



*Taber Adult
Learning*
2023

Taber and District Community Adult
Learning Association
Regional Community Needs
Assessment

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Forward

Taber & District Community Adult Learning Association (TDCALA) regularly conducts formal and informal regional community needs assessments to ensure that programs and services remain relevant and fill needs within the service region. The 2023 Regional Community Needs Assessment was conducted in conjunction with the development and support of the new five year strategic framework and strategic plan looking to the future, 2028.

TDCALA offers many programs and services, each contract having their own service region. Generally speaking, TDCALA's service region encompasses the whole of the MD of Taber and the County of Warner and the associated municipalities within those geographic boundaries. However, some programs and services allow for service delivery to the Western communities in the County of 40 Mile, the Southern half of the County of Newell and the North Eastern communities in the County of Lethbridge. Increasingly, program delivery may extend provincially or nationally through on-line delivery (as has been the case with GED and ABE programming).

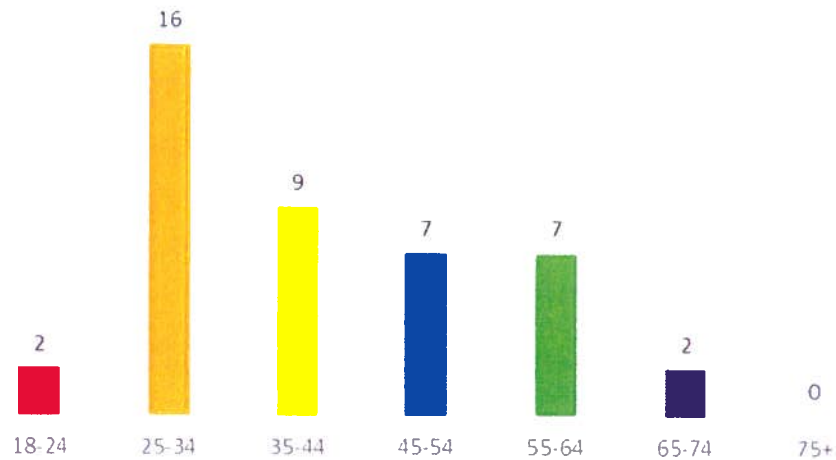
In an effort to understand the complexity of the economics and demographics of the service region, a companion document "Community Profiles: TDCALA Service Region " was developed that focused solely on the communities located geographically within MD of Taber and County of Warner. An understanding of these complexities is required when understanding the needs and rationale for programming provided by TDCALA.

General Interviews/Surveys, Demographics

There were 15 *interviews* conducted throughout the MD of Taber and the County of Warner. The primary targets of the interviews are large employers and service providers. The *general surveys* were distributed using social media platforms such as Facebook, and going to the communities directly to distribute flyers. The advertisements on Facebook were posted in groups that were local to the MD of Taber and the County of Warner; buy-and-sell pages, town/village pages, community events pages, and local charity and club groups.

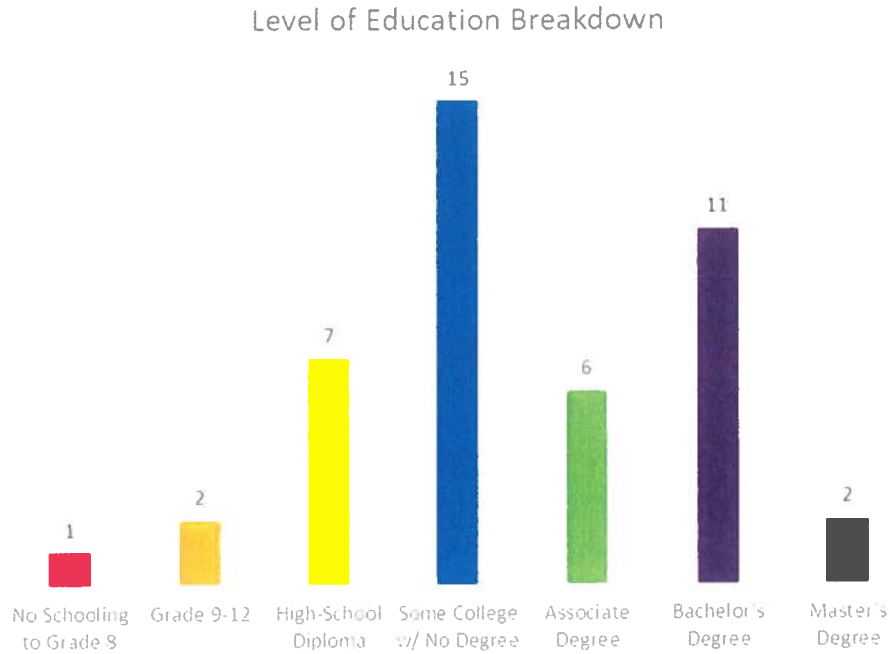
We conducted a general public survey for anyone 18 and over living within the bounds of the MD of Taber or County of Warner. The survey had a total of 46 respondents, with 42 having completed the entirety of the survey. 2 respondents completed 71% of the survey and 2 respondents completed 43% of the survey. For the purposes of this analysis, all data has been utilized, regardless of completion. Graphs will show a slight total respondent difference depending on if the 4 participants that did not fully complete the survey answered that particular question or series of questions.

