Community Futures Pan West

Annual Report

April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025

Message from the Chair

Steve Lupky

Chair, Community Futures Pan West Network

It is my pleasure to present the 2024–2025 Annual Report for the Community Futures Pan West Network. This year showcased the dedication of our volunteers and staff across Western Canada Community Futures offices, working together to overcome challenges, spark opportunities, and strengthen rural communities. The impact of our collective efforts continues to be felt in the businesses, organizations, and people we support every day.

A key highlight was the first-ever Western Chairs' Event—a one-day gathering focused on collaboration, networking, and shared learning. Its success has inspired us to bring it back in November 2025, reinforcing the value of strong connections and shared leadership across our network.

Community Futures Pan West worked hard to secure an additional $1 million for the ROF 2.0 program, benefiting Prairie Community Futures organizations. We are pleased to share that, to date, 22 projects totaling over $4.8 million have been approved – an outstanding achievement for our network. These investments are having an immediate impact in driving innovation and support long-term growth in rural communities.

Our strategies continue to align with Vision 2030, under which we have accomplished numerous impactful projects. As Chair, I am proud of the dedication and commitment of our volunteer board of directors and staff. I look forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.

Our Foundation

Purpose

Community Futures Pan West Network Inc. exists because Western Community Futures organizations benefit from proactive leadership, shared actions and advocacy in their efforts to grow resilient, vibrant, rural communities.

Vision

Leading Rural Entrepreneurship.

Mission

Community Futures Pan West Network is a proactive network that undertakes collaborative activities designed to support and strengthen the efforts of Community Futures organizations in Western Canada.

Values

Community Futures Pan West Network has the following values:

Teamwork

Perseverance

Innovative

ROF 2.0 Approved Projects - Part 1

The Rural Opportunities Fund (ROF) 2.0 continues to be a cornerstone initiative of Community Futures Pan West Network. In April 2024, we applied for and received an additional $1 million in funding to expand the impact of this initiative—bringing new opportunities to rural communities across the Prairies.

Since April 2023, the ROF 2.0 Adjudication Committee has approved a total of over $4.8 million in project funding. Between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025, seven projects were approved, totaling over $1 million in funding.

We are pleased to highlight the projects approved this fiscal year:

CF Manitoba: Come to Market

Project Total: $177,021.50

The initiative will select nine farmers' market or Pow Wow locations, including one in northern Manitoba, to support emerging entrepreneurs. The project provides low-risk opportunities to test products, gain marketing exposure, and refine pricing strategies. Participants will receive vendor fees, equipment, advisory support, and mentorship from experienced vendors. CF offices will identify markets, promote vendor opportunities, and offer business advisory services.

CF Wood Buffalo: The 4Pillars of Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Project Total: $300,000.00

This initiative fosters new businesses and employment in the Wood Buffalo region, with a focus on environmental stewardship, community values, and Indigenous rights. CF Wood Buffalo will deliver training across five communities, helping residents transform ideas into sustainable businesses. Participants receive training, coaching, and access to a new loan fund. Topics include energy, and waste reduction, sustainable practices and cultural awareness.

CF Highwood: ExitNavigator

Project Total: $182,785.00

In partnership with Venture Connect, this project supports business succession planning in rural Alberta. CF Highwood, along with CF Centre West and CF Lethbridge, will promote cost-effective advisory services and workshops for buyers and sellers. The initiative will help reduce business closures due to aging ownership and enhance the visibility of CF services.

ROF 2.0 Approved Projects - Part 2

CF Grande Prairie & Region: Creating Opportunities for BIPOC Entrepreneurs

Project Total: $160,000.00

This project expands the Shell LiveWIRE program to support a broader BIPOC audience. It includes a Start UP Weekend, bootcamps, personalized mentorship, and a Pitch Event. With a focus on cultural appreciation, the initiative provides support from ideation through to business growth.

CF Westman: Lending Circles

Project Total: $154,200.00

CF Westman will create lending circles to help newcomers access small business loans despite credit barriers or religious restrictions on interest. Circles will pool funds, vote on loan approvals, and receive matching funds from CF Westman. The initiative also includes financial literacy, coordination support, and credit-building through repayment tracking.

CF West Yellowhead: Small Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Toolkits

Project Total: $30,000.00 (additional funding)

Building on a previously approved project, this additional funding enhances disaster preparedness and recovery resources for CF offices in Alberta. Activities include toolkits, workshops, roundtables, and policy development to strengthen business continuity efforts.

CF West Interlake: MB Community Edge Municipal Capacity Building

Project Total: $24,650.00 (additional funding)

Additional funding supports expanded delivery of the Community Edge curriculum across Manitoba. The project includes Indigenous-focused modules, northern governance models, and a "train the trainer" component. This extension ensures continued reach and impact through to December 2025.

Featured Highlight: Leading from the Front Chairs' Event

On November 23, 2024, the Community Futures Pan West Network proudly hosted its first-ever "Leading from the Front" Chairs' Event at the Marriott International Airport Hotel in Calgary, Alberta. This milestone gathering brought together Chairs from across Western Canada for a day of meaningful dialogue, shared learning, and strengthened relationships.

