

Labour Market Recruitment and Retention Strategy

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Alberta  Canada 

Town of
CANMORE



ballad

Acknowledgments

This Labour Market Recruitment and Retention Strategy has been prepared for the Town of Canmore in partnership with the Banff Canmore Job Resource Centre (JRC), the Bow Valley Builders & Developers Association (BOWDA), the Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce (BVCC), the Downtown Canmore Business Improvement Area (BIA), Tourism Canmore Kananaskis (TCK), and the Government of Alberta.

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Executive Summary

Canmore's labour market is shaped by complex challenges, ranging from localized matters to large structural considerations. Tackling them will take a strategic, collaborative effort involving the Town of Canmore and inviting local businesses and organizations to be part of solutions.

Economic analysis shows that the labour shortages across Canada more heavily affected Canmore than average, primarily due to the community's economic composition. While there has been a reduction in job vacancies in recent months, multiple sectors still struggle with shortages. It will be crucial to address them as analysis also shows that economic recovery in Canmore has been steady since the pandemic. So, demand for labour can be reasonably expected to increase in the coming years.

GDP forecasts highlight continued growth for the area. Although post-pandemic recovery is expected to slow down, GDP will continue to grow in Canmore for the foreseeable future. This outlook underscores the immediate need to act strategically on labour shortages to ensure that future growth is not stunted.

Comparisons made between Canmore and other similar communities reveal various insights. These include Canmore's higher cost of living and somewhat older population, greater economic diversity, and low unemployment rate. These comparisons show that even against similar communities, Canmore has unique qualities that are important to consider in strategic planning.

Both workers and businesses shared insightful information from engagement conducted throughout the community. The insights included more detailed information on the vacancies affecting the labour market, the differences between small and large businesses, the varying confidence levels of employers in finding workers, and the impacts of secondary effects on labour.

This report's analysis is categorized according to several themes to ensure that labour challenges and opportunities are identified and addressed. The themes, detailed further in the report, are:

- **Training:** Essential to ensuring that the appropriate skills are available in the workforce, training is an important matter to consider for both workers and employers.
- **Hiring:** Improving hiring practices and processes ensures better handling of job vacancies and overall recruitment and retention efforts.
- **Sourcing Skills from External Markets:** Canmore's migrant population is growing and is a key part of addressing labour needs in the community. The community must continue to look to external markets to ensure that Canmore's growing labour demand is appropriately supplied.
- **Workplace Culture:** A strong workplace culture fosters a sense of belonging and community. Its intentional development is crucial to sustaining the existing workforce and driving the growth of the labour market.
- **Productivity-Enhancing Technology:** Technologies offer a range of options to support efficiency, which can greatly impact outcomes for businesses, allowing for strategic use of existing staff. Understanding and implementing appropriate technologies will be fundamental to labour market development.

- **Social Infrastructure:** The key to retention is social infrastructure, which supports workers needs in a community. Developing a resilient social infrastructure will help attract and retain workers.
- **Cost of Living:** Canmore has a high cost of living, directly impacting those deciding to move to or stay in Canmore. It is crucial to address this issue to ensure that labour markets can function sustainably.
- **Housing:** Closely tied to cost of living, housing is also a barrier in Canmore that is affecting labour. Efforts to support appropriate housing in the context of labour market forecasts will help to counter labour shortages.

These themes present both issues and opportunities, exploring areas where collective action can have the most impact. By implementing the strategies highlighted in this report with a spirit of partnership and a forward-thinking outlook, Canmore can expect to greatly improve its economic output, growth, and vitality.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Pre-pandemic, the Canmore labour market experienced challenges impacting local businesses in their ability to offer services and/or operating hours. As part of the COVID-19 Response Plan for Economic Development in 2020, Council approved the creation of a temporary advisory group named the Business Recovery Taskforce to bring forward recommendations that would support businesses in their return to work, operations, and recovery efforts. The recommendations also looked at future growth opportunities and ways to propel the community beyond recovery. On December 7, 2021, Council accepted the Business Recovery Taskforce Report for planning purposes.

As part of the recommendations made related to labour, the taskforce identified the need for the creation of a Labour Market Recruitment and Retention Strategy to understand the current labour market, and to recognize opportunities to promote better recruitment and retention in anticipation of labour pressures as the economy and travel recovered.

Since that time, Canmore has seen growing challenges related to labour within the business community that supersede the pre-pandemic labour pressures identified in 2019. Although labour problems are not unique to Canmore, there are compounding issues that impact the ability to attract employees that are unrelated to the types of jobs offered within the community. They include elements such as housing, affordability, seasonality of work, and limited access to a temporary foreign labour force. These challenges have resulted in some businesses reducing their hours of operations, closing their doors for multiple days each week, limiting their contracts, and limiting available inventory and services to ensure that they can retain the staff and remain operational with the limited resources, including workforce, available to them.

As the competition for labour increases, it is increasingly important that all key stakeholders, including the Town, local businesses, and representative organizations, improve their understanding of the current labour market. They must also look at best practices and strategies to recruit and retain the area's workforce, and consider an action plan that unifies businesses, residents, and local groups for the benefit of the entire community.

- Providing town-specific data points and an understanding of labour market trends, wage review, and comparators;
- Examining best practices for recruitment and retention;
- Offering strategic recommendations related to HR supports and best practices, employee retention strategies, immigration, and housing needs for the current and future workforce.