Age Breakdown



Education

It was difficult to ascertain education levels as levels are not standardized across provincial and international boundaries. The breakdown of the 45 participants by education level is below:



Employment

Participants in the general public survey were asked about their employment status. Below is the breakdown of the 45 participants by employment status:



Service Provider Highlights

- Interviewees generally knew our name but didn't have a good understanding of what programs and services are provided.
- The name "TDCALA" confuses people as the County of Warner isn't represented in the name
- Raymond and area have a limited understanding of how to communicate with TDCALA
- Access to education and services is often limited because of client/student location.
- Mental Health is being reported as a crisis
 - Service Providers request more funding for programs to improve mental health - community events
 - Providers far from more urban centers report that they are feeling "hopeless" combating mental health
- Majority of service agencies are running at less than 50% leaving capacity for people to be served.
- The barriers that are most prevalent:
 - Transportation - People are without access to transportation - No public transportation anywhere
 - Facilities - No knowledge of services in the area, no resources to provide them. i.e. In Milk River, there are no doctors on site.
 - English as a second language and newcomers services are a need in our region - LGM and Ukrainian populations are increasing
- Taber Adult Learning is recognized for having strong supports for people needing help with resumes, employment and ESL.
- Service providers agree referrals are important - not many have conducted them. No formalized or recognized process for doing so.
- Not everyone knows where to refer individuals that are experiencing barriers
 - Most know about FCSS - nobody else
- There are reports of the Low-German Mennonite population being mistreated in a few workplaces - being forced to work in unsafe workplaces/performing unsafe work practices. Employer education on worker rights is recommended. Employee education on worker rights is also recommended.
- Few in the County of Warner recognize what TDCALA is able to provide. "If people knew who you (TDCALA) actually were, they'd come." (P.W. 2023) - Raymond, Milk River, Stirling
- Services like libraries struggle to collaborate with others in the community - they are not connected
- Schools in the Town of Taber report a growing diverse population, consisting of Filipino and low-German Mennonites.
 - Tagalog and low-German are common

- Establishing connection and trust in the Low-German Mennonite community is a challenge.

