WORK NW ALBERTA

GRANDE PRAIRIE-GREENVIEW CORRIDOR

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING

SECTOR PROFILE

WORK NW
ALBERTA

GRANDE PRAIRIE-GREENVIEW CORRIDOR

Work Northwest Alberta - representing the Grande Prairie Greenview corridor - is poised for unprecedented growth and opportunity. By 2031 our region will need over 4,000+ skilled employees across key sectors such as Energy, Healthcare, Agriculture, Education, Logistics, and Transportation (Lightcast Analyst) to support and expand our thriving economy. Recognized as a northern economic powerhouse, our area serves a trade market of 300,000 and plays a vital role in contributing to both national and international markets.

The sector profile project was led by Work NW Alberta, a collaborative effort between the City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, Municipal District of Greenview, Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce, and Northwestern Polytechnic.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed their feedback, ideas and expertise to the study.

Please note that every effort has been made to use the most current data available. The following sources of information are used in this profile:

· Manifold Data Mining Inc. 2023/2024
· Lightcast Analyst, Datarun 2024.3
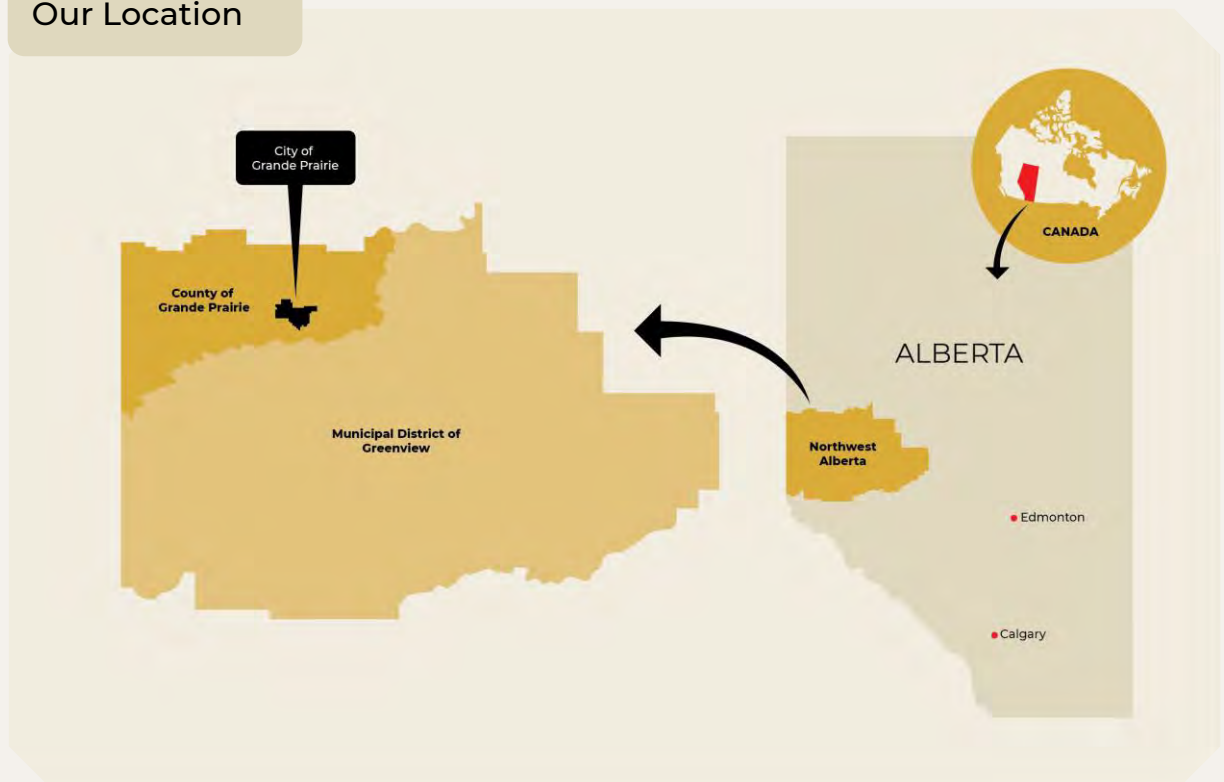· IBIS World 2024 Industry Profiles

INTRODUCTION

This profile offers comprehensive information about the agriculture and food processing industries in the Northwest Alberta Region. It serves as a valuable resource, providing detailed data on business size, sector outlook, and cluster assets within the region.