1.2 Report Overview

This report provides detailed analysis and policy recommendations for the Town of Canmore, the business community, local advocacy groups, and other stakeholders. It offers a collective response to Canmore's current and anticipated labour market recruitment and retention needs.

Section 2 summarizes the current state of Canmore's economy and labour market, as well as forecasts for the coming years. Its models are based on data published by trusted public sources (e.g., Statistics Canada) and localized data provided by project partners. It also provides additional details related to key sectors that are critical drivers within the local economic landscape.

Section 3 reviews engagement with both business owners/managers and labour market participants (i.e., the local workforce), highlighting key findings and feedback raised by participants through surveys and interviews.

Subsequent sections of this report examine the major themes driving discussions regarding Canmore's current and future labour market, offering recommendations to address needs in each area. Thematic discussions focus first on labour-specific issues where resolution will require cross-community action and collaboration, before considering broader topics affecting local labour that will require greater structural change. These themes are:

- Training and employee development
- Improving hiring processes
- Sourcing skills from external markets
- Supporting workplace culture
- Integrating productivity-enhancing technologies
- Developing social infrastructure
- Managing the cost of living
- Considering housing needs for the current and future workforce

Overall, Canmore has a strong foundation for continued growth. It has several competitive advantages—notably, its enviable mountain lifestyle, idyllic landscapes, extensive amenities, proximity to Calgary, and access to an international airport.

An even greater asset to Canmore is its resourceful community of business owners, advocacy groups, and other local stakeholders who engage regularly with the Town on economic development and policy initiatives. It is hoped that this report and its strategic recommendations provide a common purpose to these groups, putting Canmore on an improved path to economic sustainability reflecting its vision as a resilient and vibrant community socially, economically, and environmentally.¹

¹ [Town of Canmore. 2023. Vision and Mission.](#)

2 Economic Assessment and Labour Market Outlook

To understand the findings and recommendations emerging from this study, it is first necessary to consider the broader economic trends influencing Canmore's economic trajectory.

2.1 National and Regional Labour Market Trends

Growing labour shortages have been widespread across Canada's labour market throughout the post-pandemic period, with the job vacancy rate reaching a national high of 5.9% in the second quarter of 2022. During this period, job vacancy for the Canmore region was higher, at 8.3% (Figure 1).²

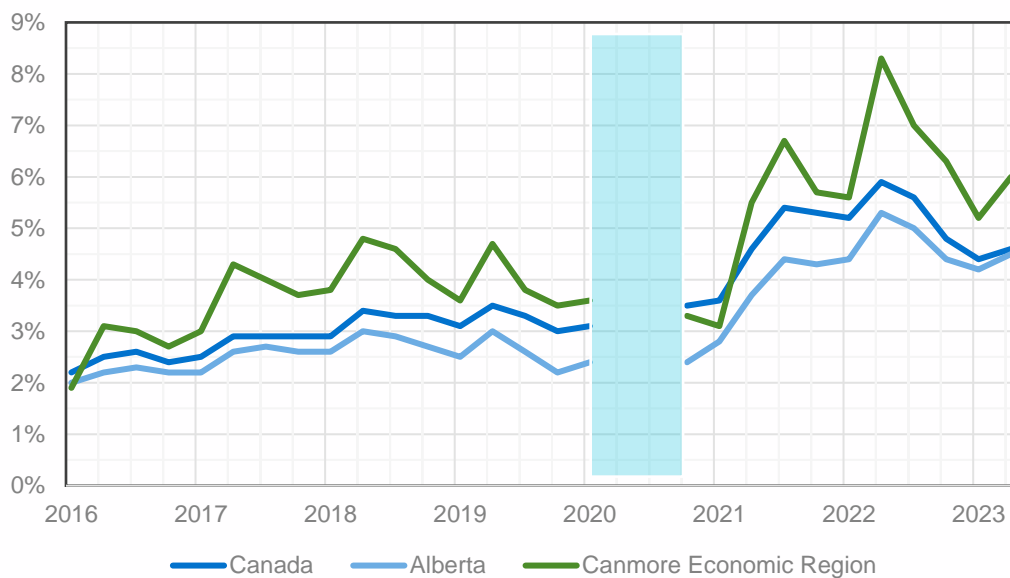


Figure 1 - Job vacancy rates (Source: Statistics Canada, Table: 14-10-0325-01)

The estimated vacancy rate in Canmore was 11.2% at the start of 2023, being higher due to severe shortages in the accommodation and food services (14.6%) and retail trade (14.3%) industries.³ The severity of labour shortages in Canmore reflects the local economy's composition, with sectors such as accommodation and food services, retail trade, and arts, entertainment, and recreation accounting for one-in-three jobs in the community (34.3%). These sectors faced the greatest challenges during the pandemic, given their largely in-person mode of delivery. Correspondingly, they also saw the largest outflow of skills as workers sought out more stable employment opportunities, as health risks and wealth

² Within quarterly Statistic Canada job vacancy data tables, data for Canmore is aggregated with the Banff–Jasper–Rocky Mountain House and Athabasca–Grande Prairie–Peace River economic zones.

