highlighted in green.

Figure 1: CCTI and CCTI-IF Logic Model



3.0 Methodology

This section describes the scope of the evaluation, outlines the questions the evaluation aimed to address, describes the methodologies that were employed as part of this evaluation, and concludes with challenges faced by the evaluation.

3.1 Evaluation scope

The Impact Evaluation of the CCTI and CCTI-IF was started in fiscal year 2023-24 as a requirement under the Treasury Board Submission for the CCTI-IF. ACOA, independently, also evaluated the programs in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia during the same timeframe.

The performance of the CCTI and the CCTI-IF in achieving their short- and medium-term outcomes in Alberta and Saskatchewan was assessed, as well as the likelihood of the programs achieving their long-term outcomes after funding ends. The impact evaluation focussed on communities impacted by Canada's coal transition in Alberta and Saskatchewan from April 1, 2018 to January 23, 2025.

Of note, the CCTI had **projects that were still ongoing** and the CCTI-IF was **continuing to approve and fund projects during the evaluation**. The evaluation accounted for the fact that some projects for both programs were still ongoing during data collection for the evaluation.

The evaluation focussed on addressing **eight evaluation questions** under the areas of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency:

Relevance

1. To what extent do the programs address the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and communities in the affected provinces?
2. To what extent are the programs aligned with priorities at the time of design, in addition to current Government of Canada and PrairiesCan priorities?

Effectiveness

3. Is the intervention achieving its objectives?
4. To what extent do the programs demonstrate progress towards intended outcomes?
 - a. What impacts have been achieved in the short and mid-term?
 - b. How likely are the projects to achieve longer-term outcomes after funding ends?
5. What factors will facilitate whether the impacts of the program will be sustained?
6. To what extent are the programs addressing diverse populations?

Efficiency

7. How well are resources being used?
8. What factors facilitate or impede efficient program delivery?

An **evaluation matrix** was developed that presents the evaluation questions and indicators that were used to guide the evaluation, along with the data sources that were used to respond to each indicator (see Appendix B).

3.2 Data collection methods

The evaluation included **five data collection methods** that all concluded with technical reports.

Document and database review: The document and data review examined 400 documents provided by PrairiesCan which included program information and context documents, community-specific information documents, and CCTI and CCTI-IF project-specific documents. The document and data review included detailed program profiles and evidence for a number of the evaluation questions and indicators.

Economic analysis: The economic analysis included developing economic profiles of the coal-affected regions and communities in Saskatchewan and Alberta and showcased their respective CCTI and CCTI-IF project activities and outcomes. The report aimed to provide an economic context for these communities, examine their vulnerabilities, and assess the impact of the funded projects. Internal PrairiesCan (e.g., outcome information reported by the funded projects) and online (e.g., 2021 Canadian Census data, data from the Canada Energy Regulator) information and data were used for the economic analysis.

Case studies: Case studies for each broad region impacted by the expected closing of a coal mine in Alberta and Saskatchewan were completed. Therefore, the following six regional case studies (with the impacted mine) were completed:

Alberta:

1. Leduc County (Genesee)
2. Parkland County (Highvale)
3. Battle River (Paintearth)
4. Harvest Sky (Sheerness)

Saskatchewan:

5. Estevan (Estevan)
6. Coronach (Poplar River Mine)

Each case study focussed on all the CCTI- and CCTI-IF-funded projects associated with the closing of a specific mine and involved a document and data review of internal and available online information and interviews with program officers, funding recipients, participants in the interventions, and community and business leaders. In total 32 interviews were completed across the six case studies.¹ Each case study concluded with a case study summary.

Key informant interviews: Key informant interviews were completed with eight PrairiesCan staff, including CCTI and CCTI-IF program managers and officers and other related/knowledgeable staff. Interviews were conducted virtually and ranged between 60 and 90 minutes in length. Two interview guides were developed and tailored to the interviewee groups. Key informants received a copy of the interview guide in advance to

¹ Information collected from the key informant interviews with the four program officers was also included in the case studies.

allow them an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the research and prepare responses if they felt inclined to do so.

Survey of stakeholders: The survey of stakeholders was an online survey focussed on end-users of a service funded through the programs, stakeholders involved in a funded project, and/or community leaders. Funding recipients were asked to send an open survey link to potential survey participants. The survey was open from June 26, 2024 to August 9, 2024. In total, there were 24 completes of the survey.

3.3 Challenges and limitations

The main challenge that impacted the results of this evaluation was **limited end-user feedback**. The evaluation attempted to get end-user (e.g., community and business leaders, impacted coal workers) feedback on the CCTI and CCTI-IF projects implemented in the Alberta and Saskatchewan through case study interviews and administering a survey. A small number of interviews were completed with end-users as part of the case studies and only 24 individuals completed the survey, of which only 16 identified themselves as end-users/direct beneficiaries of an implemented project(s). Part of the challenge of getting end-user feedback was the difficulty of identifying end-users for projects such as feasibility studies, as well as for projects that are ongoing or recently completed for which benefits in the communities have not fully been realized. However, a number of projects should have had potential end-users to identify and the attempts to include them in the evaluation were not successful. As a result, the end-user feedback received is included in the findings but must be considered with caution and not as representative of all end-users of the programs.

4.0 Findings

The findings of the evaluation are organized by key theme areas of the evaluation: relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency. Each section begins with a summary of findings, followed by a full description of the findings. Throughout the findings, examples of funded projects in Alberta and Saskatchewan are provided in blue highlighted tables.

4.1 Relevance

Summary of findings: The CCTI and CCTI-IF programs were found to be highly relevant in Alberta and Saskatchewan. They address economic development needs within the targeted communities, but the duration of the programs and their integration with other necessary social supports were seen as insufficient. The relevance section emphasizes the economic dependency of six regions in Alberta (Leduc County, Parkland County, Battle River, and Harvest Sky) and Saskatchewan (Estevan and Coronach) on coal mines, highlighted by **decreasing populations**, and therefore **tax bases**, and **number of workers at the mines** and generating stations prior to the closing of the mines. While all of these regions are dependent on the coal mines in their regions, those with **larger populations have less industry concentration** and therefore are already more economically diversified and have more opportunity for economic diversification.

The CCTI and CCTI-IF are **addressing the needs of these communities** by funding community economic development projects identified by the communities. **Community engagement** undertaken at the outset of the CCTI between the communities and PrairiesCan helped build relationships and

identify projects that will result in economic development in the impacted communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In instances where feasible projects were difficult to identify, feasibility studies or economic strategies were funded through the CCTI.

Additional support for the impacted communities will be needed in both provinces if the longer-term outcomes of the programs and communities are to be achieved. Both provinces will require support to build on the CCTI and CCTI-IF-funded projects to further diversify their economies to ensure long-term sustainability of the communities. **Alberta has been more effective in addressing its communities' needs than Saskatchewan** because, in Saskatchewan, the coal mines continue to operate and the communities in Saskatchewan are smaller and more remote than those in Alberta, especially in Coronach, Saskatchewan. **Suggestions for continued funding support** were provided.

The programs are **aligned with Government of Canada and PrairiesCan priorities**. These programs are in response to and aim to mitigate the impacts on communities of the Government's strategy for climate change. The programs focus on economic diversification and job creation in regions impacted by the coal phase-out — both priorities of the federal government and PrairiesCan when the programs were introduced and currently.

Regional profiles

This section begins with descriptions of the economic situations in the six impacted regions in Saskatchewan and Alberta. These economic descriptors provide evidence for the need of the CCTI and CCTI-IF in these regions and serve as important context that is referred to throughout this report. One important metric that is used throughout the regional profiles is the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI). HHI is a common measure of market concentration. Typically used to account for the number of businesses within an industry, it is used in this analysis as a method to interpret the overall level of industry concentration. An HHI between 1,000 and 1,800 would indicate a moderate level of concentration, and an HHI above 1,800 is highly concentrated (DOJ, 2015; ISED, 2023).² The HHI is a valuable metric, as regions with lower HHI scores are already more economically diversified and would likely be able to more easily further economically diversify versus those with higher HHI scores. It should be noted that higher HHI values in smaller communities are expected due to limited industry breadth. This is what our findings show, and this structural factor should be considered with interpreting differences across regions.

Estevan region, Saskatchewan

In 2021, the Estevan region had a **population of 13,128, which declined** by 8.8% since 2016, reflecting potential outmigration likely linked to economic uncertainty surrounding the coal phase-out. The workforce is heavily concentrated in mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction, and utilities — sectors that collectively represent a larger share of employment compared to the provincial average. Additionally, Estevan region's relatively high median income compared to the provincial average, at \$50,400 in 2021, reflects the well-paying nature of jobs in coal and utilities. With the phase-out, there is a risk of income levels declining if alternative industries do not provide similarly competitive wages. However, the Estevan region exhibits **relatively higher industry diversification** among coal-affected regions in Saskatchewan and Alberta, with an HHI of 709.

² The HHI is calculated as: $HHI = \frac{1}{T^2} \sum_{i=1}^N x_i^2$, where x_i is the count of businesses in industry i to N , and T is the total number of businesses.

Employment at the Boundary Dam and Shand coal-fired generating stations and the Estevan mine remains high, with 401 FTEs at the mine and 418 at the generating stations in 2022. However, as the phase-out progresses, this employment base could diminish. The region's **tax base has also shown a declining trend**, with the total number of tax filings dropping around 8% from a peak of 11,540 in 2014 to 10,560 by 2021. The total reported income has followed a similar downward trajectory, decreasing from around \$807 million at its peak to levels closer to \$700 million by the end of the decade. This decline in both tax filings and reported income reflects a broader economic impact on local public finances.

Coronach region, Saskatchewan

In 2021, the Coronach region had a **population of 2,810, down by 1.2%** since 2016, with a median age of 50 — significantly older than the provincial median of 38. The labour force is highly concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, which accounts for 37.9% of local employment. The Coronach region is **less diversified than other coal-affected areas**, with an HHI of 1,870, indicating high industry concentration, primarily within agriculture and utilities. **Employment at the Poplar River coal-fired generating station and the nearby mine has seen some decline** over the past decade; the mine employed 160 FTEs in 2012, which fell to 140 FTEs by 2022, while the generating station's employment peaked at 279 FTEs in 2017 before dropping to 149 FTEs in 2022.

The **tax base also shows signs of contraction**. The total number of income tax filings dropped from an average of around 2,200 per year between 2012 and 2020 to just 1,780 in 2021. The total value of reported incomes, which had peaked at \$116.2 million in 2020, fell to \$94.8 million by 2021, returning to levels seen nearly a decade earlier. The median individual income was \$38,743 in 2021, below the provincial median of \$42,400, and while higher income brackets had been increasing, this reversed in 2021, indicating a decrease across these brackets. This decline in both median and total incomes highlights the Coronach region's economic vulnerability as the coal phase-out progresses, with fewer high-income opportunities likely available as coal-related employment diminishes.

Leduc County region, Alberta

In 2021, the Leduc County region had a **population of 50,153, which increased by 2.3%** since 2016, with a median age of 43. The labour force, comprising 27,255 workers, has concentrations in construction (12.5%) and manufacturing (7.4%), both of which are larger shares than the provincial averages of 9.2% and 5.4%, respectively. The mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction sectors make up 6.4% of the workforce, which is slightly above Alberta's average of 5.5%. The Leduc County region shows **relatively low industry concentration**, with an HHI of 779, indicating a diverse mix of businesses across sectors compared to other coal-affected regions in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The construction industry represents the largest segment of the 2,501 businesses in the area, comprising 15.5%.