This sector profile focuses on the Region consisting of the City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, Municipal District (MD) of Greenview, Town of Beaverlodge, Town of Sexsmith, Town of Wembley, Town of Fox Creek, Town of Valleyview, Greenview Co-ops and Enterprises, Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, and Horse Lake First Nation. Any references to "Region" within this document refer to the custom region above.

The Region spans nearly 40,000 square kilometres and acts as a gateway and resource hub for northwestern Alberta. Its largest centre, the City of Grande Prairie, is located approximately 450 kilometres northwest of Edmonton. With a strong postsecondary institution, new hospital, skilled labour force, and significant business supports, opportunities abound within the Region.
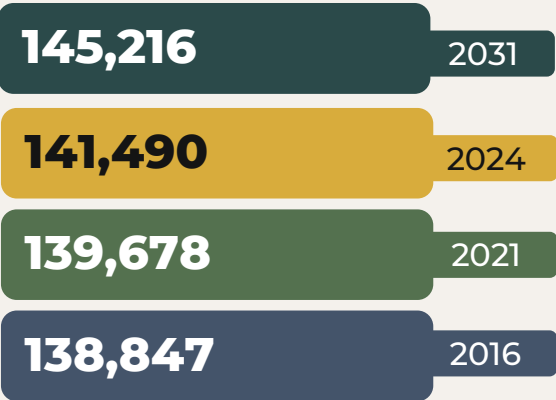
The agriculture and food processing sector employed 1,496 individuals in 2024 across 1,505 in the Region. Employment is expected to decrease by 230 jobs or 15% by 2031. The majority of the Region's businesses within this sector are small enterprises as 75% of businesses with employees, employ fewer than four individuals.

Our Location

REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

POPULATION OF REGION, 2024

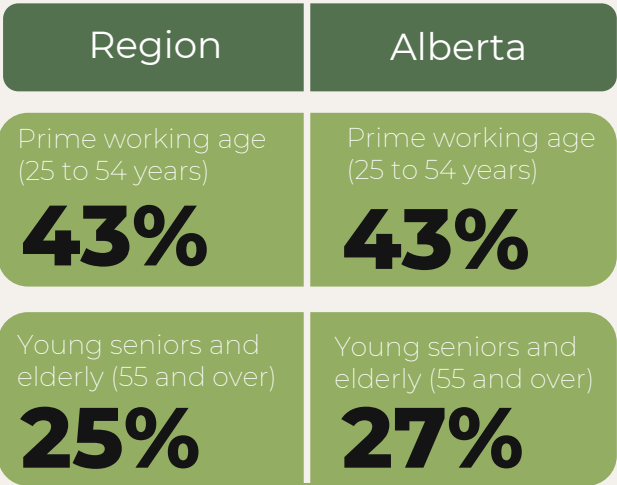|	
145,216	2031
141,490	2024
139,678	2021
138,847	2016

Source: Lightcast Analyst, Datarun 2024.3

Approximately 60% of the Region's population resides in the City of Grande Prairie.