³ Estimated using data collected by Ballad as part of the Employers Survey.

effects prompted older workers to retire in large numbers, and as international travel restrictions limited the labour supply from abroad.⁴

Despite the progress made in reducing vacancy rates in recent months, these sectors remain the most challenged (Figure 2). Combined, vacancies across these three sectors still account for more than one-quarter (26.2%) of all vacancies across Canada despite representing a much smaller share (7.7%) of total economic output.⁵

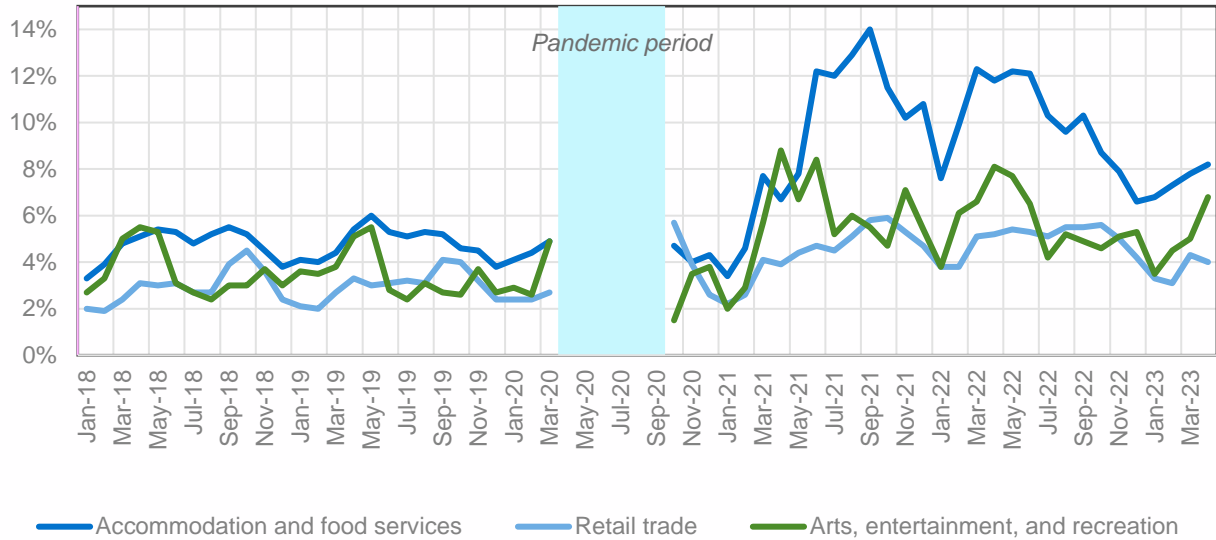


Figure 2 - Job vacancy rates by sector (Source: Statistics Canada, Table: 14-10-0372-01)

Multiple studies have identified common barriers impacting recruitment. For example, Alberta Chambers of Commerce and the Business Council of Alberta (July 2021) found that a lack of applicants, lack of skills, and competition from other employers were the main barriers to hiring. These factors have affected output and limited capacity to grow. Similarly, reports from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) show that almost half (46%) of small businesses in Alberta are experiencing staff shortages, with one-quarter (24%) estimating that current shortages are affecting business operations. Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) found that many small- and medium-sized businesses have been unable to fill vacancies for several months.

These studies also point to another contributor to reduced labour supply—many workers in industries most affected by the pandemic have left in search of more stable employment, and incentives to return are limited. BDC research finds that 20% of those who became unemployed during the pandemic found work in another sector, while CFIB found that this percentage is even higher among people who were laid off from the hospitality sector (48%). These findings suggests that any rebound in employment in the hospitality sector may have to be prompted by a resolution of the sector’s deep-rooted issues (e.g., pay, and working conditions). According to Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS), some of the most in-demand jobs are bartenders, food service supervisors, and chefs. Ensuring that these positions and more managerial roles are filled with highly skilled individuals will be critical to Canmore’s recovery and future success .

⁴ In Canmore’s case, international labour supply through the two-year visas provided by the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (closed) and International Experience Canada (open) are found to be an important source of labour supply, corresponding with 6.8% of the 399 labour market participants surveyed for this study. When looking at the tourism sector specifically, this figure rises to 15.0% of all workers in the sector.

⁵ As of April 2023.

Recent declines in job vacancy rates reflect a mix of supply and demand factors. On the supply side, inward migration has started to rebound, and businesses have improved access to foreign labour pools;⁶ on the demand side, advanced economies such as Canada, the United States, and the European Union (the largest markets for Alberta’s tourism industry) are all showing signs of slowing growth, which could ease pressure on businesses in the near term. As consumers continue to reduce spending in response to declining real incomes,⁷ falling savings, and interest rate hikes, their behaviours could have a dampening effect on Canmore’s local economy and labour demand in the near term, which may also reduce labour pressures seen across the business community at present.

2.2 Post-Pandemic Economic Recovery in Canmore

Canmore’s economy recovered rapidly from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting the community’s orientation towards consumer-servicing sectors. Businesses in these areas have benefitted from rising confidence and wealth effects, while increases in home prices have added further momentum to the local real estate market and residential construction activity. More fundamentally, the reopening of international borders has allowed the return of visitors from abroad, with the profile of visitors in Canmore shifting from Albertans (and other Canadians) to much higher-spending foreign visitors.⁸ It is important to note however that a complete recovery of consumer spending has not yet been seen.

