

MEDIA RELEASE
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Immediate

GAER Municipalities Seek Efficiencies to Support Regional Development

The Grande Alberta Economic Region's (GAER) thirteen member municipalities have a very positive working relationship. That relationship has evolved beyond economic development initiatives to inter-municipal shared services. Under GAER's leadership, an eighteen-month project will look at five different areas of municipal concern and test cooperative working relationships. At the end of the project, municipalities will have a framework for formal partnerships that make sense for them.

The five areas for discussion are:

1. Broadband services
2. Regional recycling facilities
3. Regional assessment services
4. Geographical Information Systems
5. Water/Aquifer issues

Anticipated Outcomes include:

- Improved cost savings to municipalities through economies of scale
- Increased use of technological improvements
- Greater expertise provided by shared service provider
- Better opportunities for continuous improvements
- Consistency of service
- Emerging opportunities for new shared services
- Better positioning to take advantage of GAER regional development initiatives

As GAER works toward greater economic prosperity for the region, it is important that communities continue to offer services and infrastructure that make them attractive destinations for investment purposes. Shared services initiatives are one way of increasing efficiencies and enhancing the region's competitive advantage.

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Backgrounder attached.

BACKGROUNDER

Intermunicipal Shared Services Project

Grande Alberta Economic Region

Rationale and Anticipated Outcomes

Inter-municipal Shared Service delivery is an opportunity for municipalities within the Grande Alberta Economic Region to work together towards a common vision. A number of the municipalities are under the stress of depopulation, threatening tax base. In other communities, accelerated growth has presented a challenge in providing needed infrastructure. As GAER works toward greater economic prosperity for the region, it is important that communities continue to offer services and infrastructure that make them attractive destinations for investment purposes. Shared services initiatives are one way of increasing efficiencies and enhancing competitive advantage in shrinking or challenged municipal budgets.

Scope of Project

This project will have two phases, Exploration and Implementation, and will span the period of July 2005 to December 31, 2006. It will require the contracting of professional facilitation and project management services including a reporting function. The Inter-municipal Shared Services Committee will administer the Project on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Grande Alberta Economic Region (GAER).

Exploration Phase This phase will address the development of an Inter-municipal Shared Services Plan to be completed by December 31, 2005. During the first stage of this process, the Project Contractor will research current best practices of shared services arrangements and typical challenges, types of services shared and opportunities developed. The Project Contractor, Austrom Consulting, will also develop a summary of municipal services currently shared within and between GAER member municipalities.

The Contractor will then undertake in consultation with GAER's member municipalities and their Senior Municipal Administrators the development of a needs assessment and preliminary recommendations regarding the following areas of potential co-operation:

1. Broadband services
2. Regional recycling facilities
3. Regional assessment services
4. Geographical Information Systems
5. Water/Aquifer issues

Those recommendations will include the engagement of any regional structure that either currently exists or which needs to be initiated to ensure the successful delivery of shared services. The contractor will relay to the committee any other issues that emerge with recommendations on a final list of co-operation opportunities for pursuit in the second phase of the Project. Upon the acceptance of the preliminary recommendations, the Project Contractor will prepare the Inter-municipal Shared Services Plan. The Project Contractor will provide concise monthly progress reports to the Committee.

The Exploration Phase will culminate in December of 2005 with the delivery of an Inter-municipal Shared Services Plan, which shall include an action plan for the remainder of the project period.

Budget for this phase is \$40,000.

Implementation Phase This phase will address the implementation of the Inter-municipal Shared Services Plan and will span January 1 to December 31, 2006. The Project Contractor will facilitate the implementation of the Plan, prepare monthly progress reports and prepare the project final report. All reports will be concise and designed to quickly and accurately inform the reader. That final report will include recommendations and action plans to carry the activities forward.

Budget for this phase is \$ 50,000.

Reporting Structure and Accountability

The Project Contractor shall report to the Board of Directors of the Grande Alberta Economic Region (GAER) through the Inter-municipal Shared Services Committee. The Committee will provide ongoing project leadership and shall be represented on a daily basis with the Contractor by the Manager of GAER.