The Region's population accounted for 80% of the total population in Census Division 18 and Census Division 19. The population in both Census Divisions is projected to increase 2% by 2031.
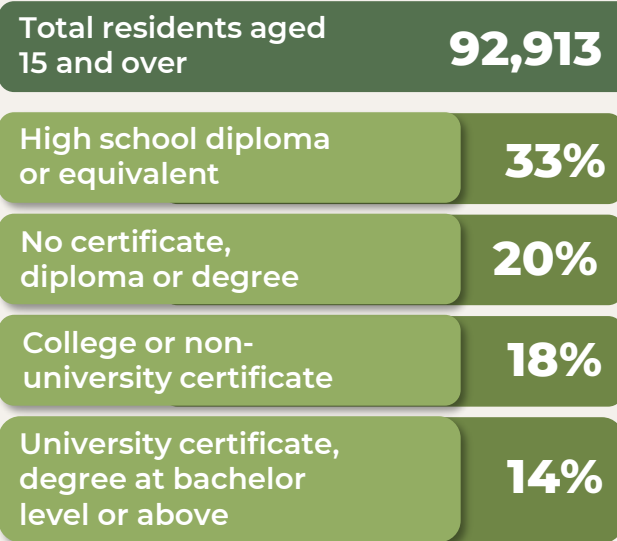
AGE OF POPULATION, 2024

Region	Alberta
Prime working age (25 to 54 years) **43%**	Prime working age (25 to 54 years) **43%**
Young seniors and elderly (55 and over) **25%**	Young seniors and elderly (55 and over) **27%**

Source: Lightcast Analyst, Datarun 2024.3

HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR REGION RESIDENTS, AGED 15 AND OVER, 2024

Total residents aged 15 and over	**92,913**
High school diploma or equivalent	**33%**
No certificate, diploma or degree	**20%**
College or non-university certificate	**18%**
University certificate, degree at bachelor level or above	**14%**

Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2024

60%

of the Region's working age population is within the City of Grande Prairie

TOP 5 FIELDS OF STUDY FOR REGION RESIDENTS, AGED 15 AND OVER, 2024

13,666
Architecture, Engineering, and Related Technologies

8,233
Business, Management, and Public Administration

6,852
Health and Related Fields

3,264
Education

3,170
Personal, Protective and Transportation Services

Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2024

LABOUR FORCE STATUS FOR REGION RESIDENTS, 2024

Labour Force Status	Region
Total population, Residents aged 15 and over	92,913
In the labour force	68,406
Employed	63,970
Unemployed	4,436
Not in the labour force	24,507

Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2024

AVERAGE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES, 2024

PARTICIPATION RATE
74%

EMPLOYMENT RATE
69%

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
6%

Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2024

ABOUT THE SECTOR

Agriculture and Food Processing has been identified as a target sector within the Region. Subsectors within this field consist of farms; activities supporting farming; and beverage, dairy, meat and other food manufacturing. This industry is well-positioned to bolster the local economy, with anticipated growth in agriculture and food processing businesses over the next several years from increasing consumer demand.

REGION SPECIFIC

The agricultural sector is heavily concentrated within the Region when compared to the rest of Alberta and is one of the fastest growing sectors locally. Specifically, beef cattle ranching (427 businesses), other grain (235 businesses) and hay (137 businesses) are the most prevalent farming subsectors within the Region.

The majority of the Region's businesses within this sector with known employment totals are small enterprises, with 75.2% reporting employing 1-4 people.

In total, the Region is home to 1,505 businesses within the agriculture and food processing sector, representing 9.1% of all businesses in the Region. The vast majority of these businesses are farms (1,442) or support activities for farms (49).

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING BUSINESSES, JUNE 2024

Industries	Businesses
Farms	1,442
Support activities for farms	49
Dairy product manufacturing	1
Meat product manufacturing	2
Bakeries and tortilla manufacturing	2
Other food manufacturing	2
Beverage manufacturing	7
TOTAL	1,505

Source: Lightcast Analyst, Datarun 2024.3

REGION SPECIFIC (Cont.)