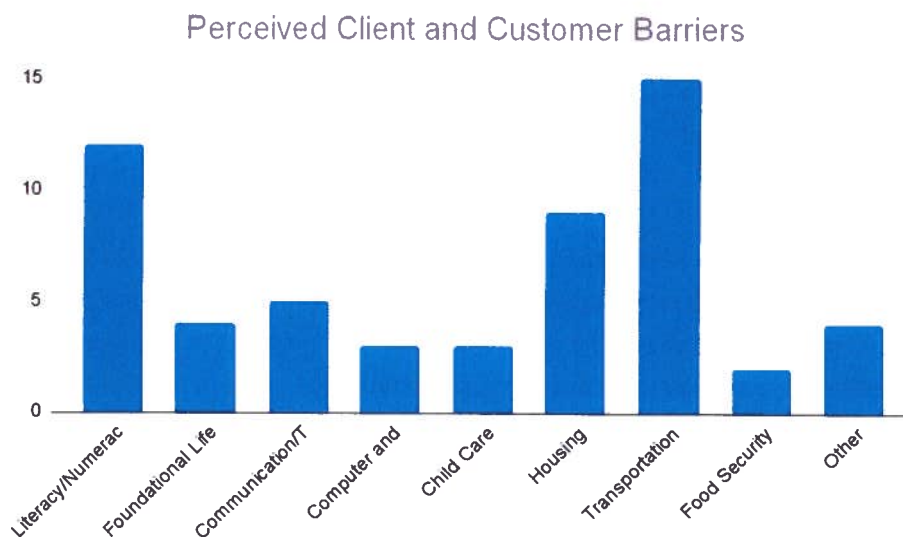
Employer Highlights

- Competition among employers makes it difficult to hire qualified workers.
 - Side note - some said that trying to find workers that require some education/certificates is lacking due to interest and number of applicants.
- Employers partner with the local schools to aid in skill building and award credits - i.e. St. Mary's School's RAP program.
- Another barrier that makes it difficult to find and hire new employees is communication (some EAL, some just hard in general)
- The labor pool seems to be very small for larger employers - some employers are very unsatisfied
- Training is usually offered in other communities, mainly Lethbridge, no easy means of accessing the training locally.
- Businesses liked the mental health first aid course
 - Some supports for businesses are not well tailored for rural communities.
- Employers know of TDCALA's GED and EAL programs
- Employers are interested in the following training opportunities:
 - **MHFA** (mental health first aid)
 - Forklift certification
 - WHMIS
 - First aid
 - **EDI** (equality, diversity and inclusion)
- Larger employers offer training on-site
- Everyone is connected in the more rural communities - the labor pool is diminished by family and friend owned businesses.
 - "Labour pools in rural areas are swallowed up by family and friend owned businesses." (M.P. 2023)
- Technology advances and credentials are restricting the labor pool.
 - The more technology is introduced into workplaces, it puts strain on future applicants from the "lack of experience" with the new technology.

In September 2023, we held a job fair that included 30+ employers and community organizations. We handed out a survey focused on their specific needs and their perceived community needs as well as ranked the importance of the services we offer. A total of 28 responses were recorded.

Eight of the employers boasted employee bases of 50+ employees, showing that a majority of the employers at the job fair and consequently the employers we serve are small businesses. Overwhelmingly, these businesses indicated that there would be some increase in need for qualified employees, though the bigger employers typically indicated they would need more substantial increases over the next five years.

Transportation, Literacy/Numeracy skills, and Housing Concerns were the top 3 most noted perceived barriers from our employers. In particular, lack of housing is a major theme not only for our employers, but for the community as a whole.



We asked employers to tell us about their “ideal employee”. The most commonly cited attributes were, organized, reliable, and hard working. Nearly 80% of the employers surveyed cited not knowing of the Canada Alberta Jobs Grant and thus also haven’t utilized it.

Qualitative Interviews

In addition to the quantitative survey approach, we also completed a series of qualitative interviews with employers, government officials, and other leaders within the M.D. of Taber and County of Warner. Their identities are protected in the quotes used in our analysis. A total of at least 15 interviews were conducted to achieve saturation. Upon completion, the data was analyzed by our associate director and our marketing assistant. The following major themes emerged from the interviews:

Major Theme 1 - Who is TDCALA?

“If people knew who you (TDCALA) actually were, they’d come.” (P.W. 2023) There are very few people who know where to access the services we offer. There are two primary reasons for the public’s unawareness of who Taber Adult Learning is. The first being the branding issues, The name ‘Taber Adult Learning’ gave interviewees living outside the Town of Taber the perception that they are not eligible or not able to come get assistance from us. The second reason is that TDCALA does not fully utilize the connections they have and do not have any resources targeted to making and maintaining connections with the other agencies/businesses. TDCALA must concentrate on the job of branding/representing themselves as a ‘community hub’ for adult learning for *all communities* in the service region. Interviewees were not asked specific questions about if they believe there’s a need for TDCALA in their communities, but, 7 out of 15 stated they strongly believe there would be a need for us in the community after hearing about what TDCALA offers.

Major Theme 2 - For who they serve, they do so well.