Hotel occupancy rates (Figure 3) have recovered from the pandemic lows and are on track to surpass their 2019 levels already in 2023. Average daily rates are higher than pre-pandemic levels, which has improved revenues for the community as demand for tourism services has made a robust rebound.⁹

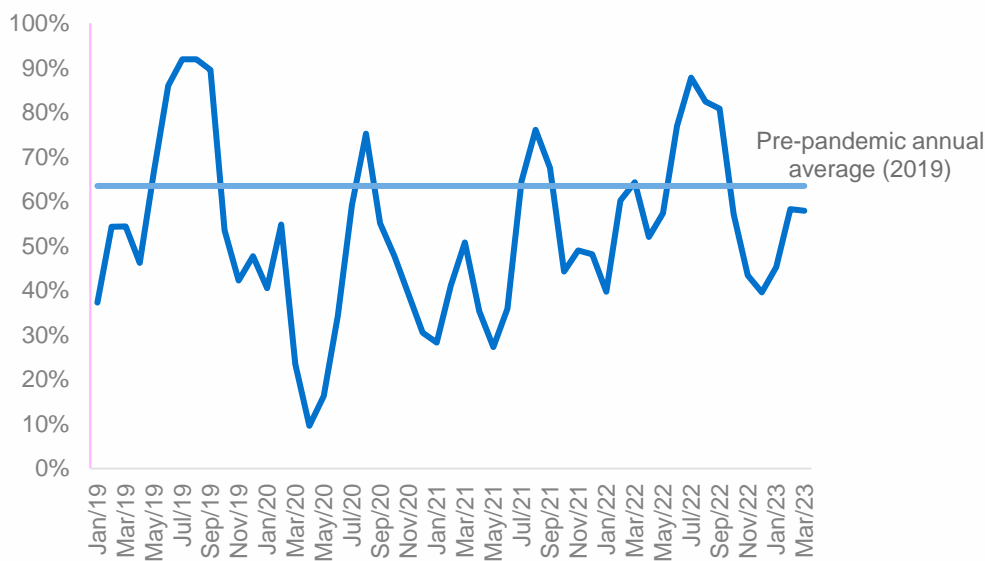


Figure 3 - Hotel occupancy rates (Source: Tourism Canmore-Kananaskis)

So far in 2023, occupancy rates have remained stable but average daily rates have climbed another 12.4%. While there is evidence of declining seasonality in Canmore’s economy and corresponding labour demand, Figure 3 illustrates the still-high fluctuations between peak and off-peak seasons in terms of occupancy rates. Our estimation that tourism-related

⁶ For example, Canada expects to admit 90,000 new (two-year) temporary workers via the International Experience Canada (IEC) stream, up 20% from 2022, while the Temporary Foreign Worker Program issued 136,650 new permits in 2022.

⁷ Real income refers to the amount of money an individual or entity makes after adjusting for inflation. High inflation reduces the real income of households.

⁸ Travel Alberta estimates that an international traveller spends on average four times more than the domestic traveller ([source](#)).

⁹ For example, average daily rates in 2022 were more than 26.4% higher than in 2019.

spending has been strong is supported by provincial and federal data that shows growth in recent months. Tourism spending across Canada rose in real terms at an annualized rate of 10.9% in the first quarter of 2023, quickening its pace from earlier quarters.

Estimates of local house price dynamics also indicate post-pandemic shifts. While Canmore was already one of Canada's most expensive real estate markets, the post-pandemic period saw house prices climb another 39% in the span of just three years, bringing the median home price to around \$1.2 million (Figure 4). Such rapid growth has supported activity in the construction sector, while wealth effects are likely to have improved sales of locally produced goods and services.

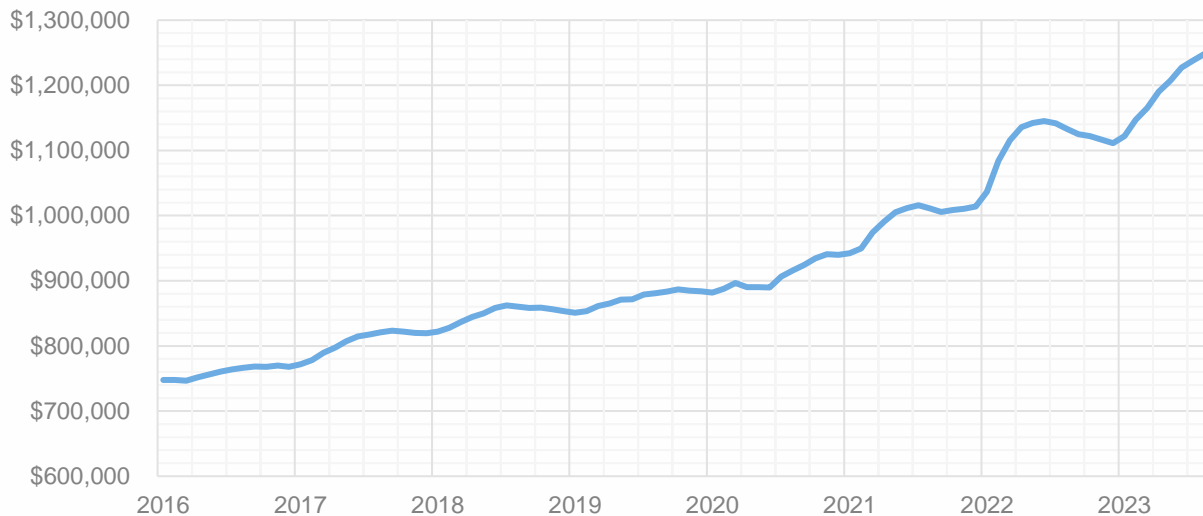


Figure 4 - Median home price in Canmore (Sources: Statistics Canada; Ballad; CREA)