The median income for the region remains at \$41,100 — below the provincial median of \$44,800. **Employment at the Genesee mine and generating station has been trending downward** over the past decade; for example, the generating station's workforce decreased from 237 FTEs in 2012 to 179 FTEs by 2022, while the mine's employment fell from 161 FTEs to 112 FTEs in the same period. With the **Genesee mine closing in 2024** following the transition of the generating station to natural gas, there may be further decreases in coal-related employment.

Financially, total public revenues peaked between 2015 and 2017 at around \$250 million but declined to \$220.9 million by 2022, while expenses increased from \$147 million in 2010 to \$204 million in 2022.

Consequently, net public revenues of the Leduc County region communities have fallen by 81%, from a high of \$91.5 million in 2015 to \$17 million in 2022.

Parkland County region, Alberta

In 2021, the Parkland County region had a **population of 89,053, which grew by 2.2%** from 2016. The median age of the region's population was 42. About 46% of the population held post-secondary qualifications, below the Alberta average of 56%. The labour force, composed of 46,945 workers, shows an above-average concentration in the construction industry (14.9%), compared to Alberta's 9.2%. Wholesale trade employment also exceeded the provincial average, comprising 4.9% of the local workforce.

Coal-related employment has significantly declined over the past decade. In 2022, a total of 287 FTEs were employed at the Keephills and Sundance generating stations and the Highvale mine, down from 2,178 FTEs in 2012. This reduction reflects the transition away from coal. Units at the Sundance and Keephills stations have been gradually retired or converted to natural gas since 2018, while the **Highvale mine ceased operations in 2021** and is currently in remediation. The mine's employment alone dropped from over 700 FTEs between 2012 and 2017 to just 82 FTEs by 2022.

The **region's business landscape is relatively diverse**, with an HHI of 889, indicating moderate industry diversification. An average of 3,306 businesses were recorded from 2022-2023, the most among coal-affected regions. The construction sector was the largest, with 20.8% of businesses. Financially, the Parkland County region's communities' total public revenues increased from \$158.5 million in 2010 to around \$302 million in 2022, while expenses grew from \$119.7 million to \$253.7 million in the same period. Although net revenues peaked at \$95.4 million in 2015, rising expenses have resulted in decreasing net revenues since 2016. In 2022, 44% of total revenue came from property taxes, 19% from sales and user taxes, and 38% from other sources.

Paul First Nation

In 2021, the Paul First Nation had a **population of 981, a significant decline** of 38% from 2016. The median age was 24, much younger than the regional average, and only 26% of residents held post-secondary qualifications. The community faced a median income of \$24,200, well below the broader regional and provincial levels, with an unemployment rate of 33% — significantly higher than the 12.8% for the Parkland County region. The local labour force, comprising 275 workers, reflects the economic challenges and lower educational attainment in this area.

Battle River region, Alberta

In 2021, the Battle River region had a **population of 8,389, which declined** by 10% from 2016. The median age was 51, and 46% of the population held post-secondary education, below Alberta's average of 56%. The Battle River region communities show **moderate industry concentration**, with an HHI of 1,074, indicating a more concentrated business landscape compared to more diversified regions like the Parkland County region. In 2022-2023, the region averaged 322 businesses, with 27.0% in the agriculture sector. The labour force, composed of 4,250 workers, is concentrated in the agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting industry, which employs 29.4% of the region's workforce. Employment in mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction accounted for 6.5%, and utilities for 2.2%. The median annual income was \$40,240, falling short of the provincial median of \$44,800.

Coal-related employment has decreased over the past decade. In 2013, the **Paintearth Mine** employed 130 FTEs, which fell to 44 FTEs by 2022, following its **closure in 2021** with a small workforce retained for

remediation. The Battle River generating station saw similar reductions; in 2012, it employed around 140 FTEs, but by 2020, that number had dropped to 91 FTEs, and further declined to 57 FTEs in 2021 after the station converted its Units to natural gas. By 2022, total coal-related employment across both facilities was down to 100 FTEs from around 280 in 2014, reflecting the broader impact of the coal phase-out on local jobs.

Financially, the region's communities' public revenues reached \$58.4 million in 2022, while expenses were \$51 million, leading to a net revenue of \$7.4 million. Net public revenues have remained relatively flat since 2016. Throughout the 2010-2022 period, the region derived **a significant portion of revenue from property taxes**, which peaked at 74% in 2015. This reliance on property taxes highlights a limited fiscal base, which can be impacted by local economic shifts such as declining coal-related activity.

Harvest Sky region, Alberta

In 2021, the Harvest Sky region had a **population of 4,425, representing a slight increase** of 1% since 2016, with a median age of 46. The increase in Harvest Sky's population versus other regions could be attributable to the housing boom in Hanna, which is described in more detail later in this report. About 40% of the population held post-secondary education, below the Alberta average of 56%. The region's labour force, comprising 2,220 workers, has a strong presence in the agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting sector, which employs 25.4% of the workforce. The mining, quarrying, and oil and gas sectors also play key roles, engaging 8.0% of workers, above the provincial average. The utilities sector is similarly significant, with 5.4% of the workforce employed here, compared to just 1.1% provincially. The median annual income in the region was \$41,400, slightly below the Alberta median of \$44,800.

Coal-related employment has fluctuated over the past decade, with the Sheerness mine and generating station employing approximately 105 to 106 FTEs consistently until 2019. In 2020, FTEs at the mine dropped from 106 to 48, and the **mine closed in 2021**. The Sheerness generating station converted to natural gas in 2021, reducing employment from 95 FTEs in 2020 to 68 FTEs. By 2022, combined coal-related employment across the station and mine was 115 FTEs. The mine now focusses on mining Humalite, a soil-enhancing material used in agriculture.

The Harvest Sky region has a relatively low business count, with an average of 218 businesses between 2022 and 2023, making it the least populous of the coal-affected regions in Alberta. Agriculture dominates the business landscape, comprising 27.6% of businesses, followed by retail trade (11.2%) and other services (8.9%). The region's industry diversification, indicated by an HHI of 1,185, suggests **moderate concentration; it is the least diversified coal-affected region in Alberta** and second only to the Coronach region in Saskatchewan overall.

Financially, the region's communities' public revenues have been flat from 2010 to 2022, fluctuating between \$7.4 million and \$9.8 million. Expenses, however, have risen gradually, from \$5.1 million in 2010 to \$8.2 million in 2020, resulting in a decline in net revenues, which fell from a peak of \$4.1 million in 2010 to a low of \$50,000 in 2021. In 2022, property taxes accounted for 35% of total revenue, sales and user taxes 29%, and other sources 36%. Correlation analysis reveals that higher dependence on property and sales taxes often corresponds to lower net revenue, indicating that windfalls from other sources of revenue are relied on to boost the region's finances.

Relevance Findings

The CCTI and CCTI-IF are addressing the needs of the communities, but additional and continued support is needed to continue to diversify their economies

Need for economic development programming when CCTI and CCTI-IF were introduced

The economic review of the impacted regions shows the **need for support for some regions preceded the closing of the coal mines** as the regions were seeing declining populations, tax bases, and therefore, net revenues over the past five to 10 years leading up to 2021-2022. All the regions also saw the **number of workers at the coal mines and generating stations decreasing** prior to the mines closing. These numbers have likely continued to decline in all impacted regions, especially in Alberta where the mines are now closed. The closing of the coal mines in the regions, especially those already seeing declining revenues, therefore intensified the **need for the CCTI and CCTI-IF programs** to support community projects. This is most evident in the Battle River region where the reliance on the tax base is so high. Finally, an obvious trend from the economic analysis of the regions is that the **more populous regions have less industry concentration** (i.e., are more economically diversified, have lower HHIs), providing more opportunities for economic diversification. Coronach, with a high industry concentration level, and Battle River and Harvest Sky, with moderate industry concentration levels, have more need for economic diversification with the coal mines closing, but will have more difficulty implementing economic diversification projects.

Designed to meet community needs

The **community engagement undertaken at the outset of the CCTI** to help understand and address community needs, and build relationships, was highlighted as a positive of the program by program representatives and funding recipients. This engagement helped ensure the funded projects were community driven — for the communities to understand their capacity and to identify and undertake projects that would help diversify their economy. In instances where feasible projects were difficult to identify, feasibility studies or economic strategies were funded through the CCTI. A key informant noted that while funding feasibility studies is not a common practice for PrairiesCan, it was deemed necessary as part of the CCTI to support communities that had less experience in economic development.

Funding recipients and feedback from community leaders and end-users confirm that the **projects funded through the CCTI and CCTI-IF are addressing the needs of the affected communities** in Alberta and Saskatchewan. As noted above, the support was necessary as the regions were seeing decreases in net revenues and coal mine employment, therefore limiting the communities' own available funding for these projects. The funding recipients confirmed that the community engagement at the outset of the CCTI helped ensure the projects addressed their needs. Some of the main features of the programs highlighted by funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users included:

- CCTI-IF projects providing significant infrastructure upgrades to the affected communities.
- CCTI-IF project infrastructure upgrades resulting in additional investor opportunities in affected communities to help diversify the economy (e.g., the CCTI-IF-funded project to improve two intersections on Highway 16A in Acheson in the Parkland County region sped up the infrastructure work that will lead to faster industrial development in the area).
- CCTI projects expanding the business and entrepreneurial support and training services in the affected communities.

- Funded projects aiming to increase employment and upskilling opportunities in the affected communities to mitigate the impact of coal transition (e.g., CCTI-funded projects in the Estevan region supported Southeast College’s Heavy Equipment Operator training program, which has directly resulted in new employment at the college and for students that take the program).
- CCTI funding feasibility studies and economic strategies to identify economic diversification opportunities in the communities (e.g., tourism opportunities).

Ongoing need for programming

While CCTI and CCTI-IF have benefited communities, the need for economic development remains high for many of the regions in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Key informants, funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users discussed continued support for implementing projects identified through the CCTI, as well as support to identify and implement future economic opportunities.

- In Saskatchewan, it was noted that the coal mines are still operating and, therefore, the regions have not yet felt and need to address the impact of the laid-off workers in the regions. Therefore, the project funds under both programs will be exhausted before the transition happens in Saskatchewan.
- In Alberta and Saskatchewan, although the transition has already happened in Alberta, all impacted areas will require continued support to diversify their economies to ensure long-term sustainability of the communities. Funding recipients noted that economic diversification of the communities is a long-term process. **Funding to specifically follow-up on opportunities identified in economic strategies and feasibility studies** developed through the CCTI was also mentioned. While some CCTI-IF projects stemmed directly from opportunities identified from CCTI-funded projects, other projects will likely still require funding (federal and/or provincial) to take advantage of the opportunities identified through those projects.

Note that in Leduc, Alberta, it was identified that there may be less need for follow-up on the funded CCTI and CCTI-IF projects. The creation of the Business Retention Centre (BRE) through a funded CCTI project led to an entire economic development department for Leduc County. Several businesses are also located at the BRE. The BRE also provides mentoring and other programming. As a result, the communities will continue to rely on the BRE and the county’s economic development department going forward, which have remained operational following the CCTI funding. Nevertheless, recipients in the region are still looking for future funding support, as indicated later in this report.

