

Annapolis Valley

Regional Economic Recovery Plan

Developed by Valley Regional Enterprise Network

In consultation with regional stakeholders

Version 15.0

As of December 8, 2020

Record of Amendments

Version No.	Release Date	Notes
1.0	May 27, 2020	Draft presented to Business Supports Response Team
	May 28, 2020	Draft presented to Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce
	June 3, 2020	Draft presented to Workforce Supports Response Team
2.0	June 10, 2020	Second Draft presented to Business Supports Response Team
	June 11, 2020	Second Draft presented to Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce
	June 17, 2020	Second Draft presented to Workforce Supports Response Team
	June 19, 2020	Second Draft presented to Sector and Employer Response Team
3.0	June 24, 2020	Third Draft presented to Business Supports Response Team
	June 25, 2020	Third Draft presented to Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce
	June 30, 2020	Third Draft presented to Workforce Supports Response Team
4.0	July 8, 2020	Updated draft presented to Business Supports Response Team
	July 9, 2020	Updated draft presented to Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce
	July 10, 2020	Third Draft presented to Sector and Employer Response Team
	July 15, 2020	Updated draft presented to Workforce Supports Response Team
5.0	July 22, 2020	Business Supports Response Team updated
	July 23, 2020	Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce updated
	July 29, 2020	Workforce Supports Response Team updated
6.0	August 5, 2020	Business Supports Response Team updated
	August 6, 2020	Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce updated
	August 7, 2020	Sector and Employer Development Response Team updated
	August 12, 2020	Workforce Supports Response Team updated
7.0	August 19, 2020	Business Supports Response Team updated
	August 20, 2020	Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce updated
	August 26, 2020	Workforce Supports Response Team updated
8.0	September 2, 2020	Business Supports Response Team updated
	September 3, 2020	Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce updated
	September 4, 2020	Sector and Employer Development Response Team updated
	September 9, 2020	Workforce Supports Response Team updated
	September 11, 2020	Sector and Employer Development Response Team updated
9.0	September 16, 2020	Business Supports Response Team updated
	September 17, 2020	Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce updated
	September 23, 2020	Workforce Supports Response Team updated
10.0	September 30, 2020	Business Supports Response Team updated
	October 2, 2020	Workforce Supports Response Team updated
	October 14, 2020	Business Supports Response Team updated
11.0	October 15, 2020	Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce updated
	October 21, 2020	Workforce Supports Response Team updated
	October 28, 2020	Business Supports Response Team updated
12.0	October 29, 2020	Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce updated
	November 4, 2020	Workforce Supports Response Team updated
	November 6, 2020	Sector and Employer Development Response Team updated
	November 10, 2020	Business Supports Response Team updated

	November 12, 2020	Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce updated
	November 18, 2020	Workforce Supports Response Team updated
14.0	November 25, 2020	Business Supports Response Team updated
	November 26, 2020	Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce updated
	December 2, 2020	Workforce Supports Response Team updated
15.0	December 9, 2020	Business Supports Response Team updated
	December 10, 2020	Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce updated
	December 16, 2020	Workforce Supports Response Team updated

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Introduction

We are living and operating in unprecedented times. Once the state of emergency is lifted and a phased in approach to opening begins, the region's resilience requires a coordinated approach to recovery. We are stronger together and will create a more meaningful impact if we work together regionally. As the region's regional enterprise network, the Valley REN put thoughtful ideas to paper, presented a regional structure to recovery and a recovery strategy to all stakeholders in the region in mid May. The Valley REN was also tasked with creating a draft regional economic recovery plan, to present to stakeholders in late May/early June. The role of the regional economic recovery plan is to fit within the response and recovery plan provided by the Province of Nova Scotia. This plan is subject to change depending on emergent conditions and information.

This plan will work towards reenergizing and restoring the Annapolis Valley economy and charting a path forward for a stronger, more resilient Annapolis Valley.

Background

On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) was alerted to several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, but this virus did not match any other known virus. Now known as novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, the WHO declared the outbreak as a public health event of international concern on January 30, 2020.

Canada confirmed its first case of COVID-19 on January 25, 2020 related to travel in Wuhan, China. Canada confirmed its first case of COVID-19 on February 20, 2020 related to travel outside of mainland China. Canada confirmed its first death related to COVID-19 on March 9, 2020 and on March 11, 2020, the WHO declared the global outbreak of COVID-19 a pandemic.

Nova Scotia announced its first cases of novel coronavirus on March 15, 2020 and as of March 22, 2020, the Province of Nova Scotia has been in a state of emergency to help contain the spread. The state of emergency has been extended until noon on December 13, 2020.