The local construction sector is set to receive a boost from the development of several major projects spanning residential and non-residential sectors, with the local housing market remaining hot, even in the face of rising interest rates over the past year.¹⁰ The volume of sales in Canmore have fallen (-19% year-on-year in August 2023) and the average number of days that a property remains on the local market has risen (14% increase year-on-year in August 2023).¹¹ However, average property prices have increased year-on-year in August 2023, and low inventories point to tight supply conditions. As a result, further declines in volumes from here are not anticipated, while local market commentators believe buyers are remaining on the sidelines and waiting for an opportunity to enter the market. Given the high cost of housing, interest rate increases are not expected to have the same effects as in other communities because many buyers are using cash rather than debt financing, especially buyers from outside of the community.

Given the combination of rebounding visitor numbers and high property prices outlined above, Canmore's economy as of mid-2023 appears robust. Labour demand is high across multiple business sectors and, at a growth rate of 3.3%, the local economy is on track to surpass pre-pandemic output during 2023, however, this is dependent on various factors.

¹⁰ While the local housing market is currently strong, as Section 2.4 points out, economic conditions could cause employment growth slow or stall in 2024 or 2025.

¹¹ Canmore Real Estate Market Report 2022, City to Summit Real Estate.

2.3 Growth Forecast

When considering Canmore’s outlook for the coming years, a key determinant is spending by foreign visitors; as such, fluctuations in this consumer market are impactful. Figure 5 estimates tourism spending in the community and the corresponding impacts on GDP and employment growth in Canmore.

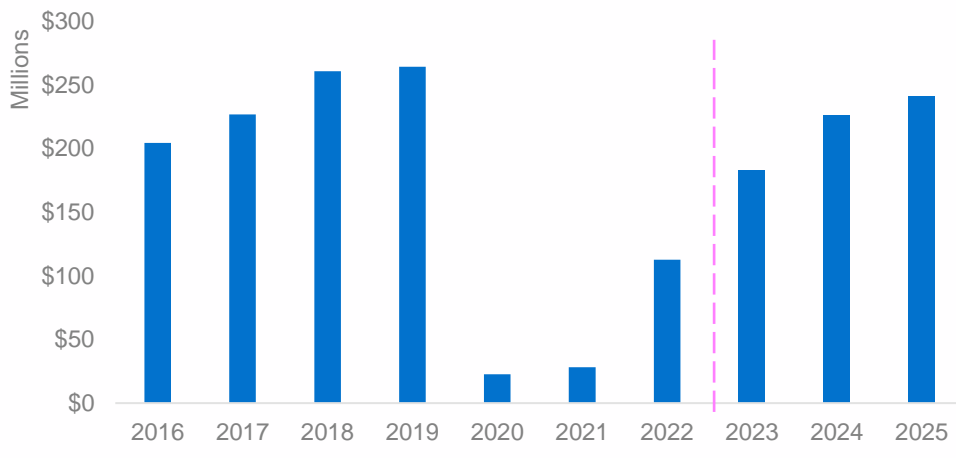


Figure 5 - Foreign visitor spending in the Canadian Rockies (Source: Ballard)

As Figure 5 shows, foreign visitor spending rebounded rapidly in 2022, corresponding to the relaxation of border restrictions. Our forecasts anticipate further growth in foreign tourism spending in the coming years, but at a decreasing growth rate (62.6% in 2023, 23.6% in 2024, and 6.3% in 2025). This shift reflects both a return to pre-pandemic levels as well as slowing GDP growth across some of Canmore’s most important markets (Table 1). We expect economic growth to slow due to moderating outlooks across advanced economies like the US and Europe. These markets are the largest source of visitors who travel to Canmore, and declining growth in these markets has corresponding negative effects on the local economy. Domestic tourism numbers could also see slower growth in 2024 as more Canadians return to travelling abroad.

Table 1 - GDP growth forecasts for Canada and trading partners (Source: Bank of Canada)¹²

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Canada	3.4%	1.8%	1.2%	2.4%
United States	2.1%	1.8%	0.6%	1.4%
Euro Area	3.5%	0.3%	1.0%	1.5%
Japan	1.0%	1.3%	0.9%	1.2%
China	3.0%	5.5%	4.7%	4.3%

Other factors at the regional and national level may also contribute to slower growth in Canmore in the coming years, including inflation, interest rate changes, and fluctuations in the price of oil. These dynamics may contribute to weaker consumer demand, which in turn may impact business investment at the local level. However, the provincial government looks set to engage in expansionary fiscal policy and provide additional spending on healthcare and related activities, which may counter some of these effects.

¹² The selection of countries and regions highlighted in this table is informed by [Government of Alberta data on international airport arrivals](#) and [Alberta Visitor Profiles](#).