Agriculture and food processing businesses in the Region employed 1,496 people in 2024, a contraction of 713 positions since 2021. From 2024 to 2031 this sector is poised to see a further decline of 230 positions to a total of 1,266 positions in the Region. The only subsector that is projected for growth is bakeries and tortilla manufacturing, with a projected 26% increase in total jobs.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING EMPLOYED AND SELF-EMPLOYED POSITIONS, 2021, 2024 AND 2031

Subsector	2021 Positions	2024 Positions	2031 Positions	Change 24'-31'	% Change
Farms	1,855	1,234	995	-239	-19%
Support activities for farms	182	46	<10	N/A	N/A
Dairy product manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0%
Meat product manufacturing	63	74	88	14	19%
Bakeries and tortilla manufacturing	71	99	125	26	26%
Other food manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0%
Beverage manufacturing	38	43	49	6	14%
TOTAL	2,209	1,496	1,266	-230	-15%

Source: Lightcast Analyst, Datarun 2024.3
Note: Job totals per subsector may not add up to total number of positions within the broader sector due to methodological rounding

Photo Courtesy of White Lightning Media Inc.

Photo Courtesy of White Lightning Media Inc.

Though many positions within this sector are directly related to the agriculture and food processing process, other occupations of note include accounting technicians and bookkeepers; heavy-duty equipment mechanics; and transport truck drivers. These positions illustrate how agriculture and food processing businesses employ a range of individuals with diverse skillsets. The occupations in the table below are the top occupations based on total staffing patterns within the Region. The associated wages are listed for the occupation regardless of the sector of work.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING AVERAGE WAGES (REGARDLESS OF SECTOR OF WORK) PER OCCUPATION, 2023

Occupations	Average Wages
Specialized livestock workers and farm machinery operators	$46,873.18
Livestock labourers	$41,912.05
Labourers in food and beverage processing	$51,970.49
Harvesting labourers	$45,336.61
Supervisors, food and beverage processing	$68,914.58
Nursery and greenhouse labourers	$38,098.32
Industrial butchers and meat cutters, poultry preparers and related workers	$64,107.43
Heavy-duty equipment mechanics	$88,649.60
Transport truck drivers	$69,742.40

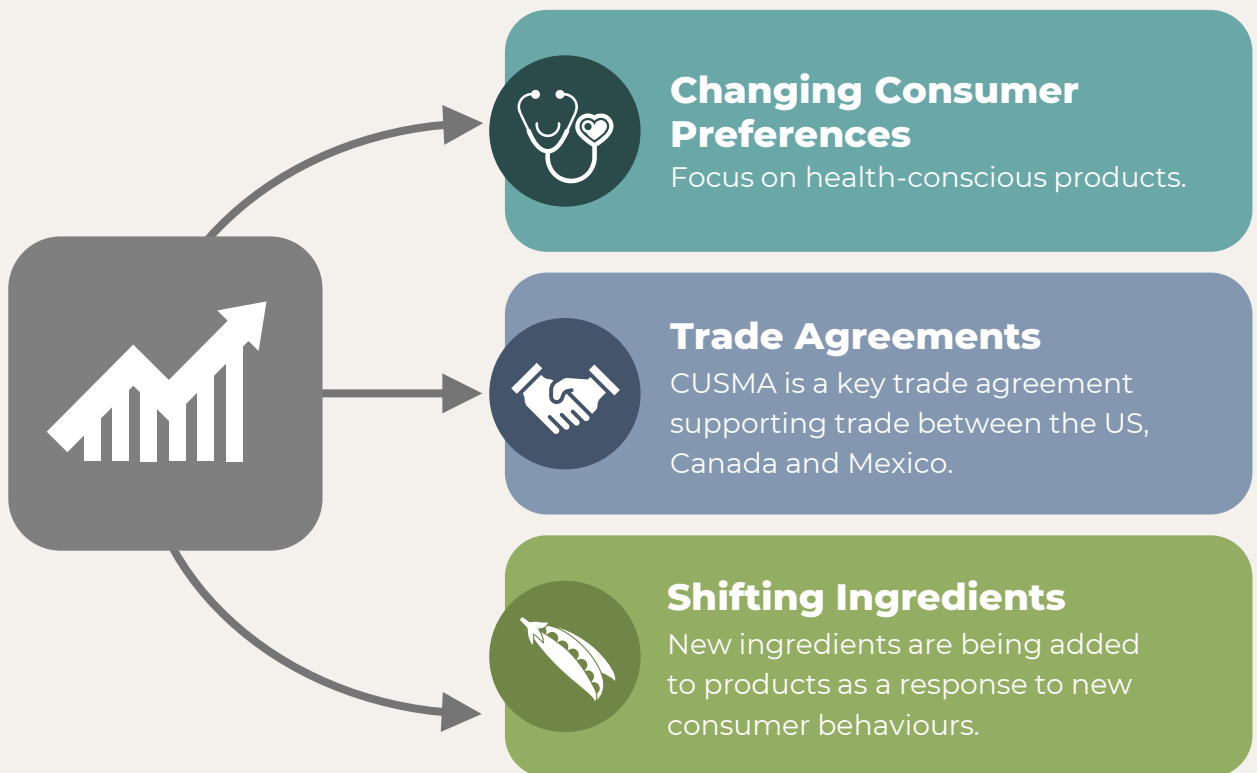Source: Lightcast Analyst, Datarun 2024.3