Overall, the impression from key informants is that the programs have been **more successful in addressing the needs of communities in Alberta versus Saskatchewan**. In addition to the Saskatchewan coal mines still operating, the communities in Saskatchewan are smaller and more remote than those in Alberta; therefore, their opportunities to economically diversify are more limited. This appears to be truer in Coronach versus Estevan, where Coronach is smaller than Estevan and has a higher industry concentration (limiting the ability of the region to more easily economically diversify). Some key informants noted that in Saskatchewan, the lack of knowledge and capacity in the communities, as well as the low level of funding through the CCTI and CCTI-IF programs, has led to the program falling short of helping the communities’ transition away from coal. They noted that the infrastructure projects help meet some immediate needs of the communities because the communities undertake projects they would not be able to with a diminishing tax base, but the projects will not lead to economic diversification and additional investment in the community.

Suggestions to address gaps

The **flexibility of the CCTI and CCTI-IF allowed for a wide range of project types to be funded**, limiting the number of suggestions for different types of funding that could have been made available through the programs. The most common general suggestion was **providing more support and funding to the impacted communities**. Specific examples included extending the funding period until the coal transition is complete (by 2030), and more funding for existing projects to address pandemic/supply chain/labour shortage-related cost increases and project delays. Other specific suggestions included:

- Providing more support and guidance on the front end to help guide communities (e.g., hiring of economic development officers, connecting communities to other sources and/or communities that have already gone through a similar experience).
- PrairiesCan should collaborate with the province to create a unified funding approach. This will help funding applicants understand available funding opportunities and enable funding recipients to better plan proposals that impact regional economic development.
- Programs focussing more on finding comparable employment for laid-off coal miners (i.e., coal miners will travel to other areas for similar jobs with similar pay to maintain a certain lifestyle versus staying in the community at a job that pays significantly less than what they made as a coal miner). Although this was noted by funding recipients in multiple regions, Estevan region's relatively high median income at \$50,400 compared to the provincial average at \$42,400 in 2021, reflects the well-paying nature of jobs in coal and utilities.

Some key informants and funding recipients also noted the **gap in social programming** being offered to the communities and the directly affected workers and their families. Some informants pointed out the **negative social effects of layoffs**, such as increased domestic violence and addiction, which require attention. While the key informants said that social supports are outside the mandate of PrairiesCan, they were missing in the affected communities. Funding recipients indicated that social programming needs to be integrated with the economic development programming.

The CCTI and CCTI-IF are aligned with Government of Canada and PrairiesCan priorities in the areas of economic growth and diversification, and job creation

The priorities of the Government of Canada and PrairiesCan intersect in **areas of environmental stewardship, economic growth, and job creation**. The Government of Canada is committed to the Paris Agreement, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and phase out coal-fired electricity by 2030. It seeks to balance environmental initiatives with economic development, emphasizing a just transition for workers and communities affected by environmental policy changes. This approach is reflected in the Pan-Canadian Framework's collaboration for sustainable growth, aiming to meet or exceed greenhouse gas emission targets while fostering economic growth and job creation. PrairiesCan's priorities at the time of the launch of the CCTI and currently remain similar. In 2020-21, PrairiesCan (WD at the time) had five priorities, one of which was community economic development that aimed to assist communities in recovering from economic downturns (WD, 2020). More current Departmental Plans include promoting growth and diversification in the Prairies' economy, emphasizing innovation, competitiveness, clean technology adoption, and inclusive growth. It focusses on developing and diversifying local economies, making strategic investments to strengthen the regional innovation ecosystem, and supporting the commercialization of innovative technologies and business development (PrairiesCan, 2022b).

The **alignment of the CCTI and CCTI-IF with the priorities of the Government of Canada and PrairiesCan is evident**. These programs are in response to and aim to mitigate the impacts on communities of the Government's strategy for climate change, specifically targeting the coal phase-out by 2030, and its commitment to the Paris Agreement and goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The programs resonate with the Government's broader environmental and economic policies by focussing on economic diversification and job creation in regions impacted by the coal phase-out. PrairiesCan's role in these programs includes assisting communities and workers in adapting to new economic realities, reflecting its commitment to promoting community stability and economic growth amid industrial changes. The CCTI-IF's focus on infrastructure projects that aid economic development and diversification fits well with PrairiesCan's role in investing in and advising on regional economic projects, thereby supporting the economic development of communities affected by the coal phase-out.

Key informants agreed that the CCTI and CCTI-IF are **aligned with Government of Canada priorities** of ensuring a just transition, and diversifying economies, resulting in job creation, and are **mostly aligned with PrairiesCan priorities** of community-driven approaches/community economic development and diversifying economies. Some key informants noted that some specific projects may fall outside of PrairiesCan priorities due to the broad range of projects the programs could fund.

4.2 Effectiveness

Summary of findings: The **CCTI and CCTI-IF have been effective for the impacted regions** in Alberta and Saskatchewan in a number of different ways. The programs have allowed communities to assess economic diversification options, as well as implement economic diversification projects. The CCTI-IF has allowed communities to undertake needed infrastructure projects that will lead to the achievement of immediate and long-term outcomes. While most expected short and medium-term outcomes for the programs have been achieved, some medium and the long-term outcomes will only be achieved in the future as the projects are implemented and economic opportunities develop from those projects (e.g., infrastructure projects opening land for development that will result in business development and job creation).

Most funded project activities and outputs were completed or are expected to be completed successfully. These activities and outputs include assisting businesses, generating economic analyses and feasibility studies, and training individuals.

Although projects were mostly completed successfully, the programs and projects faced a number of **factors that impeded the delivery of the programs and projects**. These included: delays in getting the CCTI off the ground due to the sudden announcement of funding, government bureaucracy, and the level of support needed by the small rural communities; long PrairiesCan funding approval times; natural disasters; the COVID-19 pandemic; inability of communities to leverage additional funding; projects focussing on immediate community needs versus long-term economic development needs; and the programs ending in 2026 prior to the mines closing in Saskatchewan. The **engagement of PrairiesCan staff, flexibility of the programs, and funding support from PrairiesCan aided the programs and projects in overcoming these negative factors**.

The programs in Alberta and Saskatchewan have **achieved or are expected to achieve most of their short-term and medium-term outcomes**, according to project reporting and feedback from funding

recipients. Many of the medium-term outcome targets have been achieved, other than jobs created under the CCTI.

Outcome	CCTI	CCTI-IF
Businesses created, maintained, or expanded	1,341	329
Jobs maintained	841	1,988
Jobs created	163	600

In terms of the programs' **long-term outcome of impacted communities being able to grow and economically diversify**, the expectation is that **Alberta communities and Estevan will more likely attain this outcome than Coronach** and other small rural Saskatchewan communities; although, as previously noted, **continued support in all communities will be needed** to meet this long-term outcome.

Going forward, outside of the **lack of continued funding to support the communities**, other factors that will hinder the sustained impacts of the programs are turnover of elected officials, changing pre-existing attitudes regarding economic diversification, continued cost inflation and rising fuel and transportation costs, and natural disasters. Positive factors include continued collaboration between communities; continued community engagement and positive communications around funded initiatives; strong energy, oil, and gas economy in Alberta; and increasing tax bases from people moving back to the communities.

Although **diversity was not a focus of the programs**, some effective measures were implemented. For example, the programs considered diversity for project approval; project reporting included measuring job creation for women and youth; and many of the projects, although not a requirement of the project, had diversity considerations, such as engagement with Indigenous communities and other diverse groups, targeting certain populations (e.g., seniors), and ensuring programming was available to all individuals in the communities. The CCTI projects funded with Paul First Nation were also highlighted by the program.

Finally, funding recipients are **held accountable through quarterly reporting**. While some viewed the reporting as too frequent, especially for CCTI-IF projects, program staff and funding recipients were generally satisfied with the required reporting. Program staff agreed that quarterly reporting was effective in ensuring projects remained on track. However, some **suggestions** to improve reporting included **capturing qualitative information** to support the quantitative measures, and to **review the quantitative measures being captured** to ensure they apply to the projects and when they are being captured.

Funded project activities and outputs were generally completed successfully

Program reporting tracks some of the specific expected activities and outputs of the funded projects. Table 1 shows the number of SMEs assisted, economic analyses and feasibility studies developed, and individuals trained through the funded CCTI and CCTI-IF projects.

Activities/Outputs	Alberta		Saskatchewan		Total
	CCTI	CCTI-IF	CCTI	CCTI-IF	
Number of SMEs assisted	4,210	10	25	-	4,245
Economic analyses and feasibility studies conducted	23	5	20	-	48
Number of participants trained	4,874	N/A	871	N/A	5,745

Data is as of January 23, 2025.
Note: Projects could contribute to more than one outcome.

- CCTI programming in Alberta and Saskatchewan and CCTI-IF programming in Alberta led to the **assistance of 4,245 SMEs**.

The **Community Resiliency and Opportunity Project (CROP)** in Alberta's Parkland and Leduc Counties, spearheaded by Community Futures Alberta, included a suite of services aimed at boosting the local economy. CROP's objectives were centered on limiting the negative economic impacts within Alberta communities affected by the transition of coal-fired power plants. The project's activities included business and strategic management training and coaching, business financing for new and existing businesses, communication and stakeholder relationship supports/projects, and documentation of best practices and lessons learned to provide strategies for future economically impacted communities. In total, CROP reported assisting 1,478 SMEs over the four years of the project.

- The CCTI and CCTI-IF programs collectively generated 48 **economic analyses and feasibility studies**. In Alberta, CCTI and CCTI-IF projects led to the creation of 28 studies, while in Saskatchewan, CCTI projects resulted in 20 studies. Economic analyses and feasibility studies were conducted in each supported region in Alberta and Saskatchewan.
- Project activities that produced feasibility or economic studies involved a series of approaches. Many projects engaged with consultants and coordinators to plan and create feasibility studies and economic analyses, which encompassed land use, infrastructure development, investment alignment across municipalities, and economic diversification, retention, and expansion. There was also an emphasis on developing marketing strategies, branding, and promotional materials to enhance regional visibility and attract investment. The overarching purpose of the studies was to facilitate regional economic growth, diversification, such as developing tourism, and collaborative action among stakeholders.

The aim of this project was to develop an **Investment Readiness and Implementation Strategy (IRIS)** to provide direction for proper investment to encourage growth and employment in Leduc County. The IRIS provided Leduc County with a roadmap to pursue the design and reconstruction of a roadway to complete the Nisku Spine Road, funded under a CCTI-IF project.

The IRIS report encompassed a comprehensive approach to enhancing the region's economic growth and diversification. Throughout the report, the Nisku area and development of the Nisku Spine Road was noted as a key site and recommendation touching upon its benefits to the support of the energy industry in Alberta through developing and enhancing transportation and logistics and subsequently fell under the recommendation of Planning and Land Use Considerations.

- In total, CCTI programming resulted in 5,745 **individuals trained**. Each supported region in Alberta and Saskatchewan had projects that resulted in training individuals. Harvest Sky was the only region that did not have a specific project that resulted in trained individuals; however, the region was part of the Community Futures Network of Alberta project that supported all the regions.