“I came to Canada a few months ago. The newcomer's office gave me the chance to speak with people about my needs. It gave me the opportunity to talk to people who speak English. They helped me with what I needed so that I can start living my life in Canada. I can go to the store and pay for what I need. This program has helped me with speaking and improving my English.

I have met newcomers just like me and feel happy to be in Canada. I made new friends and we support each other outside. I feel able to do what I need to after visiting (the newcomers office) many times to ask many questions on many different topics. I feel confident driving. I drove my husband to the hospital in an emergency. I came today and asked many more questions on how to get my S.I.N card, my Health Care Card and my marriage license. They are always ready to help me and take the time to explain and are patient with me.”

See TDCALA Client Survey Results in the following section

Major Theme 3 - Mental Health

“*Mental Health is a crisis in our rural communities.*” (M.P. 2023) Time spent doing the qualitative research there was the trend that the more rural the community was, residents in the community suffered more mental health issues. Two factors were identified:

- There is no concerted communication about supports or programs in smaller communities to address these issues. There is no general knowledge about resources allocated to target the problems.
- Rural and remote communities don’t have sufficient numbers to request funding through other sources. Different cultures have been reported to have been affected by the mental health crisis. For example, the MAP School (Mennonite Alternative

Program) in Vauxhall reported that students experience mental health problems but can't find assistance. "*Communities that are not located close to a larger town or city, have nowhere to go.*" (P.W. 2023)

Major Theme 4 - How do I get Around?

"If you don't have a car, you don't leave." (M.P. 2023)

Service providers and employers in Milk river, Coutts, Taber, and Raymond reported that there is no access to public transportation. With no access to public transportation, youth, seniors and other residents that don't have a private form of transportation are stuck. "Some residents in the home (assisted living centers) have not left town in years." (Ridge Country Housing, 2023) The result of this is, if people need to go to doctor's appointments, get groceries, or any other necessity they are relying on people with private forms of transportation to take them.

Raymond and Milk River have some forms of public transportation, but it doesn't come cheap as Handibus programs cost hundreds of dollars to make commutes to Lethbridge/Taber. For all communities in the MD of Taber and the County of Warner, it is accurate to state that public transportation does not exist and poses a massive barrier. To note, this problem exists in places like Enchant, Vauxhall, Hays, and Grassy Lake, or anywhere that is outside of an urban center.

Major Theme 5 - Communication and Collaboration

Communication is a barrier for many people in our communities. With Facebook and other social media outlets being the primary ways of communication, there are still people that don't know what is happening around them. Effective digital communication strategies and the use of digital devices as a tool for daily living and communication is an area to explore for programs with certain demographics (i.e. seniors, newcomers).

Collaboration is a challenge/problem for service providers because there are multiple providers where the public may perceive duplication of services; although that may not truly be the case. Further investigation into this would be required and was beyond the scope of this regional community needs assessment. An example of this being the Libraries of Milk River and Raymond, as well as LDS and other church organizations, when asked what kinds of gaps and barriers individuals face, all outlined the following barriers and how they address them:

- Digital Literacy and aid are provided at libraries
- Providing help with government forms such as AISH and WCB through the library and with church volunteers
- English as a second language, and is offered through some church groups (and previously other organizations)

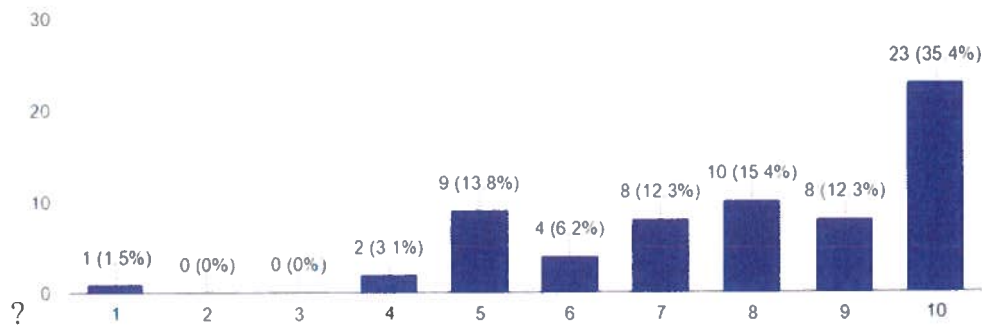


Since these organizations are providing the same services as TDCALA, *“there needs to be collaboration to build something stronger rather than having everyone compete with each other.”* (B.S. 2023)