SECTOR DATA
FUTURE OUTLOOK OF THE SECTOR

Farms are the primary business within the subsector in the Region. The anticipated rise in global interest rates and the reduction of supply chain issues are expected to stabilize and normalize the prices of key inputs in the agricultural sector. This stabilization is likely to positively impact farming operations within the Region. However, the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the Russia-Ukraine conflict is expected to continue exerting upward pressure on global oilseed prices, which may boost profitability of some local operations.

KEY DRIVERS OF DEMAND

Factors determining national demand for the agriculture and food processing sector can be broken into three categories.

Changing Consumer Preferences
Focus on health-conscious products.

Trade Agreements
CUSMA is a key trade agreement supporting trade between the US, Canada and Mexico.

Shifting Ingredients
New ingredients are being added to products as a response to new consumer behaviours.

Source: IBISWorld, 2024

KEY SUPPLIERS TO THE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING SECTOR

Wholesalers and manufacturers of farm supplies
(e.g., tractors and agricultural machinery; and pesticides and fertilizers)

Manufacturers of organic and inorganic chemicals and other pharmaceutical goods

Source: IBISWorld, 2024

KEY BUYERS TO THE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING SECTOR

Wholesalers and retailers of agriculture/food produce
(e.g., specialty food stores, supermarkets and grocery stores)