As of midnight November 24, 2020, the Provinces of Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island withdrew from the Atlantic Bubble for at least two weeks, due to increase in cases in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Nova Scotia also initiated restrictions placed on HRM and surrounding Hants County regions, effective November 23, 2020 (reduced gathering limits) and extending to December 16, 2020.

What We Know in the Country and in our Region

Throughout the country, national, provincial and regional surveys have been conducted to help understand the impact of COVID-19 on businesses.

Canada Business Resilience Network

From April 3 to 24, 2020, representatives from more than 12,600 businesses visited Statistics Canada's website and took part in the online questionnaire about how COVID-19 is affecting their business.

- Over half of all businesses see a decline of 20% or more in revenue. Businesses in the accommodation and food services (72.6%), arts, entertainment and recreation (66.7%) and retail trade (60.3%) sectors were most likely to report a decline in revenue greater than 20%.
- Over one-quarter (28.6%) of businesses requested credit from financial institutions to cover operating costs due to revenue shortfalls caused by COVID-19.
- In terms of businesses that pay rent, one-fifth (20.0%) had their rent deferred.
- Just under two-thirds (64.8%) of businesses reported being highly affected by lower demand for their products or services, while nearly half (48.5%) of businesses reported being highly affected by the need to cancel services they offered. Businesses in the accommodation and food services

(88.7%), arts, entertainment and recreation (87.1%) and retail trade (72.5%) sectors were most likely to be highly impacted by lower demand for their products or services.

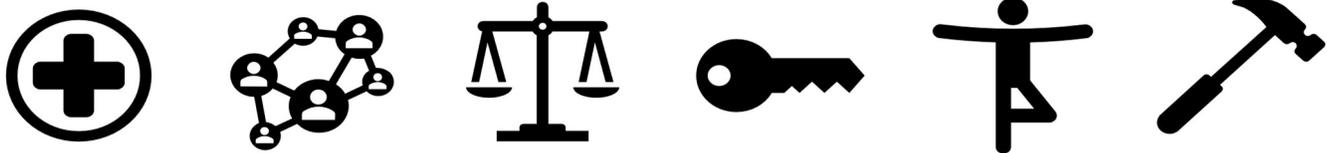
- Employees face reduced hours, layoffs and greater remote work. The March 2020 Labour Force Survey reported that 1.3 million Canadians were away from work due to COVID-19. In addition, 2.1 million people worked reduced hours.

Valley Regional Enterprise Network

The Valley REN launched an online survey in mid-March to gain an understanding of the high-level and immediate impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the business community in the Annapolis Valley Region. The survey was distributed through the Valley REN network and through social media, where many other REN partner's also shared the survey link. The results are concerning though are in-line with other impact survey results coming in from across the country, showing that the Valley region is indeed not alone in its economic struggles due to COVID-19. It goes without saying that COVID-19 is having an unprecedented impact on the regional economy.

- 100% of the 61 total survey respondents indicated a negative impact on their business, with 89% indicating a significant negative impact, and 11% indicating a lower negative impact.
- Overall, the top concern among respondents is drop in revenue, business, or deal flow (86%). The following three most significant concerns are:
 - Seeing a decrease in demand for products or services (67%)
 - Cancellations of meetings, gatherings, or events that you depend on (56%)
 - Decrease of physical customer traffic resulting from heightened public fear/caution (53%)

Guiding Principles



The regional economic recovery plan is guided by the following principles:

1. Follow the advice of our provincial and national healthcare experts
2. Work in partnership to leverage our teams, expertise, data and networks throughout the region
3. Pursue alignment with all three levels of government
4. Communication is key. We need to remain in constant contact, engage and collaborate with our local stakeholders
5. Act swiftly, nimbly, flexibly and creatively with clear purpose. Being able to adapt to circumstances as they arise is necessary.
6. Build resiliency.

Regional Economic Recovery Plan Goals and Objectives

The regional economic recovery plan intends to chart a roadmap for recovery for the region and the businesses and communities within the region in returning to a level of normalcy following the COVID-19 pandemic event. The two primary goals of the plan consider the health and well-being of residents, financial and economic recovery within the region, business continuity and the response to future pandemic events within the region.