The **Destination Project** by Sunrise Community Futures in Estevan Saskatchewan ran in early 2023. The aim of the project was to develop a regional tourism initiative to train and engage businesses in southeast Saskatchewan on how to become a Destination Business. The Regional Economic Development (RED) Coordinator organized several training activities for communities and businesses in the region. In total, 406 participants were trained through this project and 127 businesses were engaged through the project's regional tourism initiative that helped them develop into Destination Businesses.

Three projects included the construction or renovation of **transition centres** as part of their programming. One project, facilitated under CCTI in Alberta, successfully renovated two transition centres, and another project in Saskatchewan established a transition centre in Estevan. Additionally, a CCTI project in Paul First Nation was in the process of renovating and transforming an unused facility into a central, multi-functional space for individuals, businesses, and entrepreneurs. This facility will function as a hub for entrepreneurship and employment training, contributing to the development and economic diversification of the area. Overall, these centres served as resources for employment assistance, offering training programs, counseling, and guidance on entrepreneurship and business development. They acted as hubs where individuals could receive direct support and access to resources needed for adjusting to the economic changes brought by the decline in coal-based industries. These centres were designed to be accessible and responsive to the needs of the local workforce and entrepreneurs, providing a space for collaborative development and individual skill enhancement. In addition to transition centres, four projects incorporated the hiring of a transition coordinator as an integral part of their approach to facilitate economic transition from coal-based employment.

Situated in the County of Paintearth No.18 and serving seven communities within the Battle River Economic Opportunities Committee (BREOC)³ partnership, one project focussed on the **renovation of two transition centres** in East-Central Alberta. These centres, located in the Village of Forestburg and the Town of Castor, were established to assist workers and community members impacted by the phase-out of coal-fired electricity generation.

The transition centres provide a range of supports, including employment and business assistance, training programs, and entrepreneurial development, specifically addressing the needs of laid-off coal workers and regional community members. Two hundred and twenty-seven workers were expected to be affected in the region. Each centre was equipped with classroom space, public use computers, meeting rooms, and spaces for service providers like Community Futures, Employment and Social Development Canada, and various training or post-secondary institutions.

³ BREOC is a collaborative partnership representing the Counties of Flagstaff and Paintearth; Villages of Forestburg, Halkirk, Heisler; and the Towns of Castor and Coronation to support and implement the ongoing economic transition in the region (BREOC, 2023).

Numerous negative factors have impacted the delivery of the programs and the projects, although these negative factors were generally overcome through PrairiesCan staff and programming flexibility

Key informants, funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users identified several factors that impeded the delivery of the programs. While these factors resulted in project delays, adjustments, and amendments for some projects, almost all projects overcame them to successfully implement and complete their projects. Negative factors identified included:

- The sudden **announcement of the funding, bureaucracy of government, and small rural communities** needing support to identify and undertake projects led to many delays in terms of getting the programs off the ground and projects moving. This resulted in smaller timeframes for project completion and the need to move funding from year to year (again having to deal with bureaucracy).
- Long PrairiesCan **funding approval timelines** for CCTI-IF projects impacting construction tendering timing. An example of an approval taking 16 months was provided.
- **Natural disasters**, such as wildfires interrupting project progress.
- The **COVID-19 pandemic** halting projects, increasing costs, and creating supply chain issues, especially regarding the CCTI-IF projects.
 - As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a CCTI-funded project aimed at supporting diversification and development initiatives in Alberta's Town of Hanna and Village of Youngstown, faced supply chain and construction issues.
 - A CCTI-funded project in Saskatchewan Estevan faced difficulties in sourcing materials, leading the Town to request an extension.
- The **capacity of the communities** to identify and implement “good” projects that will lead to economic development.
- The ability to **attract “talent”** to the communities to help with project identification and implementation.
- The inability of communities to be able to **leverage additional funding** to support their projects and/or community, mainly due to other funding opportunities not being available to the communities (this was highlighted in Saskatchewan, but it seems this was also the situation in Alberta).
- The funding of **transition centres in Saskatchewan** when there was not an immediate need for them since the coal miners were still employed; there was low uptake.
- **Partnership challenges**, including with other municipalities (e.g., change in leadership changing direction/slowing progress) and the mine management.
 - The **Alberta CROP** encountered resistance in building relationships with some plant and mine management teams, even alluding to partners attempting to undermine or sabotage the project. Despite the project's intention to support workers in transition, the partnering management teams were hesitant to collaborate, primarily due to their need to retain workers with specialized skills during transitional periods and not wanting to lose them early in the power plant and mine transition. Despite this challenge, the project was still successful in assisting numerous SMEs and training workers.
- Projects focussing on **immediate community needs** versus long-term economic development needs of the regions. These immediate needs were often noted as a priority before moving to longer-term economic development needs, but the communities did not otherwise have the dollars to undertake the immediate need projects.

- The **programs ending in 2026** when the plan to close the coal mines in Saskatchewan extends to 2030. A higher level of need for the programs in Saskatchewan is expected when the mines close.

Positive factors that helped overcome these negative factors identified by key informants, funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users included:

- The engagement and collaboration by **PrairiesCan staff** with the communities to build trust, identify their needs, and help identify projects.
- Project support from PrairiesCan staff, including their willingness to adjust project timelines (i.e., extensions), improved project implementation success.
- **Community and community leader support** for and involvement in the projects.
- The program **funding support** from PrairiesCan.

The CCTI and CCTI-IF have achieved or are expected to achieve most of their short-term outcomes

Short-term outcome: Communities discover unique economic development opportunities

All key informants and funding recipients, and most community leaders and end-users, indicated that the **communities discovered unique opportunities for economic development**. Key informants highlighted the initial engagement with PrairiesCan staff as one of the methods that helped identify unique opportunities for the communities. Key informants and funding recipients also noted that different opportunities were identified through CCTI-funded feasibility studies and economic analyses. For example, the Coronach and Leduc regions identified the importance and influence of tourism in their regions. Key informants noted that Coronach leaned heavily into tourism as there were not many other options. As another example, the Harvest Sky region identified supporting entrepreneurship and focussing on agricultural ventures such as fertilizer production and greenhouses. In Alberta, key informants also highlighted the CCTI funding for a business case to redevelop a waterfront in Parkland County and identifying the opportunity to renovate an old rail roundhouse in Hanna as a tourist attraction.

Short-term outcome: Communities are becoming equipped to capitalize on economic development opportunities

Funding recipients, community leaders, and end users mostly agreed that the **CCTI and CCTI-IF programs have allowed their communities to capitalize on available economic opportunities**. It was noted that some projects utilized existing community assets to develop new economic opportunities. Key informants also provided some examples of communities capitalizing on economic opportunities by using CCTI-IF funding to implement projects, including some discovered through CCTI-funded projects (e.g., the Parkland County and Hanna examples provided under the above short-term outcome). Key informants and some funding recipients expressed that the CCTI and CCTI-IF had **limited funding for the communities to capitalize on economic opportunities** — particularly in Coronach and Estevan, Saskatchewan.

Parkland County developed a **Wabamun Area Development Strategy** through this project. The project included undertaking economic analyses, land use planning strategies, and stakeholder engagement to develop comprehensive land management plans. The analyses identified economically viable development for the Wabamun area as a whole. Parkland County then had a CCTI-IF project funded to upgrade a wastewater facility, develop a water feature, and redevelop the waterfront park in Wabamun, which were economic opportunities identified in the CCTI project.

Short-term outcome: Community leaders better understand how to facilitate economic development opportunities

All key informants and most funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users agreed that the **programs helped community leaders be better prepared and understand how to facilitate economic development opportunities**, to a certain extent. Generally, the development of feasibility studies and economic analyses were highlighted as contributing to this outcome.

More specifically, in Alberta, key informants and funding recipients mentioned that the opportunities in the four areas are different. For example, the development of BREOC in Battle River has been a success for the communities and their leaders and the committee has continued to operate after CCTI funding ran out. Conversely, Hanna had a similar council funded through CCTI, but it did not continue once the funding ended.

In Saskatchewan, key informants and funding recipients mentioned that community leaders are learning and are likely better prepared, but there was less confidence from key informants that they understand how to facilitate economic development opportunities or will be able to without additional funding. However, positive examples in Saskatchewan were provided. In the Estevan region, the Southeast Saskatchewan Economic Partnership (SSEP) was highlighted by funding recipients as contributing to community leaders' better understanding of how to facilitate economic development opportunities. This was facilitated by the communities hiring an Economic Development Officer (EDO) to assist in identifying and realizing economic development opportunities in the region. The SSEP was the recipient of funding for a CCTI project but was also involved in (and contributed indirectly to) several other CCTI and CCTI-IF supported initiatives in the region.

Key informants identified that **turnover in community leaders' positions** in Alberta and Saskatchewan have been a negative factor for community leaders being better prepared and understanding as the knowledge is lost when a community leader that worked with the programs or on specific projects leaves.

A project in the Harvest Sky Region was a community-based initiative designed to **develop a strategic transition plan** for communities in east-central Alberta transitioning from coal-fired electricity generation. The project involved hiring a facilitator to lead strategic planning sessions and provide the Hanna Climate Change Strategy Taskforce with a comprehensive transition plan. This plan intended to direct the Town of Hanna and surrounding areas through the economic transition. While the plan experienced delays, it ultimately achieved its objective, providing a blueprint for navigating the shift from coal dependency and aligning with the short-term outcomes of discovering unique and becoming equipped to capitalize on economic development opportunities. The strategic planning sessions also contributed to enhancing community leaders' understanding of economic development facilitation.

Short-term outcome: Community members increase their knowledge of economic development tools and techniques

Key informants, funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users agreed that **this outcome is being achieved, but to a more limited extent**. For example, key informants did not provide many examples of community members, outside of community leaders, having increased knowledge of economic tools and techniques. For the most part, key informants acknowledged increased preparedness in the communities and increased understanding in some of the communities from the development of economic development plans, formation of committees, and so forth. Key informants and funding recipients also provided some specific examples:

- Hanna had a series of open houses and town halls to provide the community members with information and to solicit feedback.
- In Battle River, participants involved in the business ecosystem development project that attended the workshops and seminars increased their business-related knowledge and skills to support their economic growth. For example, they developed a business summit series with an external marketing expert to help local businesses position their brand and grow their customer base using both traditional and digital marketing techniques. The program also supported numerous businesses in creating a video business profile.
- In Coronach, the Business Hub project resulted in the development of an online training portal with various topics and information that could be accessed free of charge and was open to all community members.

Short-term outcome: Communities are becoming more resilient to economic and other changes

Overall, key informants, funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users agree that the CCTI and CCTI-IF are **helping communities become more resilient to economic and other changes**. However, they acknowledged there is still a lot of work to do in many communities, and it is also too early to tell as many projects at the time of this evaluation were still ongoing or just recently completed and the impacts in the communities had not yet been realized.

In **Alberta**, key informants and funding recipients believe that the **communities are more resilient to economic and other changes** than they were prior to the implementation of the programs, and this is already being seen since the coal mines have already been shut down, but the communities are maintaining the status quo or growing. The example of the Hanna housing situation was highlighted, where Hanna had numerous houses for sale a few years ago, but during the pandemic this changed to people wanting to move to Hanna and not being able to find housing. However, it was also noted that it is too soon to tell as five years is not long enough to know if the communities will continue to survive, especially as other potential issues in the communities arise.

