



MIT REAP

SOUTH SHORE

Connecting people and ideas

Looking Back, Looking Forward

MIT REAP South Shore

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PRESENTED BY: TEAM SOUTH SHORE
JUNE 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LOOKING BACK

THE STATE-AS-IS

Lunenburg-Queens possesses concentrations in sectors such as Tourism, Tire Manufacturing and Ocean Technology/Marine, where further analysis and collaboration could generate new innovation in the region. Our manufacturing base provides a workforce component with experience in assembly and production.

In terms of human capital, the region faces the same challenges as others where an ageing demographic and worker shortage remains a constant issue. Having a NSCC campus within the region is a strong advantage and provides opportunity for specialized training. Our proximity to the universities of both Halifax and the Annapolis Valley region positions us well to attract highly skilled talent.

The region has access to a range of federal, provincial and private sources of funding and equity with no discernable disadvantages in this area based on our location and profile. Likewise, the same could be said about our infrastructure, including areas such as internet access, transportation links and facilities to support entrepreneurship. Those resources that don't exist within the region are quite accessible within an hour's commute in the provincial capital.

It is important to note, however, that the Lunenburg-Queens lacks a Regional Enterprise Network, unlike the other regions of Nova Scotia involved in the MIT REAP. As such, the region is reliant on other sources of support like private sector leadership to address this gap.

The region benefits from the presence of the Acadia Entrepreneurship Centre, Work Evolved and South Shore Opportunities Inc., a community business development corporation providing business counselling and debt financing support. Between 12 and 15% of the local workforce is self-employed, higher than the provincial average and good indicator of entrepreneurial potential.

As part of the MIT REAP process, research and consultation suggested that the Lunenburg/Queens strategic environment is quite rich but very fragmented. Leveraging innovation-driven entrepreneurship to build on our existing strategic advantages for future growth can only occur with greater interaction, collaboration and partnership within the region's business community. While local government, federal and provincial programs and other stakeholders can champion and encourage innovation and new economic growth, the real driver must be the private sector.

COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE

The region's comparative advantages can be summarized as its stable and diverse economy, infrastructure, attractive lifestyle, proximity to Halifax and positive business environment or foundation for accelerating future innovation-driven entrepreneurship.

The local economy's traditional base of forestry and fisheries (also seafood processing), continues to make a significant contribution, while manufacturing, marine and ocean technology, retail and professional services have developed to create a well-diversified and stable economy, capable of weathering periodic downturns in specific sectors.

Transportation infrastructure is primarily ground-based with international air and rail links and a major shipping port with global connectivity within a one-hour commute.

Lunenburg-Queens truly exemplifies the "East Coast Lifestyle" in terms of the range of available outdoor activities, the vibrant small towns and the pace of life found in the region. A popular and top tourist destination, the region is becoming increasingly attractive as a place to live. In contrast to most of rural Nova Scotia, the 2016 Census data indicated several of the municipalities in Lunenburg/Queens experienced population growth. Since the COVID19 epidemic, the region has experience further population growth due to the significant wave of migration to Nova Scotia from the rest of Canada and beyond.

Combined with these local advantages, Lunenburg-Queens has a distinct advantage in being located within a one-hour travelling distance from Halifax. The region has a strong asset base upon which to build while taking full advantage of the large marketplace, education and research institutions and the growing range of entrepreneur and innovation-focused organizations such as the COVE, Volta Labs and CEED.

MUST WIN BATTLE

Team South Shore's vision for the region involves activation of the energy, expertise and skill within the business community to assume a leadership role in knitting together and strengthening the ecosystem. A stronger, more collaborative ecosystem will help to grow business start-ups and expansions, innovation and economic diversity. Combined with the region's lifestyle and natural assets, a highly synergized and efficient ecosystem will elevate the South Shore region's reputation as a place to start and grow innovation-driven enterprises.

Lunenburg-Queens has a long history of enterprise and innovation, the evidence of which can be found by looking at Canada's dime. Few better examples exist of home-grown Nova Scotia innovation than the story of the Bluenose. Our vision is to build on that legacy, re-awaken it and create a new network for partnerships, entrepreneurial support and the mentoring of new enterprises.