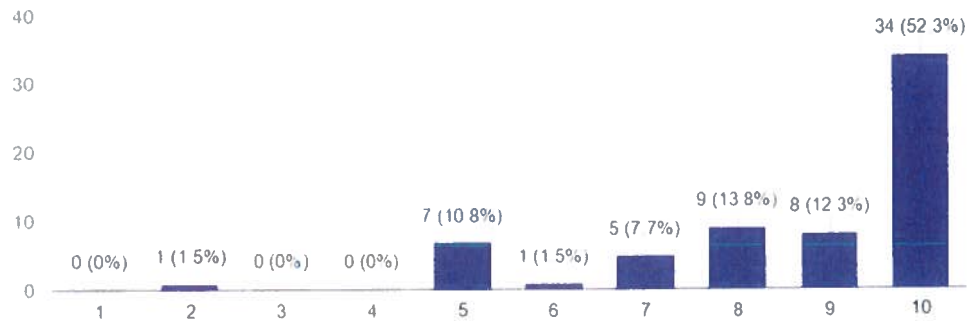
TDCALA Client Survey

A clientele satisfaction survey that consisted of 65 responses was composed of people who had accessed: CALP Taber, CALP Warner, EAL Drop-in, GED/ABE/Work Foundations, Newcomers, TEA, YEP, and “Other”. Everyone who had filled out any survey or took part in an interview had a chance to win a \$100 Walmart gift card. 65 Participants were asked the following questions on scales of 1 to 10 (1 being poor and 10 being great), included are the results:

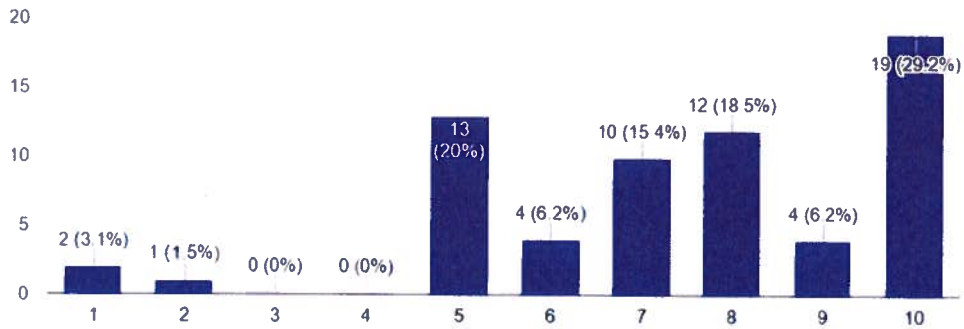
Have your attitudes, perceptions, or knowledge changed, became more positive or increased as a result of this service or program



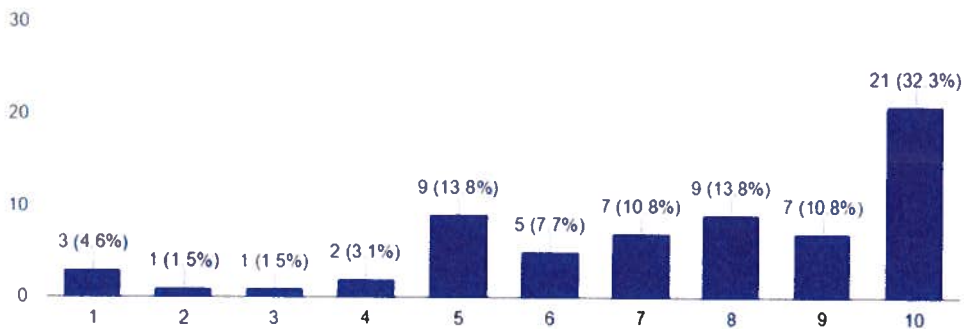
Did this service or program make a lasting impact?



Have you applied new skills as a result of this service or program?



Has your performance improved as a result of this service or program?