Based on these variables, GDP growth can be expected to slow to 1.9% in 2024 and 2.2% in 2025 (Figure 6). However, there are several factors that may either boost or limit growth from our current expectations, including:

- Stronger growth across external partners (+)
- More negative effects from rising interest rates (-)
- Positive (+) or negative (-) outturns for energy prices relative to our baseline forecast

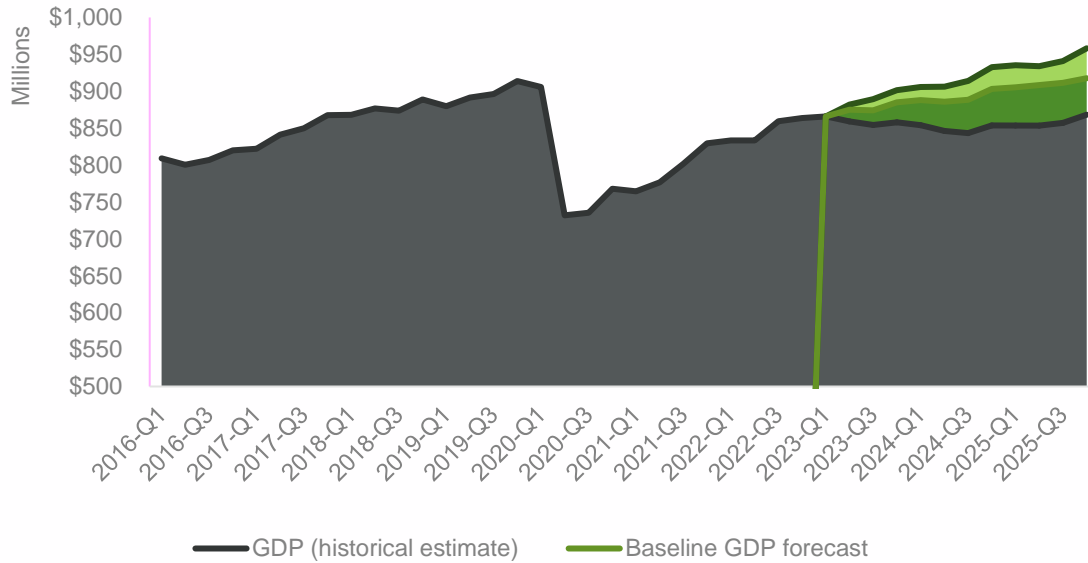


Figure 6 - GDP growth forecast (Source: Ballard)

Owing to these factors, Table 2 sets out the high- and low-growth scenarios that may materialize, while Table 3 projects the local unemployment rate based on current policy. It is important to note that unemployment rate estimates are full-year figures, not point-in-time statistics (e.g., July 2023). For example, while the full-year unemployment rate may fall to 5.4% by 2025, this figure is an average of Canmore’s high seasons (e.g., winter, summer) and shoulder seasons. Given seasonality in the labour market, we expect that variation in the unemployment rate will be noticeable between these periods, meaning that the unemployment rate will be much lower at times than what the full-year figures suggest.

Table 2 - GDP growth forecast scenarios for Canmore (Source: Ballard)

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Baseline	6.9%	3.3%	1.9%	2.2%
High-growth scenario		4.4%	3.4%	3.0%
Low-growth scenario		1.4%	-1.2%	1.0%

Table 3 - Unemployment forecast for Canmore, assuming no major policy changes. 2021 figures relate to Statistics Canada census data, while figures for 2022 and beyond are Ballard estimates.

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Unemployment rate (%)	9.7%	8.2%	6.3%	5.8%	5.4%

Based on expectations for overall GDP and sector-specific growth in the coming period, forecasts predict that unemployment will fall to 5.4% by 2025. This trend reflects positive employment growth expected across most sectors (see Section 2.4 below) and a rebound in the labour force participation rate from its pandemic-period lows. It also accounts for the anticipated retirement of an aging workforce.

2.4 Sector-Specific Outlooks in Canmore

Table 4 below summarizes unemployment by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) sector, based on the survey responses of 399 labour market participants (see also Section 3 below). Notably, despite widespread views that shortages are most severe in accommodation and food services and retail trade, survey responses indicate respective unemployment or underemployment rates of 10.5% and 7.4% in those sectors. These discrepancies may relate to:

- seasonality, as some of these labour market participants provided their responses prior to the May Long Weekend;
- the length of time needed for job matching (that is, the period from entering the job market to finding work); and/or
- a higher frequency of part-time work in these sectors, which may not align with the expectations of employees.

Table 4 - Unemployment rate by sector (Source: Ballard survey)

NAICS Code	Sector	No. of Respondents	Under-/unemployed (%)
1	Agriculture, forestry, fishing, & mining	3	33.3%
9	Information & cultural industries	9	22.2%
12	Professional, scientific, & technical services	43	11.6%
10	Finance & insurance	9	11.1%
2	Mining, quarrying, oil & gas*	3	11.1%
18	Accommodation & food services	57	10.5%
n.a.	Other/unknown	11	9.1%
15	Educational services	24	8.3%
19	Other services (except public administration)	27	7.4%
7	Retail trade	27	7.4%
16	Health care & social assistance	36	5.6%
17	Arts, entertainment, & recreation	38	5.3%
14	Administrative & support, waste management, & remediation services	11	0.0%
4	Construction	34	0.0%
13	Management of companies	10	0.0%
5	Manufacturing	6	0.0%
20	Public administration	32	0.0%
11	Real estate, rental & leasing	2	0.0%
8	Transportation & Warehousing	5	0.0%
3	Utilities	6	0.0%
6	Wholesale trade	0	0.0%