Our vision involves building on the existing foundation of companies in the region, seeking their input and direction on the most effective path forward and creating opportunities for our small businesses and individuals who aspire to be innovative entrepreneurs to receive the necessary support and guidance.

More broadly, opportunities exist to stimulate cluster development in sectors such as Ocean Technology/Marine Services, Manufacturing and Experiential Tourism and the initial steps necessary involve dialogue among current firms engaged in these sectors. Our future vision for the region revolves around engagement and connectivity among as much of the business community as possible and the development of a working, results-oriented network of private enterprise.

Team South Shore's Strategic Action Plan can be summarized as follows:

- Create a networking series to encourage connections, new expansion opportunities and generate shared problem solving. Utilize the initiative to fine tune future initiatives based on private sector input.
- Promote our "lifestyle" as a significant attraction to relocate to the region for work, business, or establishing a new venture.
- Promote the region's advantages of being adjacent to Halifax.
- Highlight the region's infrastructure, business parks and support systems for business.
- Profile success stories of local businesses that have successfully attracted high-skill workforces to Lunenburg-Queens

Building on the current Collider Series, the intent of this project is to organize and host an on-going networking series that would be launched in late 2022. The on-going networking series would be born from the learnings of the current series. This represents a further commitment to the first strategic action outlined above to build a networking process that can continue after the IDE Accelerate project is completed.

The other element of our strategy is to promote the numerous strengths and advantages of Lunenburg-Queens using a website, online campaigns and other social media. The intent would be to make the promotional tool and resources developed available to local municipalities, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce and federal and provincial partners with an investment attraction or entrepreneurship mandate.

MUST WIN METRICS

Some basic indicators of success that we will be measuring will include: attendance numbers for Anchor Companies; small businesses and individuals pursuing start-ups by event and totals; number of referrals to programs and funding sources made; and, collaborations and partnerships among participants.

In terms of the online platform, indicators would include website hits, use of the site by local partners and senior levels of government.

Outcomes will include a general increase in awareness of the South Shore's many assets and advantages as a place to do business and new business starts. More broadly, outcomes will include growth in the local economy, higher employment and new entrants to the workforce. The best outcomes that could be derived would be an increase of client activity and projects supported by the ecosystem, however, this should consider the issue of attribution, given these activities are intended to influence/support entrepreneurial activity not directly ensure it.

MUST WIN ENGAGEMENT

Team South Shore has benefited from strong, on-going support from all our stakeholder groups. We intentionally focused our initial networking event on what we've termed "Anchor Companies", those large corporate players that provide significant levels of high-skill, technical employment within the region. This included Michelin Tire, Stelia, ABCO and GN Plastics, among others.

Through our work to date, we have indications of an on-going commitment from these companies to participate and share expertise, best practices and networks with smaller businesses within the region. We believe this is critical to building a lasting foundation for the region's ecosystem and attracting the attention of future investors, employees and entrepreneurs to the community.

Our process to-date has also benefited from direct involvement from providers of capital, management consulting and entrepreneurs as well as the local campus of the NSCC. The relationship with NSCC has been positive and creates an important link within the local economy between business and education. NSCC will continue to play an important part in the process and has the capacity to offer specialized training as more specific needs are identified.

Local government is at the table in the form of the Town of Bridgewater's Mayor and economic development staff. Recently, the economic development officials of all local municipal units were briefed on the REAP initiative with a view to determining how best they can support the process and partner on future activities. Specifically, working collaboratively to promote the many assets and comparative advantages of the Lunenburg-Queens region was discussed.

Team South Shore members have committed to continuing as a group to pursue the strategy's implementation and further engage the Lunenburg-Queens business community and other local stakeholders with an interest in strengthening entrepreneurship in the region.

In addition to the core Team, the **MIT REAP South Shore Collider Series**, initiated in April 2022, has identified several key business owners and managers from the region's largest companies as additional resources within Lunenburg-Queens' strategic environment. These individuals have indicated an interest to further participate in an engagement process to identify the most effective means of stimulating entrepreneurship and business growth.

LOOKING FORWARD