Goal 1	Objectives 1. Directly help businesses respond to and weather the pandemic
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Provide support and services to help Annapolis Valley businesses respond to the immediate impact of COVID-19	2. Accelerate issues of concern and needs of businesses to government
	3. Support businesses planning for reopening or resuming full operations
	4. Communicate as a collective voice in the region
Goal 2 Develop a long-term economic recovery plan to reenergize the Annapolis Valley economy, retain businesses and support employers and workers in getting people back to work as soon as possible	1. Support businesses in resuming full operations
	2. Restore and build local business and consumer confidence
	3. Communicate as a collective voice in the region
	4. Identify and capitalize on specific sector initiatives, opportunities and projects that have emerged as a result of the crisis
	5. Identify, mitigate and support gaps in our region
Goal 3 Help businesses build resiliency and prepare for future disasters/crises	1. Learn from experience and plan for the future

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Regional Economic Recovery Plan is intended to be an emergent document as the recovery situation evolves. We do not have all the answers and outcomes are based on best estimates/qualified guesses as of the date of the most recent version of the plan. Therefore, the plan will need to be fluid, flexible and continuously monitored for effectiveness.

The plan will include the following monitoring and evaluation criteria:

- Monitor and report on key economic measures (population, employment, etc.)
- Commission surveys related to business and/or consumer confidence
- Monitor and report on outputs for individual action plans (qualitative and quantitative)

As an additional measure of success, the Valley REN is hopeful that this model will continue into the future beyond the pandemic. In particular, the Response Teams created could be used as a mechanism and vehicle to continuously engage with partners. We have a tremendous ecosystem of supports for businesses in our region. We also have a wealth of knowledge and experience within these support organizations. Utilizing this structure as a vehicle to help businesses in our region, not only to stay connected and informed, but also as a sounding board for business solutions and challenges would be very beneficial for the region.

Regional Economic Recovery Action Plan

Phase 1: Response – Weather the Storm				
Goal 1: Provide support and services to help Annapolis Valley businesses respond to the immediate impact of COVID-19				
Timeframe: 1-3 months, short to medium term				
Objective	Proposed Activities	Delivery Organization(s)	Timeline	Status
1. Directly help businesses respond to and weather the pandemic	1.1. Communicate COVID-19 assistance programs, services and other resources available to business	All Business Supports Organizations	Ongoing until all businesses reopened	Valley REN COVID-19 Resources page updated
	1.2 Act as a concierge and triage business needs in the region (provide one on one expertise to businesses and connect them to resources to address their most pressing needs)	Valley REN (Primary) NSCC Central Hub (Primary) All Business Support Orgs	Ongoing	Actively responding to inquiries in our region
	1.2a Implementation of BRE Program	Valley REN	Ongoing	BRE outreach and promotion has begun, 11 BRE interviews conducted to date
	1.3 Facilitate sector solutions-focused brainstorming sessions	Valley REN CBDC, AVCC & VREN AEC	May to Ongoing	Sessions held with Tourism, ICT (digital) and Manufacturing 2 nd round of sessions to commence in December Collectively held 4 small business/entrepreneurship sessions Small business week events planned and promoted on small business week webpage B2B networking event on Oct. 23 Huddle meetings continue Acadia and NSCC Applied research focus
2. Accelerate issues of concern and needs of businesses to government	2.1 Represent the Valley region on the Nova Scotia Business and Economic Labour Coalition	Valley REN, AVCC, KBC, municipalities	March to Ongoing	Attended all Coalition meetings to pass along Valley business issues Attended NS Non Profit Coalition Open Forum

3. Support businesses planning for reopening or resuming full operations	3.1 Compile a list of reopening resources for businesses (housed on Valley REN COVID-19 webpage)	Valley REN	May to Ongoing	Posting all available reopening resources on COVID-19 webpage
	3.2 Prepare a “reopening” toolkit for businesses	Valley REN Acadia (Co-op and ICE)	June/July	Completed
	3.2.a Share reopening information from the Province of Nova Scotia and Sector Associations	Valley REN	June to Ongoing	Provincial Reopening website launched, Provincial mask information website launched Survey results report completed
	3.2.b Share information on building employee and consumer confidence	Valley REN	July	Organize information session with guest speaker for building employee confidence October 8 th
3.3 Develop and promote “support” local initiatives	Valley REN AVCC, Chambers, Municipalities, BIDs	June to Ongoing	Stakeholder meetings to discuss concept/ideas Presentation of recommended concept and strategy to Response Teams ACT Local radio ads in market, flyers distributed this week, Buy, Live, Grow videos produced Radio ads continue Business highlight video in production (1 produced) Online directory of business shops live and continuously updated	
3.4 Develop an e-commerce platform/regional online marketplace	All Taskforce Members Digital NS RENs	June/July	Working with Digital NS to create the platform, providing training to businesses and working with REN CEOs for provincial platform Securing quotes from companies to develop platform (model off Quebec’s Blue Basket - https://www.lepanierbleu.ca/) Exploring potential partnerships	