In assessing current economic activity in Canmore and forecasting future drivers of labour demand, our analysis focuses on the community's six largest sectors for employment (Table 5), which accounted for almost two-thirds (64.8%) of total employment in 2021, reflecting:

- The community’s heavy focus on consumer-servicing sectors and its attractiveness as a tourism destination, with some sectors accounting for a much greater proportion of local economic activity than they do at the provincial level—for example the share of accommodation and food services in Canmore’s economy is three times larger than for Alberta, and the share of arts, entertainment and recreation is four times larger);¹³
- Increased construction activity, owing to a strong residential real estate market that is now one of the most expensive in Canada; and
- A highly skilled workforce that can work either locally or remotely, especially in professional services.

Table 5 - Canmore's labour market profile by sector (Source: Statistics Canada – 2021 Census)

	Employment	Employment % in Canmore	Employment % in Alberta
Accommodation & food services	1,560	16.1%	5.8%
Healthcare & social assistance*	1,165	12.0%	12.4%
Retail & wholesale trade	1,170	12.0%	14.1%
Professional, scientific, & technical services	1,030	10.6%	7.8%
Construction	765	7.9%	9.2%
Arts, entertainment, & recreation	690	7.1%	1.9%
Other sectors	3,140	35.4%	51.1%

Previous reports have found that the tourism sector is a significant contributor to GDP, employment, and taxation in Canmore. A study from 2016 found that Canmore generated almost \$350 million in tourism spending annually, in the process supporting over 2,600 direct jobs in the community and a further 1,400 indirect jobs.¹⁴ As tourism has grown in Canmore since 2016, our forecasts for GDP and foreign visitor spending estimate that total spending on tourism will exceed 2016 levels by a considerable margin.¹⁵ More recently, the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta (TIAA) published their 2022 report estimating that \$6.3 billion in tourism spending supported a total of 58,900 jobs across the province.¹⁶ Based on foreign visitor spending and aggregate visitor numbers in Alberta, estimates indicate that spending has not reached pre-pandemic levels (\$10.1 billion in 2019).

Taking forecasts for GDP growth, interest rates, foreign visitor spending, economic multipliers, etc., it is possible to project employment growth for those sectors that are most important to Canmore's economy¹⁷ and create an employment forecast for Canmore to 2025.

¹³ To demonstrate the magnitude of the discrepancy between Canmore and other communities across Alberta, whereas these tourism-intensive sectors accounted for more than one-in-three jobs in Canmore (34.3%), the comparable figure for Alberta was less than one-in-five (18.7%).

¹⁴ Banff, Jasper, and Canmore: Tourism Economic Impact Study (2016)

¹⁵ According to our estimates, tourism spending in Alberta relates to an employment multiplier of 9.3 jobs per \$1 million in spending.

¹⁶ Tourism Industry Association of Alberta. 2022. Alberta’s Tourism Industry: Economic Impacts and Policy Recommendations to Spur Investment.

¹⁷ As demand in the healthcare & social assistance sector is heavily driven by provincial-level public policy decisions, we have excluded this sector from our forecast analysis. The provincial government has committed to higher spending in this sector during the coming fiscal year.

Table 6 - Employment forecast for Canmore Figures for 2021 relate to Census data. Figures for 2022 and beyond are Ballad estimates.

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Employment*	8,765	9,140	9,370	9,480	9,570
year-on-year % change		4.3%	2.5%	1.1%	1.0%
Estimated shortage*			600–650	600–650	600–650
Vacancy rate (%)**			6.7%	6.6%	6.5%

*Assuming no major policy changes

**Vacancy rate is calculated at the midpoint of the estimated shortage ranges presented in Table 6.

Overall, employment should improve by a cumulative 9% by 2025 (compared to Census 2021 levels). As Table 6 suggests, much of the rise in employment is expected to have been frontloaded to 2022, during which time strong increases in output resulted in a 4.3% increase in employment in the community. Employment growth is forecast to moderate significantly in future years.

Under current policies, job vacancy rates are expected to remain elevated at around 6.5% throughout the coming period. This statistic is lower than the post-pandemic highs that were recorded in 2022, but somewhat higher than the latest data for Canmore's broader economic region (6.0% in the second quarter of 2023). It reflects the local economy's heavier focus on the sectors that are facing the most vacancies at present.

Table 7 - Employment forecast for Canmore's largest sectors. 2021 figures relate to Statistics Canada census data, while figures for 2022 and beyond are Ballad estimates.