Food service sector
(e.g., food manufacturers, full-service and fast-food restaurants; caterers; and street vendors)
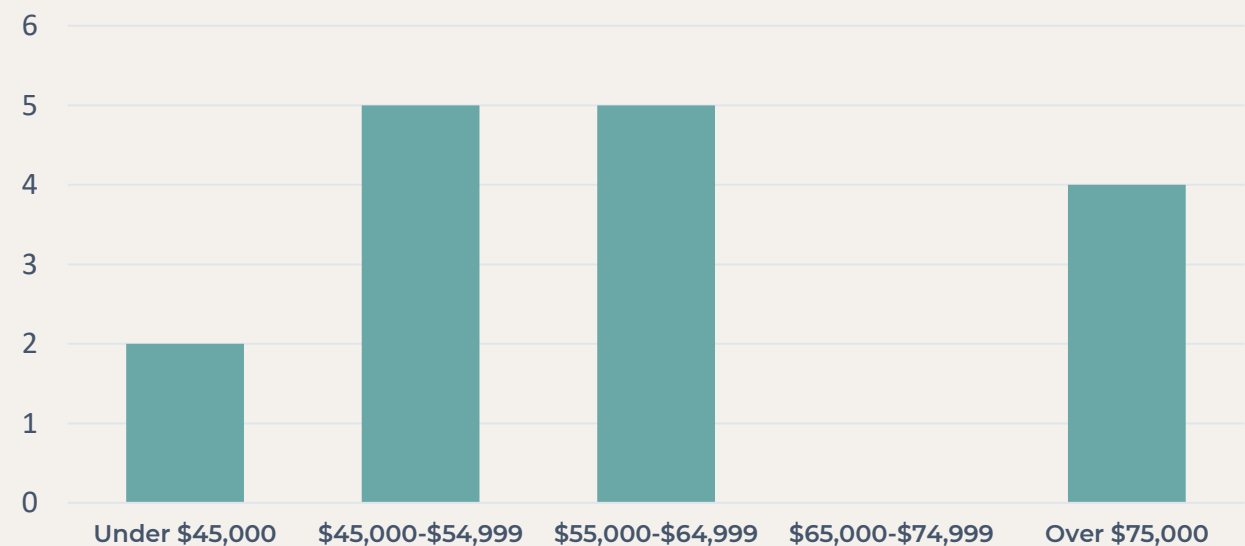
Source: IBISWorld, 2024

JOB POSTING DATA

Between January and December 2024, the Region saw 32 unique job postings within the agriculture and food processing sector. Of the jobs posted during this period, 16 had advertised salaries. Those 16 postings had a median advertised salary of $50,200, with 25% offering a salary above $75,000.

The top subsectors by number of job postings in the agriculture and food processing sector include beverage manufacturing; other food manufacturing; and bakeries and tortilla manufacturing.

JOB POSTINGS BY SALARY, JANUARY – DECEMBER 2024, REGION

Salary Range	Number of Postings
Under $45,000	2
$45,000-$54,999	5
$55,000-$64,999	5
$65,000-$74,999	0
Over $75,000	4

Source: Lightcast Analyst, Datarun 2024.3

TOP OCCUPATIONS BY NUMBER OF JOB POSTINGS, JANUARY – DECEMBER 2024

6 Sales and account representatives – wholesale trade

5 Retail salespersons and visual merchandisers

4 Delivery service drivers and door-to-door distributors

Source: Lightcast Analyst, Datarun 2024.3

COMMUNITY ASSETS SUPPORTING THE SECTOR/CLUSTER

Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce is the voice for business and community betterment in the Region. As one of the provinces largest chambers, they focus on empowering businesses and fostering opportunities for their members. **www.grandeprairiechamber.com**

Grande Prairie Regional Innovation Network serves innovators, entrepreneurs and companies in Northwestern Alberta with resources, knowledge and connections to launch innovations in connection with the broader Alberta innovation ecosystem. **gprin.ca**

Community Futures Grande Prairie and Region offers businesses support from first steps through to growth stages. This includes information on how to start a business, developing business plans, financing loans, marketing and feasibility studies. **grandeprairie.albertacf.com**

ATB Entrepreneur Centre supports businesses through business-to-business networking, connections and workshops. **atbentrepreneurcentre.com**

Women Building Futures offers programs and support services to help unemployed and underemployed women explore and connect to careers that pay above a living wage. Employment training programs provide the introductory skills to begin a new career in areas where women have historically been underrepresented. **womenbuildingfutures.ca**

For information on other Community and Training Assets, please contact the project partners.

REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

The National Bee Diagnostic Centre is the first laboratory in Canada to provide a full array of supports and services for honeybees, beekeepers, researchers and agencies across Canada. Using advanced microbiology, microscopy and molecular genetics techniques, this diagnostic centre identifies pathogens that may affect honeybee health.

The laboratory, operated by Northwestern Polytechnic, has the tools and resources to support research and diagnostics for a variety of industries across the agriculture and forestry sector (e.g., animal nutrition and forage quality; crop and animal residues; pest entomology; and bioremediation).