In **Saskatchewan**, key informants and funding recipients were **less convinced that the communities are more resilient to economic and other changes** since the coal mines are still operating and the communities are more rural with less opportunities for economic diversification (although it is noted that Estevan has more opportunities and is more advanced in this regard than Coronach). Nevertheless, both communities were seen as needing more help/funding going forward.

The CCTI and CCTI-IF have achieved most of their intermediate outcomes, although some of these outcomes are expected to be achieved years following project completion

The programs in Alberta and Saskatchewan, according to project reporting, have **achieved most of their intermediate outcomes**, per the logic model for the programs, although for some projects, these outcomes will be achieved later (e.g., emergence of new business opportunities, increased access to employment).

Medium-term outcome: Partners engaged and/or investments have occurred in community-based projects

CCTI-funded projects engaged 234 partners in community-based ventures (see Table 2). This **surpasses the program's target of engaging 100 to 130 partners**. Three CCTI projects contributed to 80% of the total count of partners engaged. First was the CROP based in Alberta's Parkland County and Leduc County, which engaged with a broad spectrum of 110 partners, including 42 government and economic development organizations, 18 financial institutions, 12 educational institutions, and several businesses and community organizations. Second was the Sunrise Community Futures Development Corporation (SCFDC) initiative in Saskatchewan's Estevan region, which engaged with 41 partners (see project details below). Finally, the Hanna Business Hub Project in Alberta's Harvest Sky region engaged 29 partners.

These partnerships encompassed a range of collaborative efforts, including joint initiatives with local businesses, which contributed to the development and implementation of community-focussed projects. Government entities played a role in policy formulation and strategic planning, ensuring that the projects were aligned with regional development goals. Educational institutions were also involved in the projects through research collaborations and training programs, contributing their expertise and resources to enhance the impact of the initiatives.

The CCTI-IF program surpassed its target of 24 with 95 partners engaged. The focus of these partnerships was on similar lines of collaborative efforts, aiming to bring together a mix of local and regional stakeholders to contribute to infrastructure and economic development projects.

Program	Medium-term Outcome	Number of Projects
CCTI	234	11 projects
CCTI Alberta	185	8 projects
CCTI Saskatchewan	49	3 projects
CCTI-IF	95	9 projects
CCTI-IF Alberta	26	5 projects
CCTI-IF Saskatchewan	69	4 projects
Total CCTI / CCTI-IF	329	20 projects

Data as of January 23, 2025.
Note: Projects could contribute to more than one outcome.

Funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users identified some specific examples of mainly public sector partners engaged on projects as well, aligning with those documented in reporting, including local economic partnership organizations, regional economic development organizations, Government of Alberta Adult Learning, Tourism Saskatchewan, Travel Alberta, SaskPower, local municipalities and community administrations, provincial government officials, not-for-profit

organizations (e.g., South Saskatchewan ready, regional park associations, Indigenous groups), and EDOs.

The **eCommerce Development Initiative** in Saskatchewan's Estevan region, managed by SCFDC, specifically targeted businesses in the Estevan area and surrounding southeast Saskatchewan communities. This project was dedicated to enhancing local businesses through the development of eCommerce platforms and strategies, in response to the economic shift from coal reliance in these specific regions. A key indicator of the project's success was engagement with community partners. The initiative collaborated with 41 different partners in community-based projects, exceeding initial expectations of 10 partners.

Medium-term outcome: New business opportunities are emerging within communities

In total, CCTI and CCTI-IF programming reported that 1,670 businesses were created, maintained, or expanded across 31 funded projects (see Table 3). Both programs surpassed their targets of 15 to 20 businesses created, maintained, or expanded for CCTI programming and 50 to 75 for CCTI-IF programming.

Program	Medium-term Outcome	Number of Projects
CCTI	1,341	12 projects
CCTI Alberta	341	3 projects
CCTI Saskatchewan	1,000	9 projects
CCTI-IF	329	19 projects
CCTI-IF Alberta	153	7 projects
CCTI-IF Saskatchewan	176	12 projects
Total CCTI / CCTI-IF	1,670	31 projects

Data as of January 23, 2025.
Note: Projects could contribute to more than one outcome.

In **Alberta**, key informants were confident that **new business opportunities have emerged** in the communities, as reflected in the performance above (see Table 3). Funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users agreed, referencing that many new business opportunities have emerged in the impacted Alberta regions because of the programming, but also that many more business opportunities are likely to emerge once projects are completed, and some time has passed. For example, in Parkland County, it was indicated that there will be plenty of new business opportunities once the infrastructure projects are complete and companies begin to develop on the newly available land. The expectation is that these opportunities should start appearing in the next one to three years. Examples of business opportunities that have already emerged were also provided:

- The revitalization project in downtown Hanna resulting in investments in a dentist space and new restaurants opening.
- In Battle River, the Business Ecosystem Development program resulted in several niche businesses being established in the area (e.g., popcorn confections shop; stuffed baked potato company; laser treatment centre).

In **Saskatchewan**, the key informants and funding recipients identified that **some of the groundwork has been laid** through the programs for entrepreneurs to open new businesses, but they are not seeing new businesses in the communities yet since the mines are still operating and the projects are either still ongoing or have only recently been completed. However, funding recipients provided an example in Coronach of a food processing plant set up in one community as an example of the program directly assisting in a new business locating in the community.

Led by the Town of Coronach, the project involved **hiring contractors to enhance main street areas and business fronts** in the nine communities of the Deep South Regional Partnership. The project focussed on improving civic areas and business storefronts, with expenses covering materials, labor, and travel. The project involved improving business areas to increase the attractiveness of the region as a place to live and to promote regional tourism, considering the area's sparse population. A significant aspect of the project was the involvement of local businesses in identifying community and storefront needs. The Town of Coronach led this process and coordinated with a reported number of 57 businesses for the renovation of building exteriors, signage, and other external works, using third-party contractors.

Medium-term outcome: Access to employment is increasing

In total, CCTI and CCTI-IF programming maintained 2,829 jobs. The CCTI program accounted for maintaining 841 jobs, while CCTI-IF managed to maintain 1,988 jobs. Regarding job creation, CCTI and CCTI-IF programming created 763 jobs. Of these jobs, 645 were non-highly qualified personnel (HQP) jobs, and 118 were HQP (including STEM) jobs. CCTI projects created 163 jobs, and CCTI-IF projects created 600 jobs (see Table 4). The CCTI has not yet met its target of 200 to 250 jobs *created*, while the CCTI-IF met its target of 300 jobs *created or maintained*.

Table 4: Number of jobs maintained and created		
Program	Medium-term Outcome	Number of Projects
Number of jobs maintained		
CCTI	841	4 projects
CCTI Alberta	-	-
CCTI Saskatchewan	841	4 projects
CCTI-IF	1,988	19 projects
CCTI-IF Alberta	1,494	7 projects
CCTI-IF Saskatchewan	494	12 projects
Total CCTI / CCTI-IF	2,829	23 projects
Number of non-HQP jobs created		
CCTI	126	8 projects
CCTI Alberta	83	4 projects
CCTI Saskatchewan	43	4 projects
CCTI-IF	519	15 projects
CCTI-IF Alberta	290	5 projects
CCTI-IF Saskatchewan	229	10 projects
Total CCTI / CCTI-IF	645	23 projects

Table 4: Number of jobs maintained and created		
Program	Medium-term Outcome	Number of Projects
Number of HQP (including STEM) jobs created		
CCTI	37	7 projects
CCTI Alberta	33	4 projects
CCTI Saskatchewan	4	3 projects
CCTI-IF	81	5 projects
CCTI-IF Alberta	81	5 projects
CCTI-IF Saskatchewan	-	-
Total CCTI / CCTI-IF	118	12 projects
Data as of January 23, 2025.		
Note: Projects could contribute to more than one outcome.		

Key informants and funding recipients in **Alberta** also noted that **new employment opportunities have emerged** (and/or been maintained) alongside new business developments. Examples of projects that resulted in new employment opportunities included the Leduc Nisku Spine Road project and the Learning Centre in Hanna. Funding recipients also highlighted that many more job opportunities will become available in the future aligning with the new business developments because of the CCTI and CCTI-IF projects.

One key informant noted that, despite new opportunities in Alberta communities, economic factors like the oil and gas downturn have significantly impacted these areas. They also mentioned that many coal miners commute to Northern Alberta for work.

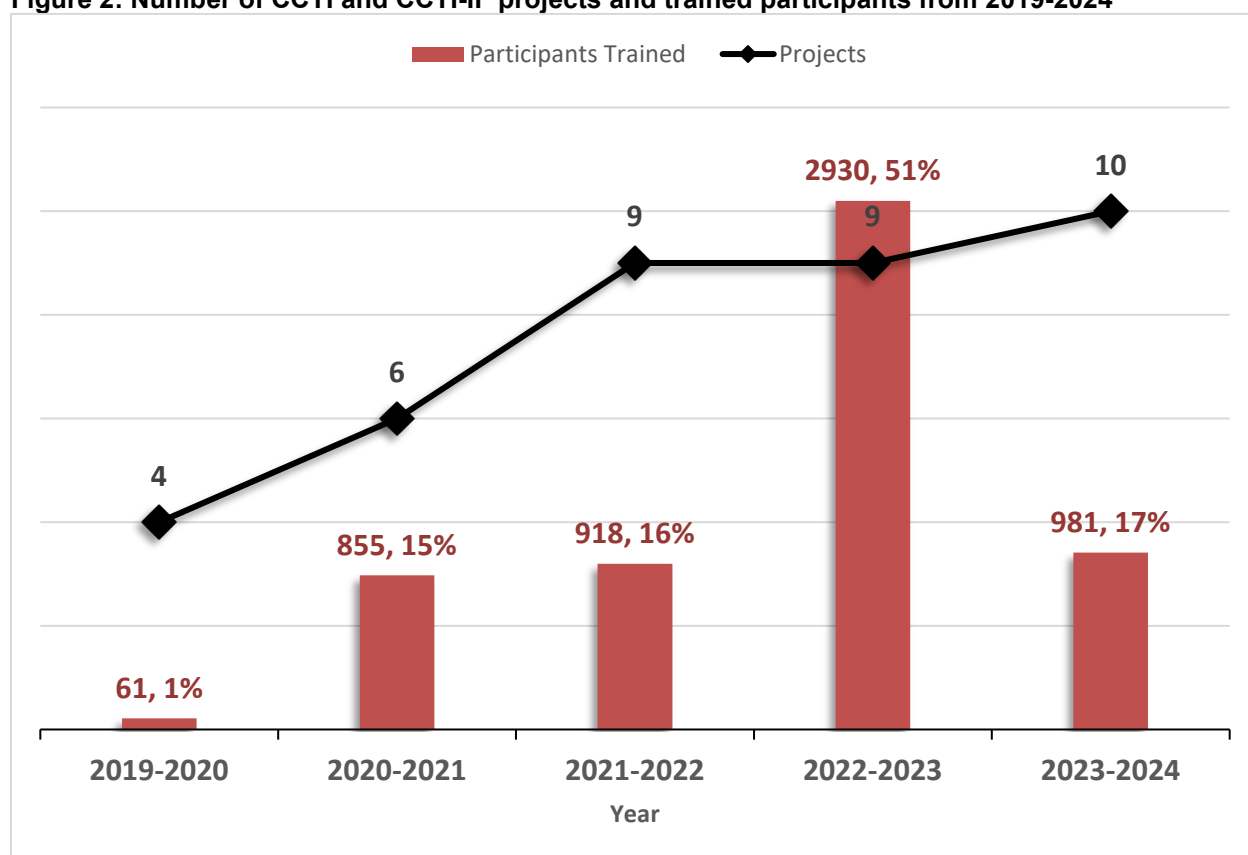
In **Saskatchewan**, **the new employment opportunities have been limited** since the coal workers are still employed. The key informants and funding recipients expressed that the opportunity for new employment from the funded projects may be there in the future with continued support, but new employment is mostly not being seen yet. Nevertheless, some examples of job creation were provided (per Table 4).