				Drafting RFP to issue prior to end of December
4. Communicate as a collective voice in the region	4.1 Promote/share the “community bright spots” and celebrate re-openings and share good news stories of local companies responding to the crisis	Valley REN AVCC KBC Municipalities Acadia		AVCC conducting and sharing member interviews KBC sharing posts and videos highlighting Downtown Kentville businesses Mayor Zebian sharing onsite videos highlighting businesses in the West Hants Regional Municipality
	4.1.a Develop a recognizable “community bright spots” / “Valley Victories” campaign	Valley REN, Chambers, BIDs, Municipalities	June to Ongoing	Started on June 26 th , one posted per day Monthly review and promotion of all Valley Victories
	4.2 Collect and share local, provincial, and national data from existing survey mechanisms	Valley REN AVCC KBC	Ongoing	See Valley REN, AVCC and KBC Results Report completed
	4.3 Develop and distribute a multiple organize newsletter to communicate as a collective voice	Valley REN All Taskforce Members		First newsletter - July 20 th Second newsletter - August 12 th Third newsletter - Sept. 14 th Fourth newsletter - Oct. 15 th Fifth newsletter – Nov. 9 th Sixth newsletter – Nov. 26 th Seventh newsletter – Dec. 14 th

Phase 2: Recovery – Emerge Stronger				
Goal 2: Develop and implement a long-term economic recovery plan to reenergize the Annapolis Valley economy, retain businesses and support employers and workers in getting people back to work as soon as possible				
Timeframe: 4-18+ months, medium to long term				
Objective	Proposed Activities	Delivery Organization(s)	Timeline	Status
1. Support businesses in resuming full operations	1.1 Develop and promote all things “support local” initiatives (buy, supply, enjoy, dine, experience, etc.)	Valley REN AVCC	June to Ongoing	AVCC Tourism marketing – in market as of June 24 th Regional marketing tourism focus in market until Oct. 31 st Developing “live here” campaign

				<p>Working with Valley REN Comms Coordinator to develop “buy local” campaign</p> <p>Stakeholder meetings to discuss concept/ideas</p> <p>Presentation of recommended concept and strategy to Response Teams</p> <p>ACT Local radio ads in market, flyers distributed this week, Buy, Live Grow videos produced</p> <p>Radio ads continue</p> <p>Business highlight video in production (1 produced)</p> <p>Online directory of business shops live and continuously updated</p>
	1.2 Connect businesses with R&D and innovation expertise	ICE NSCC AIDA	TBD	<p>Hold sector events to help connect businesses with R&D and innovation expertise and to provide information about funding opportunities to undertake this work</p> <p>NS REAP Program outcome Information session recorded with Acadia and</p> <p>NSCC/Acadia applied research opportunities on Oct.27th, 2nd taping this week and in editing mode</p>
	1.3 With partners, match employers’ urgent employment needs with students, immigrants and others looking for work (i.e. refocus the Connector Program)	All Workforce Support Organizations Valley REN Connector Program Acadia	Ongoing	<p>All Nova Scotia Works Centres continue to provide support to jobseekers and hiring employers (ARDCA, Community Inc, PeopleWorx, VANSDA)</p> <p>Acadia can support employers as there are a variety of funding programs which would support student hires.</p>
	1.3.a Deliver a virtual information session to let employers know	Nova Scotia Works		<p>Information session recorded with Acadia and NSCC applied</p>