The results of the clientele satisfaction survey represent the quality of the services provided. 3 of 4 questions on the topic of quality of service had less than 5% of participants indicating displeasure with service (anything 5/10 or less). With the outlier being less than 12% of participants claiming to have 'not so much' improved their performance. Taber Adult Learning's program quality is not in question.

General Public Survey

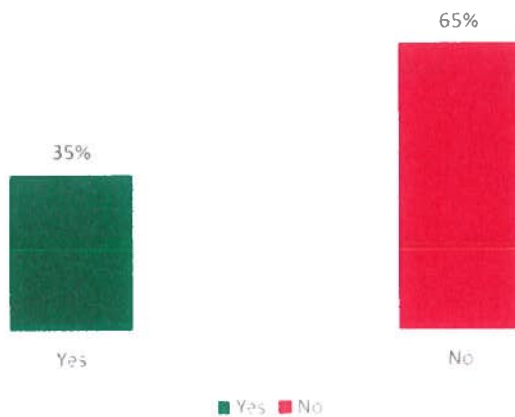
Below are results and responses from the General Public Survey. Not all questions on the survey were included in the analysis due to lack of relevant information, or if less than 80% of participants answered them.

How would you rate the importance of these services in your community?

	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neither important or unimportant	Important	Very important	I don't know what this is
Newcomer Settlement Services	3	4	6	18	69	1
Employment/Job Coach	2	1	3	17	77	1
Academic Upgrading	1	1	3	18	78	1
English Language Learning	1	5	2	14	78	2
Financial Literacy Classes	1	1	5	16	77	1
Digital Skills Classes/Coaching	1	3	4	19	73	3
Assistance with Government Forms	1	1	4	20	74	1
Supporting Youth Employment	1	0	2	17	80	2

Have you access any of the above services?

Percent of Participants Who have Accessed Services



Are you personally interested in accessing learning opportunities?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes, I have already accessed some learning opportunities in the past year.	9	20.45%
Yes, I am planning on accessing them sometime this year.	1	2.27%
Yes, but I'm not sure about what is available in my community.	9	20.45%
No, it would be too difficult to access them (example: transportation problems, too expensive, no time, no childcare, etc.)	8	18.15%
No, I'm not interested at all.	17	38.64%

What barriers (if any) prevent you from accessing these services? (short answer)

- *Not in the area*
- *Time/Schedule*
- *don't know where to get them*
- *Transportation/Distance/Mobility*
- *Not offered or available*
- *Small population/lack of need*
- *Sometimes I am too busy with work, which leads to insufficient time for study.*
- *It is easier to access if some were in the form of asynchronous learning/digitally accessible at any time*
- *I have 6 children.*
- *Financial*
- *I use a wheelchair and find access to a lot of places in town difficult. Also, the handibus hours are not very user friendly.*
- *Not interested*

What barriers (if any) do you feel prevent others from accessing these services?

- *Language barriers, lack of effort or interest, visibility of programming*
- *Location (Transportation)*
- *Internet*
- *Lack of information/unaware of them*
- *Financial*
- *Rural location, lack of access to transportation, work schedules/shift work,*
- *Time and scheduling conflicts*
- *Resource facilities not having enough employees to help everyone equally.*
- *Child care, cost of living, ability to afford time off current low paying job to get*
- *Lack of knowledge of what already exists and making what is already available more widely known and easier to access online*
- *Transportation, finances, personal commitments such as family and work, times that classes/opportunities are offered, language barriers,*
- *No time or dedication to improve themselves*

Please check all the places or the members of your household use to access services or participate in programs:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Library	23	28%
FCSS	14	17%
Recreation Center	21	25%
Taber Adult Learning	9	11%
Post-secondary institutions	10	12%
Other	6	7%



Internal Agency Focus Group

In August 2023, TDCALA held an internal focus group consisting of approximately 15 staff members. Staff members are a mix of part-time and full-time. Primary topics or questions were:

1. Barriers in the community
2. What does outreach look like?
3. Major issues or gaps in the community
4. Who are our partners in the community?
5. How can we better connect with our partners?