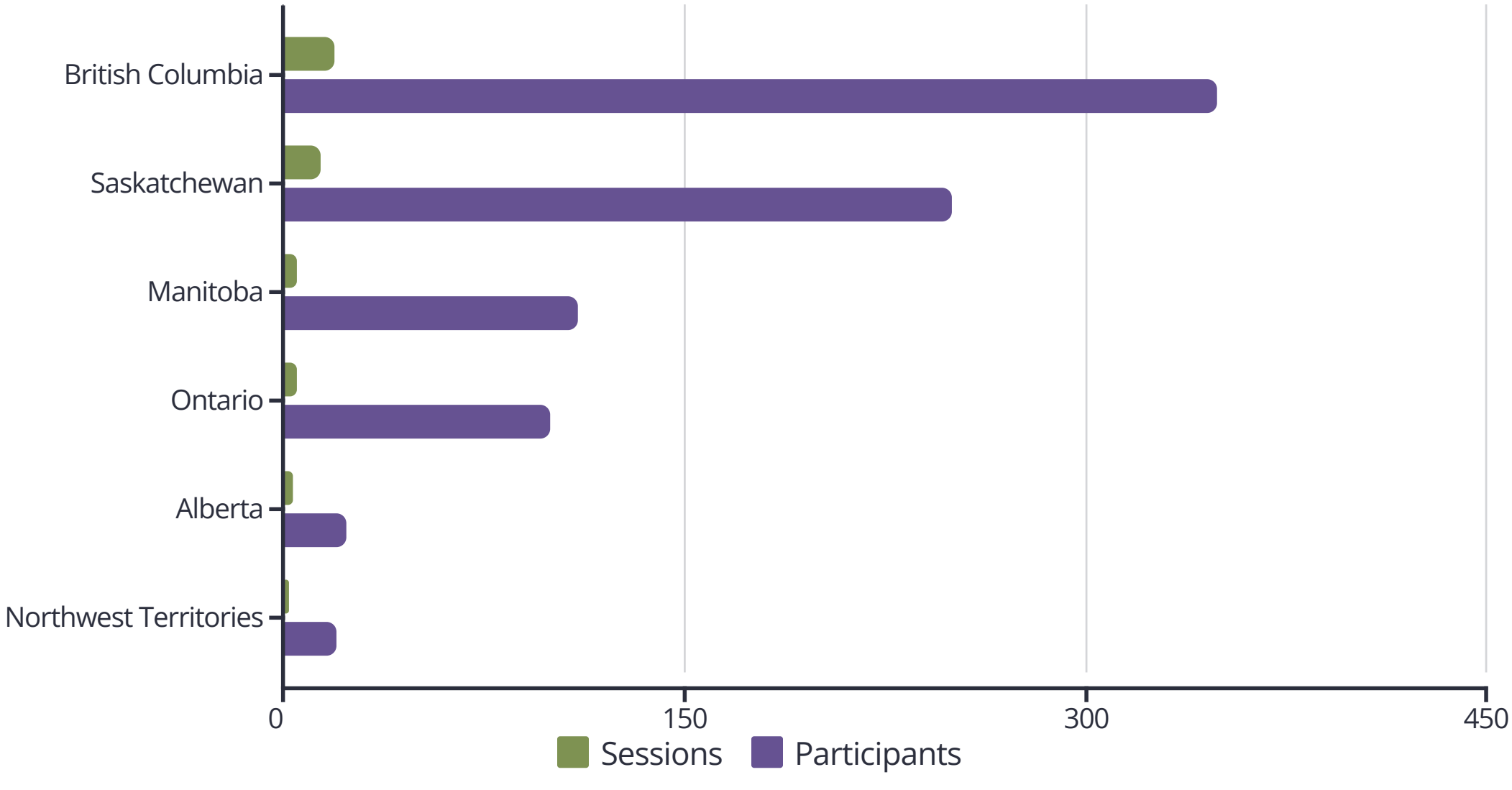
Designed to offer relevant and timely content, the agenda featured key topics including CF contract renewal updates, a national RRRF summary, a historical overview of CF lending across the West, advocacy strategies, and a forward-looking discussion on developing a vision for the Community Futures program in 2035. Interactive sessions encouraged participants to engage in open dialogue, exchange insights, and contribute to shaping the future of the network.

Thank you to everyone who joined us and made this event a success! It was a wonderful day filled with connection, energy, and memorable moments, all captured in these photos.

Community Futures Board Development

The Community Futures Leadership Institute continues to provide vital governance training across the country, helping board members build capacity, strengthen leadership, and better serve their communities. This past year saw another strong turnout and continued interest in board development opportunities.

From April 2024 to March 2025, a total of 49 sessions were delivered to 852 participants across six provinces and territories. The following highlights participation by region:



The top three most popular modules this year were:

1. Module 2 – Operations - Board & Staff
2. Module 3 – Legal Responsibilities of Boards
3. Module 4 – Financial Management of a Non-Profit

Hall of Fame Recognition

We are proud to recognize the dedication and commitment of individuals who have completed all 13 board governance training sessions. These recipients have earned the prestigious Hall of Fame Award and Streaming Leadership Certificates.