	about the services of region's Employer Engagement Specialist	Valley REN	Completed – EES, ISANS	research opportunities on Oct.27 th , 2 nd taping completing and editing being done now, next topic: ACOA Business Information Services
	1.3b Develop resource document that outlines internship opportunities in the region	Valley REN All Workforce Support Organizations	Ongoing	In progress
	1.4 Promote summer jobs to students looking for work	All Workforce Support Organizations Valley REN Connector Program	June to Ongoing	Nova Scotia Works, promoting opportunities via social media and to client network
	1.5 Organize an online job fair and online business expo	Nova Scotia Works/PeopleWorx	July 3, 17, 31 August 14, 28 September 11, 25, Oct. 9, 23	The first virtual job fair will take place on July 3 rd . Connector Program planning virtual job fair in January/February
	1.6 Support the reestablishment of business supply chains where possible	Valley REN and partners	July/August	Valley REN Supply Chain Enhancement Project in proposal development stage
	1.7 Act as a concierge and triage business needs in the region (provide one on one expertise to businesses and connect them to resources to address their most pressing needs)	Valley REN (Primary) NSCC Central Hub (Primary) Acadia (ICE) (Secondary)	Ongoing	BusinessNOW program continues to operate as a regional support navigator, responding to inquiries BusinessNOW Officer hired
	1.7.a All organizations refer businesses to appropriate services	All organizations (Secondary) Valley REN	Ongoing	Responding to inquires through NSCC Central Hub
	1.7b Implement BRE Program	Valley REN	Ongoing	BRE outreach and promotion has begun, 11 BRE interviews conducted to date
	1.8 Create a resource document for employers with a listing of daycares/dayhomes	Valley REN	Resource document complete	Meeting with LAE on Dec.10 NSCC meeting on Oct.14 Develop "how to start a dayhome" guide
2. Restore and build local business and consumer confidence	2.1 Expand buy local program to boost consumers' willingness to spend	See item 1.1		See above
	2.2 Celebrate and share success stories of local businesses	Valley REN, Chambers, BIDS Municipal EDOs	June to Ongoing	"Valley Victories" stories Municipal examples

3. Communicate as a collective voice in the region	3.1 Monitor and report on economic and labour market statistics	See 4.2 in Phase 1		RFP posted on Sept. 25 for economic and sector profiles Successful proponent engaged
	3.2 Promote/share the “community bright spots” and celebrate re-openings and share good news stories of local companies resuming full operations	Valley REN AVCC KBC Municipalities		AVCC conducting and sharing member interviews KBC sharing posts and videos highlighting Downtown Kentville businesses Mayor Zebian sharing onsite videos highlighting businesses in the Municipality of the District of West Hants
	3.2.a Develop a recognizable “community bright spots” / “Valley Victories” campaign	Valley REN, Chambers, BIDs, Municipalities	June to Ongoing	Started on June 26 th , one posted per day
4. Identify and capitalize on specific sector initiatives, opportunities and projects that have emerged as a result of the crisis	4.1 Repurpose/utilize Valley REN projects as recovery solutions	Valley REN	June to Ongoing	RFP posted on Sept.25, 8 responses received, evaluation process Successful proponent engaged
	a. Workforce Development Strategy	Workforce Supports Team		
	b. STAR Program c. NS REAP – Valley Team	ACOA Onside, NSCC, DOB, Team		
	d. Regional Marketing	AVCC, VBLI		
	e. Investment Readiness	Valley REN		
4.2 Engage with sectors to determine industry needs and identify measures to achieve needs	See 1.2 Springboard Atlantic		Work with Springboard Atlantic, through Acadia and NSCC, to determine industry needs	
	5.1 Address the gap of temporary foreign workers	LAE, DCS, Federation of Labour, Valley REN, etc		Calls with agricultural regions

5. Identify, mitigate and support gaps in our region	5.1.a Agriculture labour discussions			Agreements signed. Engaging with farms. Initiative being rolled out.
	5.1.b Regional organizations develop a local farm labour initiative (Community Roots)	DCS, Community Inc, VCLA		
	5.2 Connect students, immigrants and unemployed and underemployed with companies needing workers	See 1.3 above St.F.X. Centre for Employment Innovation		Organizing virtual event for employers to discuss labour issues and potential solutions
	5.3 Support local and regional efforts for enhanced broadband in rural areas	Develop NS	July 30 October 1 st	Joint webinar to update on internet status Internet discussions on agendas Develop NS announcements at Coalition call Sept.2 County of Kings delivered Internet Presentation to response teams Develop NS webinar Oct. 1

Phase 3: Resiliency – Future Defense				
Goal 3: Help businesses build resiliency and prepare for future disasters/crises				
Timeframe: 4-18+ months, medium to long term				
Objective	Proposed Activities	Delivery Organization(s)	Timeline	Status
1. Learn from experience and plan for the future	1.1 Offer Disaster and Crisis Mitigation training for businesses in our region	NSCC AEC	January-March	
	1.2 Consolidate lessons learned from the pandemic to help prepare for future shutdowns	Valley REN, AEC, Chambers, BIDS	January-March	
	1.3 Develop a business disaster plan toolkit	Valley REN, AEC, Chambers, BIDS	January-March	Research best practices restoreyoureconomy.org
	1.4 Evaluate the Taskforce model	Valley REN	January -March	Developing survey to determine effectiveness of the model