Northwestern Polytechnic is partnering with Lakeland College and regional producer associations to revitalize the Polytechnic's agricultural research and training programs. Researchers and technicians specializing in smart agriculture, pollinator health, forage production, animal science, and other areas are part of a province-wide research network, contributing innovative solutions for the regional agriculture and agri-food industry. With its state-of-the-art molecular genetics and microbiology laboratory in Beaverlodge, and its large animal handling facilities and research plots in Fairview, Northwestern Polytechnic continues to expand its applied research capacity in agriculture.

TRAINING ASSETS AND INSTITUTIONS THAT SUPPORT THE SECTOR/CLUSTER

TRAINING ASSETS SPECIFIC TO REGION

NORTHWESTERN POLYTECHNIC

NWP has a wide array of agriculture and food processing sector-related degrees, diplomas or certificate programs. Students can cultivate skills and knowledge in various productive pathways including: Agricultural Operations, ThinkBIG Service Technician, Business Administration, Veterinary Technology certificates and diplomas, and the Parts and the Materials Technician apprenticeship.

Sector-related apprenticeships provide hands-on Heavy Equipment Technician and Industrial Mechanic experience while NWP's Collaborative University Transfer programs develop Commercial Management and Sciences acumen. Continuing Education offers micro-credential for a variety of skills including basic bookkeeping, materials handling and warehousing, and service excellence. **nwpolytech.ca**

Agricultural Operations	Veterinary Technology	Heavy Equipment Technician

TRAINING ASSETS SPECIFIC TO REGION (CONT.)

Northern Lakes College (NLC) provides a supported distance learning environment with two locations in the Region. NLC offers Business and Administrative Studies. Continuing Education and Corporate Training programs include Asset Management Professional and Maintenance Management Professional certificates.
northernlakescollege.ca

The Rupertsland Institute supports the well-being of Métis in Alberta through job matching, training partnerships with NWP, access to technology and internet, online counselling tools, information on local services, employers and careers, and self-employment workshops.
rupertsland.org

Western Cree Tribal Council is the service provider for the **Indigenous Skills Employment and Training (ISET) Program** in the Western Cree Tribal Council area. ISET is designed to help Indigenous people improve their skills and find employment through training and skills development. The program helps the community members find employment and polish employment skills. Funded through Service Canada, it gives members the skills required to find employment and fill job gaps.
westerncree.ca

CAREERS: The Next Generation is an industry led non-profit organization that brings together industry, schools, governments, and communities to guide youth into successful career paths. Youth get the opportunity to test drive in-demand occupations in skilled trades, forestry, information and communications technology, agriculture and healthcare. Companies benefit by attracting local talent and bringing youthful energy to their industry. **careersnextgen.ca**

For information on other Community and Training Assets, please contact the project partners.

Data Disclaimer

- The data has been rounded to the sum of all subcategories to minimize discrepancies caused by margin of error.

- The information presented in this report may not precisely match the data collected or developed by each individual community.

- To maintain privacy due to small population samples, data for some communities have been suppressed by Statistics Canada and economic modeling tools. These instances are represented with "<10".

- Occupational wages and median advertised salaries for the sector are two distinct values. Occupational wages reflect the average wage by occupation based on the latest available data (2023). In contrast, the median advertised salary represents the median value of job postings in the sector that included compensation data for the period between January and December 2024.

WORK NW ALBERTA

GRANDE PRAIRIE-GREENVIEW CORRIDOR

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LIVE A GREAT LIFE.

CONNECT WITH US TO HELP IDENTIFY, RECRUIT AND GROW YOUR TALENT POOL.

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CITY OF GRANDE prairie

Municipal District of GREENVIEW

County of Grande Prairie No. 1
Alberta, Canada

Chamber of Commerce
GRANDE PRAIRIE & DISTRICT

NORTHWESTERN POLYTECHNIC