Congratulations to:

- Curtis Claydon
- Jahn Hack
- Kendra Bush
- Nicole Read
- Shelley Johnston
- Trevor Kehrer
- Dan Schubert
- Cheryl Len
- Joanne Haldenby
- Bob Wright
- Evelyn Stocki
- Marie Gray
- Amed Naqui

Their achievement reflects a deep commitment to continuous learning and strong governance practices in their communities.

Staff Development

Professional development continues to be a cornerstone of strengthening the Community Futures network. This year, we are proud to recognize the dedication and hard work of a valued team member who achieved two significant certifications through the Community Futures Leadership Institute.

Congratulations to Sharon Munn for earning both the Basic Certification and the Designation Certification for Business Analyst.

Sharon Munn - Business Analyst Designation Certification

Sharon Munn receiving highest designation certification for the position of Business Analyst.

Sharon Munn- Business Analyst Basic Certification

General Manager, Corinne McGirr presents staff member Sharon Munn with Basic Certification plaque for Business Analyst.

Sharon’s commitment to continuous learning and excellence in her role is commendable. Earning both certifications demonstrates her deep understanding of the skills, tools, and strategies required to effectively support entrepreneurs and communities. Her achievement is a reflection of her professionalism, perseverance, and dedication to the Community Futures mission.

In addition to individual accomplishments, two new staff resource manuals were developed this year to further support professional growth:

- The **Business Analyst Orientation Manual** outlines the core responsibilities and expectations of this key role. It supports on boarding and ongoing training by providing clear guidance on client engagement, loan portfolio management, and professional conduct.
- The **Strategies and Tactics for CF Loan Marketing Guide** offers a range of practical ideas to help Community Futures offices promote loan funds. The guide includes marketing tactics that can be adapted for various regions, with suggestions for both in-house and professional implementation.

These resources enhance knowledge sharing and help ensure consistency and excellence across the network.

Vision 2030

As part of our ongoing commitment to building a resilient and forward-looking network, Community Futures Pan West continued to align its activities with the goals outlined in the Vision 2030 framework.

CF Pan West Network has completed the workplan from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, which included working with PrairiesCan and PacificCan, hosting a one-day Chairs' event, and creating modules and documents in collaboration with committees—whom we would like to thank.

Small Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery Tool

One key initiative this year was a collaborative project with Community Futures British Columbia to develop a comprehensive "How-To Playbook for Emergency Operation Centers tailored specifically for the Community Futures network. This resource focuses on best practices for preparedness, response, and recovery during emergencies.

To ensure regional representation and relevance, one volunteer from each Western province was selected to serve on the project committee. Together, this team gathered information, shared practical insights, and provided critical recommendations based on their local experience and expertise. Thank you to Community Futures British Columbia for taking the lead role in this initiative. The playbook was completed and circulated on March 31, 2025.

Audit Representative Committee

Another important initiative under the Vision 2030 umbrella was the formation of the Audit Representative Committee, established to explore strategies for reducing annual external audit costs for Community Futures organizations—without compromising fiduciary oversight, funder requirements, or board confidence.

The committee brought together representatives from across the network to assess current practices, share insights, and provide practical recommendations. Their work resulted in a detailed document outlining potential cost-saving measures and efficiency opportunities, completed in March 2025.

The Community Futures Pan West Network will review the document at its upcoming board meeting and identify three key priorities to guide implementation moving forward.

Looking Back, Moving Forward

As we reflect on 2024–2025, the Community Futures Pan West Network is proud of the progress made and the collective efforts that have strengthened our impact across Western Canada. This year was defined by collaboration, innovation, and a renewed commitment to supporting resilient rural communities.

Highlights from 2024–2025:

Inaugural Chairs' Event

Hosted the inaugural "Leading from the Front" Chairs' Event, bringing together leaders from across the West for a day of connection and strategy.

ROF 2.0 Funding

Recieved and approved over $1 million in new funding for 7 innovative ROF 2.0 projects, contributing to a grand total of over $4.8 million invested since the initiative began.

Board Development

Delivered 49 board development sessions to 852 participants, with 13 new Hall of Fame recipients recognized for completing all training modules.

Staff Achievements

Celebrated the achievements of Sharon Munn, who earned both the Basic and Designation Certification for Business Analyst.

New Resources

Released two new staff manuals: the Business Analyst Orientation Manual and the Strategies and Tactics for CF Loan Marketing Guide.

Vision 2030 Progress

Advanced Vision 2030 priorities with two key initiatives: A cross-provincial committee developed a How-To Playbook for Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs), and the Audit Representative Committee completed a review aimed at reducing external audit costs while maintaining accountability.

These accomplishments reflect the strength of our network and the shared dedication of our volunteers, staff, and partners. As we look ahead, we remain focused on building capacity, fostering innovation, and leading with purpose—together.