The **Launch Box Business Incubator** in the City of Estevan was a four-year program aimed to foster new business development in the community. The Launch Box was designed to transition organizations from informal settings into a supportive environment conducive to growth, employment, and economic development, introducing new ideas and industries to the community. The Incubator offered a range of rental spaces for new and aspiring businesses in their early operational stages. Key activities of the Launch Box included market research for development strategies and business plans, business development involving community outreach and support for entrepreneurs, investment attraction activities, and regular mentoring sessions with local business owners and economic development partners. These efforts were directed towards expanding business licenses in Estevan, assisting home-based businesses to grow, and fostering investment opportunities. The project created 30 jobs by three new employers offering an average annual income of \$25,000.

Medium-term outcome: Training and education opportunities are increasing

Figure 2 shows the number of projects involved in participant training and the annual total of trained participants. The period of 2022-2023 had the highest activity, with 2,930 participants trained, making up 51% of the 5,745 total participants trained over the entire period. The high number of participants trained in 2022-2023 is mostly attributable to two projects: the CROP delivered by Community Futures Alberta in the Parkland and Leduc regions that had a focus on training, and the County of Paintearth No. 18 in collaboration with BREOC project that included the delivery of workshops, seminars, and mentoring. In 2023-2024, the number of trained participants decreased to 981, or 17% of the total. The number of projects including training performance indicators peaked at 10 in 2023-24. While most training occurred in 2022-2023, training involvement was spread across more projects, despite a decline in total participants trained in the latest year.

Figure 2: Number of CCTI and CCTI-IF projects and trained participants from 2019-2024



According to key informants, funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users, the **level of training across the impacted regions varied**, but there were numerous examples of funded projects that provided training opportunities. In Saskatchewan, some training was offered through the college, including a heavy equipment operator course that was well attended. In Alberta, the Community Futures project was highlighted because the Community Futures officers provided training to businesses and individuals, as well as employment opportunities, and so forth. In Battle River, the workshops and seminars offered through the Business Ecosystem Development project were highlighted again.

In Coronach, training opportunities were limited due to the region’s specific educational needs and scarce employment prospects.

There is more potential for growth and economic diversification in impacted Alberta communities versus Saskatchewan communities

The long-term outcome for the CCTI and CCTI-IF is that the impacted **communities are able to grow and economically diversify**. Based on evidence gathered for the six regional case studies, it was clear that there is **more growth potential in the Alberta communities**, and possibly Estevan in Saskatchewan, but not the other smaller and more rural communities in Saskatchewan, for community growth and economic diversification.

Key informants, funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users mostly agree that the **communities in Alberta will be able to continue to grow and diversify** because of the funded CCTI and CCTI-IF projects. A key informant mentioned the funding's importance in helping the communities through a "rough patch," that included the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Key informants and funding recipients mentioned larger infrastructure projects as instances where communities will have the ability to continue expanding once those projects are finished, due to additional investment and increased job opportunities. While there is optimism for the impacted communities to grow and economically diversify, it was also **agreed that much more needs to be done for the communities to continue to economically diversify** going forward.

In **Saskatchewan**, there is a belief that **communities outside of Estevan, such as Coronach, have limited growth potential**. Key informants noted that Coronach, currently with 600 residents, may shrink to fewer than 300 after the coal mine closure. The town is very rural, with the nearest town 70 kilometers away, offering minimal growth opportunities. Funding recipients mentioned that Coronach lacks the capacity to economically diversify sufficiently, especially given its rural setting and small population. While plans to boost tourism and attract businesses and new residents might help, these efforts alone will not compensate for the economic loss due to the transition away from coal. Key informants indicated that if SaskPower decides to install small modular reactors (SMRs) or other energy production methods (e.g., solar or wind farms) in Estevan and Coronach, it will benefit those economies in addition to the funded CCTI and CCTI-IF projects. In Estevan specifically, agricultural and oil and gas opportunities were identified, as well as a corridor to the south that will provide continued economic opportunities in the area.

Negative social impacts of the mines closing need to be considered

Evaluation participants were asked about additional economic and social outcomes from the programs. Most key informants, funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users did not identify extra economic results from the CCTI and CCTI-IF. However, they noted that the projects raised community awareness about the need for diversification and fostered cooperation and learning. Some funding recipients mentioned that the initiatives could attract people to the regions and increase the tax base, leading to economic benefits.

One key informant highlighted that projects like renovating campgrounds and recreation facilities have both economic and social impacts. A community leader mentioned that assessments identified social service gaps that are being addressed.

A lack of continued funding is the main factor that will negatively affect the sustained impacts of the programs

Key informants, funding recipients, community leaders, and end-users provided some examples of factors that will facilitate or hinder the impacts of the programs going forward after the programs have ended. The most commonly mentioned negative factor that will hinder the impacts of the programs was the **lack of additional funding** (federal and/or provincial) for the communities to be able to continue and

build on the programming and projects implemented from CCTI- and CCTI-IF-funded projects. Even in Leduc, where the BRE continues to operate, a need for more funding was identified. Other hindering factors mentioned included:

- Turnover of elected officials and community leaders/champions;
- Changing pre-existing attitudes regarding economic diversification in some communities;
- Continued cost inflation and rising fuel and transportation costs; and
- Natural disasters, such as more forest fires in the future.

In Saskatchewan, the **inconsistencies between federal and provincial messaging** and policies regarding the coal phase-out are also seen as negative factors going forward given the coal mines in Saskatchewan are still operational. While the federal government has indicated that the mines must be closed by 2030, the Saskatchewan government plans to keep the mines operating as long as possible with messaging that it may be beyond 2030.

Some positive factors mentioned that will facilitate the impacts of the programs included:

- Continued collaboration between communities (e.g., In Battle River, collaboration amongst the seven municipalities through BREOC was expected to positively influence the impact of the projects in the communities moving forward);
- Continued community engagement and positive communications around the funded initiatives;
- Alberta having a strong energy, oil, and gas economy; and
- People moving back to the communities in Alberta, such as Hanna, building the communities' tax base.

The Hanna Housing Boom: An economic outcome that has developed alongside the CCTI is the housing market boom in the Town of Hanna. The Town of Hanna marketed the area through targeted online advertising in major cities like Montréal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. These marketing campaigns focussed on highlighting local amenities and the affordability of housing. The region appears to have successfully promoted itself as a desirable destination for semi-retirees and those looking for a more affordable lifestyle, with access to necessary services and high-speed internet. As a result, there has been a marked increase in the demand for housing leading to a decline in housing vacancies and increased construction activity.

Diversity was not a focus of the programs, but was a consideration for many projects

Key informants agreed that while **diversity** was a consideration for project approval, it was **not a focus of the programs**. Key informants and funding recipients noted that the makeup of the impacted communities is not highly diverse, with low populations of the LGBTQ community, newcomers, immigrants, and so on. Funding recipients noted examples of community engagement with stakeholders that were open to all community members but also noted that these were not necessarily designs of the funded projects. Examples of diversity considerations from key informants and funding recipients included applications and reporting focussing on women, youth, and Indigenous people (see Table 5 for the outcome reporting), and different projects considered in terms of working directly with or engaging with First Nations and Francophone communities. The projects with Paul First Nation were highlighted as examples of successfully working with a First Nation.

Outcome	Indigenous	Women	Youth
HQP jobs created	2	13	5
Non-HQP jobs created	2	42	12
Participants trained	11	4	37

Data as of January 23, 2025.
Note: Projects could contribute to more than one outcome.

Key informants indicated that funded projects did not have any required inclusivity targets. Some specific examples of funded projects addressing diverse populations included:

- Housing projects tailored specifically to seniors, but ultimately beneficial to the entire community (Harvest Sky).
- An influx of newcomer residents (especially from the Philippines) into sectors such as hospitality, healthcare, and food services, thus enriching the local culture and stimulating entrepreneurial endeavors among these groups (Harvest Sky).
- The BRE identified considerations for persons with disabilities and for parents with young children as part of the renovations of the facility, however that was not mandated as part of the project (Leduc).
- The Community Futures project, across the four regions of Alberta, documented significant numbers of women and youth aided through the project.
- According to reporting, between 2019-20 and Q2 2023, the CCTI-funded Business Ecosystem Development project had created 12 non-HQP and 1 HQP jobs for youth; 42 non-HQP and five HQP jobs for women; and no HQP or non-HQP jobs for Indigenous people (Battle River).
- Engagement with the local Métis, First Nations, and Francophone communities to consult with them and determine their interest in participating in future projects that would take advantage of the region's rich historical background for tourism development opportunities (Coronach).
- Engagement and feedback from seniors' groups and non-profit organizations representing mobility-impaired individuals who would be impacted or who may be interested in the projects' activities and outcomes (Coronach).
- Public and Indigenous engagement related to the Rafferty Dam Marina initiative are ensuring that a range of perspectives is being considered in project design and implementation (Estevan).⁴
- Inclusiveness has been a major consideration in the design of Southeast College's Heavy Equipment Operator program; the College's mobile delivery of the program to First Nations (within their communities) represents an intentional effort to enable the program to reach diverse groups of individuals (Estevan).

⁴ The SSEP Economic Development Strategy, developed in 2021, outlined the possibility of a marina and other development at the Rafferty Dam Reservoir (McDonald Lake) under their Destination Tourism Economic Pillar. It is anticipated that the marina would include permanent docks, recreation amenities, support facilities, as well as approximately 287 residential and commercial lots and 533 recreational vehicle sites to be developed surrounding the Rafferty Reservoir. This facility is expected to increase year-round regional tourism, support the growth and development of regional businesses, and add numerous jobs. The CCTI-funded project was to complete the Rafferty Marina Phase 2 Engineering and Consultation requirements.

Funding recipients are being held accountable through project reporting, but there could be improvements to the metrics being collected

Analysis of PrairiesCan program documentation revealed the mechanisms ensuring the accountability of funding recipients. These documents included detailed assessments of project viability, timelines, benefits, performance indicators, and systematic outcome tracking, providing a framework for transparent reporting and evaluation of project effectiveness.

According to key informants, **funding recipients are being held accountable through required quarterly reporting**. Key informants noted that funding recipients were good at providing the required reporting on time and funding recipients said they were generally satisfied with the reporting requirements, although there were some suggested improvements.

