

BENCHMARKS

1. LEADERSHIP

Laying a solid foundation is the first step to building thriving communities. Proactive leadership is essential to guide the way forward in:

- √ Developing a Knowledge Base
- √ Engaging Stakeholders
- √ Assessing and analyzing current and future challenges and opportunities
- √ Formulating Action Plans
- √ Determining Local Capacity
- √ Building Partnerships
- √ Measuring Impact

ORGANIZATIONS MUST PROVIDE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION AS FOLLOWS:

1. Completed Resource Inventory (based on the trading area)
2. Current Community Profile (based on the trading area).
3. Illustrate how community residents have been engaged in formulating goals and action plans.
4. A basic SWOT Analysis (strengths; opportunities; weaknesses; threats).
5. An economic development action plan.
6. Illustrate (a) effective relationships with local government, community organizations, and business community; and (b) effective relationships with communities and/or development organizations within the trading area.
7. A performance tracking system.
8. Depending on organization structure, Committee Terms of Reference or Bylaws.
9. A budget and resources adequate to fulfill its function and mandate.
10. How resources have been enhanced through relationships with alternative funding sources or generation of own source revenue.
11. Illustrate how the organization is able to respond to customers and stakeholders in a timely and effective manner.



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2. ECONOMIC VITALITY

Because each community is unique, it is logical that each should have a different approach and view on economic vitality. And while this is true, there are nonetheless certain core elements (functions) that typically define the scope of most efforts. These include:

- √ Quality of Life
- √ Business Retention and Expansion
- √ Entrepreneurship
- √ Business and Investment Attraction
- √ Workforce Development

ORGANIZATIONS MUST PROVIDE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION AS FOLLOWS:

1. An incentive policy to support new business development.
2. Identified opportunities for new businesses or investment.
3. An Official Community Plan or Downtown Master Plan.
4. A strategy/plan to attract new businesses or investment.
5. A database of current businesses in the trading area.
6. Illustrate how the organization engages in ongoing business retention and expansion to include: regular dialogue with businesses; formal tracking of information shared; analysis of information; and action of red or green flags.
7. The capacity to support business inquiries and connect them to required resources.
8. Current labor force information for the trading area.
9. Illustrate how community and local/regional training institutions work together to address current and future workforce needs.



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3. PLACEMAKING

Placemaking transcends any one discipline and instead focuses on the character of a community or neighborhood — how it looks and feels. A single building can have its own character, but a community’s character is the composition of many buildings, streets, parks, plazas, trees, gardens, views — essentially anything in the built or natural environments.

For the purposes of accreditation, we focus on these four areas:

- √ Evaluation of public spaces and identification of strengths and weaknesses
- √ Establishing a vision
- √ Heritage conservation
- √ Design guidelines

ORGANIZATIONS MUST PROVIDE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION AS FOLLOWS:

1. An evaluation of public spaces according to the criteria of:
 - Comfort and Image
 - Sociability
 - Uses and Activities
 - Access and Linkages
2. A vision for your key public spaces. This may be incorporated within an official community plan or master plan – or simply included in your action plan documents.
3. An inventory of heritage buildings and heritage sites.
4. Illustrate how current and proposed placemaking initiatives align with current policies’ as articulated in the official community plan or master plan and if applicable, conform to provincial heritage conservation guidelines.



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4. PROMOTION

Community based marketing takes many forms, but the overall goal is to create a positive image that will maintain community pride and improve consumer and investor confidence.

- √ Branding
- √ Marketing
- √ Retail promotion
- √ Special events

ORGANIZATIONS MUST PROVIDE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION AS FOLLOWS:

1. A formal branding strategy including visual identity and messaging.
2. A community marketing action plan.
3. A special event strategy/plan.
4. Illustrate how the business sector is supported in their implementation of specific promotional campaigns.