The findings from the focus group are as follows:

Barriers in the Community

Given we operate in rural communities, access to our services can be difficult. In every department, staff hear that clients can sometimes have transportation challenges. Some clients have driven 30+ minutes to access learner support. It's also not abundantly clear where we are located, with community members not fully understanding where our building is located or where our offices are in our building. For example, we have signage in one office in the building that is mostly used for childcare and courses.

Staff indicated that community members often don't fully understand the scope of what we do. With such a broad range of programs, it can sometimes be difficult to succinctly explain what we do. There is also a misunderstanding that we are still known as further ed and we are often confused with FCSS or other programs.

Staff further indicated that we heavily rely on prospective clients to reach out to us and find us and that accessing and marketing to the clients that need us most is challenging. Our name may also be a barrier since it is inherently exclusive.

What Does Outreach Look Like?

There are parts of our jurisdiction that we rarely reach out to, such as Raymond. Many of our services could be extended to Stirling, Milk River, Raymond, and beyond, but we have yet to do so in any meaningful manner. Outreach means getting involved in those communities and creating a presence.

Staff agreed that we should set up at least one satellite office in the County of Warner that is not in Warner. Our current Warner office receives little to no foot traffic, whereas a community like Raymond would see far more support.

Traditionally, outreach has been extremely ad hoc. Discussion was had about reviving the “Brew Crew” – an initiative where a group of staff would go to a business or other organization and deliver coffee. This initiative is intended to build relationships with people in the community.

Major Issues and Gaps in the Community

Staff identified a list of major gaps they have either self-identified or have heard or vicariously experienced through clients:

1. Lack of affordable housing.
2. People are living in campgrounds due to the housing crisis.
3. Influx of newcomers from the AAIP program
4. Hospitals and healthcare are overwhelmed.
5. Service Canada shut down their office and we are filling the gap.
6. Childcare services are often overrun or nearly impossible to find.
7. Food and food security are commonly cited as a problem.
8. Employers are often hiring outside of their respective communities.
9. Significant language barriers.
10. Aftermath of COVID shutdowns.

Partners

Staff also listed people they considered to be partners (not exhaustive):

1. FCSS
2. Library
3. Town of Taber
4. Community Futures
5. Children’s Services
6. County of Warner
7. COLERE Institute
8. Service Canada
9. Canada Revenue Agency
10. Mennonite Central Committee
11. Safe Haven

Insights and Recommendations

1. Move satellite office from Warner to Raymond
2. Taber & District Community Adult Learning Association (a.k.a. TDCALA or Taber Adult Learning) should remain the legal name, however market programs and services that are inclusive of all communities served within the region
3. Form an “community champions committee” and include at least one member from each community (Vauxhall, Grassy Lake, Enchant, Taber, Raymond, Stirling, Milk River and Warner) that would meet quarterly to discuss trends and needs
4. Seek out interagency round tables and participate in community discussions. Where interagency round tables do not exist in a community, facilitate the formation of one.
5. With regard to programs:
 - Continue with English as Additional Language Programs but rationalize the programs (do not offer programs that have not had much uptake in the last three years).
 - Continue with academic upgrading programs such as ABE and those leading to a High School Equivalency credential
 - Explore Volunteer Tutor Model for most County of Warner programming services
 - Use Volunteer Tutor model for Digital Discovery, and Computer FUNdamentals
 - Provide Financial Literacy courses as “custom deliverable for organizations or businesses that request it”
 - Develop a marketing strategy for BizTrainer courses
 - Develop courses that address community needs as they arise
6. With regard to services:
 - Employment related services to job seekers, and youth transitioning to the labor market should be continued and expanded if possible (TEA, YEP)
 - Support employers who are looking for potential employees (Work exposure/work experience placements, employers’/workers’ rights, Recruitment, Orientation, Onboarding, Retention and OH&S) (TEA YEP SAEST)
 - Continue with Newcomer support services - work closely with economic development and the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program - Alberta Rural Renewal stream.
 - Learner Support services have replaced the function of Alberta Works and other provincial and Federal service programs. Continue to provide Learner support services and explore the need for such services in the service region (i.e. Raymond, Vauxhall).
 - Advocate for additional funding for Learner Support services based on increased need.



2023

Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association
Regional Community Needs Assessment