Key informants indicated that the reporting was useful but noted that sometimes the funding recipients struggled with reporting on some of the metrics and the program would be required to go back to the funding recipients to fix the issues. To that end, key informants and funding recipients agreed that **many of the indicators were difficult to report on** because they did not apply to the projects, or they were long-term outcomes that could only be reported on years after project completion. For example, for certain infrastructure projects, new businesses and job creation would not be expected until the infrastructure job is completed, and development begins in the newly accessible area. Key informants mentioned that there could be value to ask funding recipients to report beyond the life of their projects, but one key informant said that maintaining the relationships with the funding recipients was more important than putting additional administrative burden on them.

Some key informants noted the useful addition of the **indicator measuring the number of partners engaged** to the reporting. Key informants agreed that this indicator is a good measure of success for community economic development projects. Key informants suggested that, overall, PrairiesCan should allow more flexibility in determining the indicators to measure the success of programs.

Key informants and funding recipients also noted the importance of **capturing the qualitative and “soft side of things”** in conversations with the funding recipients, but are not, and it can be difficult to capture in the quarterly reporting. It was suggested that future reporting should provide a space for this. However, a review of quarterly reports shows that there is the option to provide explanations for each key indicator. It is unclear why these were not being used to enter additional qualitative results.

Funding recipients suggested that in some instances, especially for CCTI-IF projects, **quarterly reporting is too frequent**. Funding recipients argued that there was not much to report on for long periods of time for infrastructure projects and therefore the reporting was unnecessary. Key informants agreed to a certain extent but noted the importance of maintaining regular contact with the funding recipients that the quarterly reporting provides, as well as measuring cash flow and the potential to move cash from year to year that may be lost if reporting frequency is reduced. Some funding recipients also noted the benefits of reporting quarterly as it ensured they stayed on top of their projects.

4.3 Efficiency

Summary of findings: **Program resources are being used efficiently** due to the knowledgeable PrairiesCan staff and their flexibility in working with the funding recipients to ensure the successful completion of projects. However, potential improvements to improve PrairiesCan staff's efficiency included: **improving the online application system, streamlining the application process, and decreasing the amount of time for review.**

Funding recipients also used their resources efficiently and mainly kept their projects within budget and on time, given the flexibility of the programming to grant project amendments, especially in response to delays created by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it was noted that **rolling over funds** from year to year, which was necessary for many projects because of the pandemic, could be made easier. Finally, the **reimbursement process** used by PrairiesCan can limit municipalities, and program funding news releases should be timelier, not occurring post-project completion.

PrairiesCan's resources are being used efficiently, but improvements to the application process would improve efficiencies

Key informants and funding recipients agreed that resources are being used efficiently by PrairiesCan staff, but certain improvements could improve PrairiesCan staff's efficiency.

Facilitating the efficient delivery of the programs is the **quality and flexibility of the PrairiesCan staff** (e.g., program officers) in working with the funding recipients and helping to ensure the successful completion of projects. It was noted by key informants and funding recipients that the staff are knowledgeable and have done a good job of keeping projects on track in difficult situations, such as through the COVID-19 pandemic, helping inexperienced funding recipients, and so forth. All funding recipients reported positive working relationships with PrairiesCan staff, indicating staff were readily available to work through challenges and were genuinely invested in the success of the projects.

Most of the factors raised that are hindering the efficient delivery of the programs are related to the application process. The **main issue** raised by key informants resulting in inefficiencies is **the system/portal PrairiesCan uses for applications**. Key informants noted that the system is "clunky" and not very user friendly. The key informants continued that since this application process was new for these funding recipients, the system was difficult for them to navigate. Some key informants noted that the system changed prior to the CCTI-IF applications, but the system had some glitches and is still not as user friendly as it could be. However, some funding recipients expressed appreciation for PrairiesCan switch to using an online portal for application submission, which simplified the application process. Key informants noted that they can provide feedback on the system and efforts are being undertaken to continue to improve the system, although it was mentioned that it will probably be a lengthy process.

Funding recipients also indicated that the timeline for project approvals is too long. Especially regarding CCTI-IF projects, funding recipients noted that the lengthy approval process caused some infrastructure projects to miss out on the relatively short construction season that led to project delays. While key informants agreed the **review process is lengthy**, they noted it is necessary to complete the due diligence required to approve the projects. A key informant indicated that communication and explanations to the funding recipient along the process helps the funding recipient understand. However, the key informants agreed that efficiencies could potentially be implemented in terms of the information required on the applications and in the review process.

Some funding recipients noted appreciation for the use of an Expression of Interest (EOI) process by PrairiesCan, which allowed PrairiesCan to vet and provide feedback on project ideas prior to communities having to invest time and energy into developing a formal proposal. A couple of key informants also agreed that the claims process functions adequately.

Suggestions for improvements to the efficiency of PrairiesCan's resources included improving the application system, streamlining the application process, and decreasing the amount of time for review. Key informants admitted that these solutions will not be easy or quick to implement.

Funding recipients are using resources efficiently and either secured amendments or adjusted projects to successfully complete projects

Key informants and funding recipients indicated that **many projects remained within budget and finished on time**, but there have been **numerous projects that have faced challenges**. The COVID-19 pandemic, especially for infrastructure projects, has resulted in numerous financial issues for projects, in terms of delaying projects and increasing costs due to inflation and supply chain issues. Key informants and funding recipients noted that amendments have been negotiated to extend projects and, in some cases, also increase the level of funding. In other cases, projects have had to reduce their level of activity or plans (e.g., Jeanne Lougheed Park underground utilities installation project in Battle River reduced its scope in response to increased project costs) or go to their council to cover their additional costs. While key informants indicated they were mostly able to navigate the issues with the funding recipients, they noted the burden in issuing amendments to roll over funds to another year. It was noted that the Terms and Conditions for future programs should have the **ability to roll over funds in the contribution agreements** to avoid the administrative burden and delays to projects when waiting for approvals. Finally, some funding recipients noted that they completed their project under budget, which allowed them the flexibility to undertake additional work as needed without exceeding allocated funds.

Key informants and funding recipients criticized the **reimbursement process** of PrairiesCan requiring that money to be out of the municipalities' accounts before reimbursing the costs. For municipalities with small operating budgets, this created cashflow challenges. It was suggested that PrairiesCan considers advances to municipalities to cover project costs.

Finally, funding recipients would also like to see better coordination of the official funding news releases, especially when the **news releases are significantly delayed** from the time that the funding approval is given. In some instances, it was noted that projects were already completed before funding was officially announced.

5.0 Conclusions

Six regions and their respective communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan are impacted by the federal requirement to close all coal mines by 2030. In response, the federal government announced the CCTI and CCTI-IF programs, delivered by PrairiesCan in Alberta and Saskatchewan, to help the impacted communities through funding community economic development projects.

The CCTI and CCTI-IF have been successful in meeting some needs of the impacted communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Through the CCTI, the economic development projects were identified by the communities with aid from and engagement with PrairiesCan staff. Projects included the development of economic strategies and feasibility studies (n = 48 for CCTI and CCTI-IF). Infrastructure projects funded through the CCTI-IF helped some of the opportunities identified in the economic strategies and feasibility studies proceed, as well as other community identified infrastructure projects.

Continued need for funding in Alberta and Saskatchewan to maintain and further capitalize on the projects funded through the programs is evident for these communities to be able to survive the closing of the coal mines. The funded projects in Alberta and Saskatchewan have met most of their intended outcomes, including business creation expectations (n = 1,670 for CCTI and CCTI-IF), but not job creation expectations for the CCTI (n = 163, target was 300). However, the communities in the two provinces are in vastly different situations. In Alberta, the coal mines have been closed and the transition in the impacted communities has already started. With the communities in Alberta being more populated than those in Saskatchewan, and some communities being located close to major urban centres (e.g., Edmonton), the impacted Alberta communities have been more successful at diversifying their economies and see a more positive future, as long as they have funding to capitalize on identified economic diversification opportunities.

The impacted Saskatchewan communities, other than perhaps Estevan, appear to be facing a tougher future due to the current continued operation of the coal mines and the smaller and more rural nature of the impacted communities. With the coal mines in Saskatchewan still operational and not planning to close until 2030, the true impact of the mines closing will not be fully felt in the impacted communities in Saskatchewan until they do. As a result, transition funding in Saskatchewan will be needed closer to 2030, but economic diversification opportunities need to continue to be identified and operationalized now. Additional funding for this is needed.

Conclusion 1: Economic development progress in impacted communities requires ongoing funding and added social supports.

The impacted communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan require additional funding to continue to diversify their economies. Undertaking feasibility studies and economic strategies in communities that have not yet done so and providing infrastructure funding for communities to operationalize identified opportunities in the feasibility studies and economic strategies is required. Reviewing current provincial funding and other federal funding is needed to help determine the level and method for funding distribution. Finally, in Saskatchewan, any transition funding (e.g., funding a transition centre) should be aligned with when the mines are planning to close.

Another important aspect that became evident during the evaluation is the need for social supports in the communities for laid-off workers, their families, and so on. It was noted that these supports were not readily available in the communities and that integrating these supports with the community economic development funding would be beneficial for the communities and the success of the projects.

Addressing social impacts as a result of the mines closing was raised as a concern in the impacted communities. A collaborative and coordinated approach should be pursued in the future that includes both federal and provincial entities to ensure that necessary social supports are provided in the impacted communities. Social supports would likely have enhanced the success of the community economic development projects being implemented through CCTI and CCTI-IF in the impacted communities.

Evaluation participants (i.e., PrairiesCan staff, funding recipients) identified a number of improvements for the CCTI and CCTI-IF that could be applied to future programming to help increase the effective and efficient delivery of the same or similar programming. It is acknowledged that PrairiesCan staff have looked into some of these improvements and noted that they are necessary but were not possible to implement in isolation.

Conclusion 2: The following process improvements should be considered for future economic development programs like CCTI and CCTI-IF:

The time required for project approvals should be decreased.

This was noted as an issue across both programs but was most evident for CCTI-IF projects where delayed approvals by a month or so could result in projects missing the construction season (e.g., May to October in the Prairies), therefore delaying the project by almost a full year.

The time required for funding disbursements should be decreased.

Similar to project approvals, delays in the disbursement of funding can result in significant delays to projects or funding recipients needing to find ways to fund their projects on their own initially. Since the CCTI and CCTI-IF were reimbursement programs, improvements in the timeliness of payments would help to minimize cash flow issues for funding recipients. Advance payments or grants were identified as potential solutions to address this issue.

The amendment process for rolling funds from year to year should be simplified.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in several projects being delayed and the need for project amendments and extensions, that included the need for funding to be shifted from one year to the next. While PrairiesCan staff were commended for their flexibility and ability to do so, it was noted that the process is very difficult and restrictive and could have been simpler.

Reporting should meet the needs of the program.

Consideration should be given to improving the balance between indicators needed for departmental reporting and those that fit with the programs. Some of the indicators (e.g., businesses created, jobs created) did not apply to some projects (e.g., for feasibility studies) or were longer-term outcomes for many of the projects that will not be captured during their implementation. Ensuring relevant and useful metrics are captured for the programs would have increased the quality of reporting and reduced the burden on funding recipients. Additionally, increased awareness of the opportunity for more reporting would have helped funding recipients explain and PrairiesCan staff understand how and why certain metrics are and are not being met. This option appeared to exist in the reporting for each indicator, so there may have just been the need to educate funding recipients to use that space for qualitative reporting.

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Appendix A – CCTI- and CCTI-IF-funded projects in Alberta and Saskatchewan

CCTI and CCTI-IF Projects by Province, Mine and Region			
PROV	MINE	REGION	PROJECT
AB	Genesee	1) Leduc County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CCTI</u>: Investment Readiness and Implementation Strategy (for Nisku Spine Road) • <u>CCTI</u>: Business Retention and Expansion Facility in Nisku • <u>CCTI</u>: Business Retention and Expansion Centre • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Completion of Nisku Spine Road • <u>CCTI (also covered Parkland County region)</u>: Wabamun Transition Coordinator • <u>CCTI (covered all four regions in Alberta)</u>: Community Futures Network of Alberta – Community Resiliency and Opportunity Project (CROP)
	Highvale	2) Parkland County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CCTI</u>: Tri-Municipal Sub-Regional Plan • <u>CCTI</u>: Wabamun Area Development Strategy • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Wastewater upgrade and waterfront park in Wabamun • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Upgrade intersection at Highway 16A in Acheson • <u>CCTI (also covered Leduc County region)</u>: Wabamun Transition Coordinator • <u>CCTI (covered all four regions in Alberta)</u>: Community Futures Network of Alberta – Community Resiliency and Opportunity Project (CROP)
		3) Paul First Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CCTI</u>: Develop Transition Centre • <u>CCTI</u>: Feasibility study for a green energy park
	Paintearth	4) Battle River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CCTI</u>: Renovate two transition centres • <u>CCTI</u>: Battle River Economic Opportunities Committee (BREOC), support business ecosystem development and transition • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Flagstaff County Industrial Park Feasibility Study • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Forestburg South Industrial Subdivision planning and design • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Wastewater and stormwater easement infrastructure Crowfoot Crossing Industrial park • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Jeanna Lougheed Historic Park land development • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Reconstruct and convert campground area into a multipurpose venue in Castor • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Create business incubator facilities to foster commercial growth in Coronation

CCTI and CCTI-IF Projects by Province, Mine and Region			
PROV	MINE	REGION	PROJECT
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Develop Forestburg/Flagstaff Industrial Park – Phase 1 in Forestburg • <u>CCTI (covered all four regions in Alberta)</u>: Community Futures Network of Alberta – Community Resiliency and Opportunity Project (CROP)
	Sheerness	5) Harvest Sky	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CCTI</u>: Harvest Sky Economic Development Corporation, Strategic Transition Plan • <u>CCTI</u>: Hanna Business Hub • <u>CCTI</u>: Harvest Sky Economic Development Corporation, Cactus Corridor Feasibility Study • <u>CCTI</u>: Youngstown solar panels installation, Hanna signage replacement • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Sheerness Industrial Park development • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Develop and construct industrial water reservoir • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Revitalize the Main Street in Town of Hanna • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Develop the Hanna Roundhouse into a multi-purpose venue and destination hub • <u>CCTI (covered all four regions in Alberta)</u>: Community Futures Network of Alberta – Community Resiliency and Opportunity Project (CROP)
SK	Estevan	6) Estevan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CCTI</u>: Sunrise Community Futures, transition coordinator • <u>CCTI</u>: Southeast College, solar installation training program • <u>CCTI</u>: Hire experts to help transition City of Estevan • <u>CCTI</u>: Launch Box Business Incubator • <u>CCTI</u>: Zero emission natural gas power plant feasibility study • <u>CCTI</u>: City of Estevan branding and marketing strategy • <u>CCTI</u>: Feasibility study for a short line rail link from Ceres Northgate to North Portal, SK • <u>CCTI</u>: Southeast College, Heavy Equipment Operator Program • <u>CCTI</u>: Develop economic and community strategies • <u>CCTI</u>: City of Estevan Transition Centre • <u>CCTI</u>: Sunrise Community Futures, eCommerce platforms and strategies • <u>CCTI</u>: Develop downtown area design plan in City of Estevan

CCTI and CCTI-IF Projects by Province, Mine and Region			
PROV	MINE	REGION	PROJECT
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CCTI</u>: Obtain Bioeconomy Development Opportunity (BDO) Zone designation • <u>CCTI</u>: Sunrise Community Futures, regional tourism initiative • <u>CCTI</u>: Revitalize existing tourism elements in Town of Bienfait • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Upgrade Primary Grid Road 605 • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Construct fire hall in Town of Bienfait • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Upgrade and pave Primary Grid Road 704 • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Upgrade and pave Kensington Ave to Estevan Bypass • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: La Roche Percée Provincial Historic Site • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Traffic light installation at Pine Ave and King Street intersection • <u>CCTI</u>: Coal Transition Coordinator and Strategic Plan • <u>CCTI</u>: Southeast College, Heavy Equipment Operator Program Enhancement • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Complete Initial Engineering and Engagement Work for Estevan’s Downtown Revitalization • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Southeast Saskatchewan Economic Partnership (SSEP), Completion of the Rafferty Marina Phase 2 Engineering and Consultation Requirements
	Poplar River Mine	7) Coronach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CCTI</u>: South Central Community Futures Development Corporation, hire transition coordinator • <u>CCTI</u>: Hire expert to develop regional strategic plan • <u>CCTI</u>: Develop business plan for a cola interpretive centre • <u>CCTI</u>: Enhance main street areas and business fronts of communities in the Deep South Regional Partnership and area • <u>CCTI</u>: Deep South Regional Partnership Marketing and Branding Initiative • <u>CCTI</u>: Complete an economic development study for Jean Louis Legare Regional Park, SK • <u>CCTI</u>: Develop economic analyses for tourism, agri-food and energy developments in Coronach, SK • <u>CCTI</u>: Assessment of a school building for development of a transition centre in Willow Bunch, SK • <u>CCTI</u>: Coronach Business Hub

CCTI and CCTI-IF Projects by Province, Mine and Region			
PROV	MINE	REGION	PROJECT
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CCTI</u>: Upgrade campground to expand the tourism opportunities at Bengough Regional Park • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Replace waterlines and repair roads and sidewalks in Coronach's main business district • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Replace water and sewer infrastructure as well as re-surface streets and build a retaining wall in the Town of Rockglen's central business district • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Install water and sewer lines to and within the Jean Louis Legare Regional Park • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Upgrade the Feedlot Road in the Rural Municipality of Poplar Valley • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Renovate former school building into an agricultural processing facility, Willow Bunch • <u>CCTI</u>: Poplar River Community Park Development • <u>CCTI</u>: Services to advance tourism sector in Coronach • <u>CCTI-IF</u>: Install an upgraded fibre optics network in the Coronach Region

Appendix B – Evaluation matrix

Table 1: Evaluation matrix for the Impact Evaluation of the CCTI and CCTI-IF

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data source
Relevance		
1. To what extent do the programs address the needs of SMEs and communities in the affected provinces?	i. Extent to which the interventions and supports provided by the CCTI and CCTI-IF are meeting the needs of the communities (considering other federal government programming being provided by NRCan, ESDC, and INFC).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
	ii. Extent to which SMEs and communities need/will need continued support following the end of the CCTI and CCTI-IF.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
	iii. Suggestions of other and/or additional supports that should or could be offered through the CCTI and CCTI-IF.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
2. To what extent are the programs aligned with priorities at the time of design, in addition to current Government of Canada and PrairiesCan priorities?	i. Extent of the alignment of CCTI and CCTI-IF with Government of Canada priorities currently and at time of program design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review • Key informant interviews
	ii. Extent of the alignment of CCTI and CCTI-IF with PrairiesCan priorities currently and at time of program design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review • Key informant interviews
Effectiveness		
3. Is the intervention achieving its objectives?	i. Extent to which the CCTI and CCTI-IF are undertaking their expected activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
	ii. Extent to which the CCTI and CCTI-IF are producing their expected outputs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
	iii. Factors impacting (positive and negative) the delivery of the programs (i.e., the undertaking of planned activities and production of outputs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies

Table 1: Evaluation matrix for the Impact Evaluation of the CCTI and CCTI-IF

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data source
4. To what extent does the program demonstrate progress towards intended outcomes? a. What impacts have been achieved in the short and mid-term? b. How likely are the projects to achieve longer-term outcomes after funding ends?	Short-term outcomes	
	i. Number of communities benefitting from CCTI and CCTI-IF investments (<i>target of 20-25 communities for each program</i>).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review
	ii. Extent to which communities discover unique economic development opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review (final report narratives) • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
	iii. Extent to which communities are becoming equipped to capitalize on economic development opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review (final report narratives) • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
	iv. Extent to which community leaders better understand how to facilitate economic development opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review (final report narratives) • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
	v. Extent to which community members increase their knowledge of economic development tools and techniques.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review (final report narratives) • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
	vi. Extent to which communities are becoming more resilient to economic and other changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review (final report narratives) • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
	vii. Extent to which projects (funding recipients) are being held accountable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies

Table 1: Evaluation matrix for the Impact Evaluation of the CCTI and CCTI-IF

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data source
Medium-term outcomes		
viii. Extent to which partners are engaged and investments have occurred in community-based projects (<i>target: 100-130 partners engaged through CCTI; 24 partners engaged through CCTI-IF</i>).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
ix. Extent to which new business opportunities are emerging within communities (<i>target: 15-20 and 50-75 businesses created, maintained, or expanded through CCTI and CCTI-IF, respectively</i>).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review • Economic analysis (business trends) • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
x. Extent to which access to employment is increasing (<i>target: 200-250 jobs created through CCTI; 300 jobs created or maintained through CCTI-IF</i>).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review • Economic analysis (labour trends) • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
xi. Extent to which training and education opportunities are increasing.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
xii. Extent to which funding to improve economic outcomes is increasing.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic analysis • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
Long-term outcomes		
xiii. Perception of the extent to which the communities supported by the programs are able to grow and economically diversify.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic analysis • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
Other outcomes		
xiv. Identification of other outcomes (economic and social) achieved by the programs.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic analysis • Key informant interviews

Table 1: Evaluation matrix for the Impact Evaluation of the CCTI and CCTI-IF

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data source
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey • Case studies
5. What factors will facilitate whether the impacts of the program will be sustained?	i. Factors impacting (positive and negative) the achievement of the intended outcomes of the programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic analysis • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
	ii. Factors that will facilitate or hinder the impacts of the programs after the programs have ended (i.e., will the impacts be lasting and why or why not?).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic analysis • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
6. To what extent are the programs addressing diverse populations?	i. Extent to which projects are considering and addressing diverse populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review • Key informant interviews • Survey • Case studies
Efficiency		
7. How well are resources being used?	i. Extent to which resources are being used efficiently by PrairiesCan and PrairiesCan staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review (financial data) • Key informant interviews • Case studies
	ii. Extent to which resources are being used efficiently by funding recipients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and database review (financial data) • Key informant interviews • Case studies
8. What factors facilitate or impede efficient program delivery?	i. Factors impacting (positive and negative) the efficient delivery of the program by PrairiesCan and PrairiesCan staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interviews • Case studies
	ii. Factors impacting (positive and negative) the efficient delivery of projects by funding recipients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interviews • Case studies