	2021*	2022	2023	2024	2025
Accommodation & food services	1,560	1,630	1,690	1,710	1,720
y-o-y % change		4.5%	3.7%	1.2%	0.6%
Retail & wholesale trade	1,170	1,200	1,220	1,230	1,250
y-o-y % change		2.6%	1.7%	0.8%	1.6%
Professional, scientific, & technical services	1,030	1,100	1,140	1,170	1,180
y-o-y % change		6.8%	3.6%	2.6%	0.9%
Construction	765	800	820	820	825
y-o-y % change		4.6%	2.4%	0.0%	0.6%
Arts, entertainment, & recreation	690	760	770	780	790
y-o-y % change		7.2%	4.1%	1.3%	1.2%
Total employment across largest sectors	5,215	5,470	5,640	5,710	5,765
y-o-y % change		4.3%	2.5%	1.1%	1.0%
Other sectors	3,550	3,670	3,730	3,770	3,800

On a sectoral basis, we expect solid employment growth across almost all sectors in the coming period (Table 7), reflecting broader economic dynamics:

- **Accommodation and food services** are expected to grow in 2023, but growth will slow in later years as economic growth across Canmore's main tourism markets slows.
- **Wholesale and retail trade** are predicted to remain solid throughout the period, although it should be noted that labour shortages are also forecast to grow in this sector given the challenges discussed in Section 3.2.5.
- **Professional, scientific, and technical services** have grown strongly in recent years, and should remain a feature of Canmore's labour market as highly skilled and highly paid remote workers consider the Town an attractive location, notwithstanding continued growth in residential property prices.
- **Construction** employment may slow, along with the currently hot housing market, as interest rates rise and their impacts are felt by the local industry. As these factors make financing more difficult, employment growth could slow or stall in 2024 and 2025. However, there are some upside risks to this forecast, given Canmore's unique position and the large number of cash buyers at present.
- **Arts, entertainment, and recreation** could moderate from their rapid recovery in 2022, reflecting absorption of previously built-up demand and the outlook for slower growth in foreign visitor spending in the community.

2.5 Comparing Canmore to Other Communities

Taking a proactive approach to putting Canmore's labour market on a more sustainable footing means:

1. Identifying which factors workers consider most important when deciding to move to (and remain in) a community;
2. Understanding how Canmore compares with its competitors across each of these factors; and
3. Considering Canmore's unique context when developing and implementing new policies.

Canmore competes for labour with other communities, including those located in equally idyllic settings across the Canadian Rockies and beyond. Canmore and its neighbouring communities of Banff and Jasper are often grouped together as Alberta's three mountain-destination tourism economies. Looking to the east, Ontario and Quebec are home to several tourism-based communities and to the west, British Columbia is also well-regarded for its resort villages and mountain escapes.

The local labour market is highly mobile at almost all levels, with one-in-three residents having moved to the community within the last five years.¹⁸ Labour market mobility is an important factor to consider for almost all segments of the local labour market, ranging from those working in low-wage sectors and with opportunities to move to communities with a lower cost of living, to highly skilled professionals and tradespeople who are in high demand throughout Canada.

To better understand Canmore's unique economic composition and large mobile workforce, it is helpful to compare Canmore to other, similar communities located across Canada.¹⁹ The communities chosen as comparators to Canmore were identified through analysis of their demographics, labour market characteristics, industrial composition, and economic issues and challenges. Comparator communities are similar in size to Canmore and are oriented towards consumer services and tourism. Many of the communities chosen also face challenges in terms of affordable housing, shadow populations in excess of registered property taxpayers, and reliance on transient workforces.²⁰

¹⁸ Statistics Canada 2021 Census of Population for Canmore (Town) and Ballad calculations.

¹⁹ While there are many tourism-driven economies around the world, comparisons here focus on similar communities located in Canada to account for discrepancies including but not limited to: cultural differences, broader economic environment, currency, employment standards, and taxation legislation.

²⁰ While shadow populations are usually defined in the context of seasonal and transient workers in resource-rich communities, in Canmore (and comparator communities) the shadow population results from seasonal increases in tourism.

Table 8 - Canmore's comparator locations (Ballad; Census 2021)

Location	Population	Median Age
Squamish (BC) ²¹	23,819	37.6
Niagara-on-the-Lake (ON)	19,088	57.2
Whistler (BC)	13,982	35.6
The Blue Mountains (ON)	9,390	58.8
Banff (AB)	8,305	36.8
Revelstoke (BC)	8,275	37.6
Jasper (AB)	4,738	37.6
Canmore (AB)	15,990	42.8

2.5.1 ECONOMY AND LABOUR

Canmore's labour market indicators show a strong performance, with low unemployment (9.7%) compared to other locations. While the participation rate appears similar with its competitors, this indicator appears to lag slightly when compared to its Alberta neighbours, likely due to Canmore's older median age of 42.8 (Table 9).

Table 9 - Labour market statistics for comparator locations (Ballad; Census 2021)

Location	Participation Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate	Individuals in the labour force
Whistler (BC)	81.0%	66.8%	17.5%	9,625
Banff (AB)	80.9%	68.8%	14.8%	4,940
Squamish (BC)	76.9%	71.7%	6.8%	14,685
Jasper (AB)	77.1%	69.9%	9.1%	2,575
Revelstoke (BC)	72.8%	65.5%	10.0%	5,015
Canmore (AB)	71.9%	65.0%	9.7%	9,700
The Blue Mountains (ON)	53.3%	47.6%	10.9%	4,460
Niagara-on-the-Lake (ON)	50.7%	43.1%	15.0%	8,290

²¹ Squamish, BC was specifically identified by members of the project steering committee as a relevant comparator.

Compared to other tourism-based locations, Canmore boasts a more diversified economy with greater activity in public services and other services²², which combined account for 51.3% of employment in the Town (Figure 7).

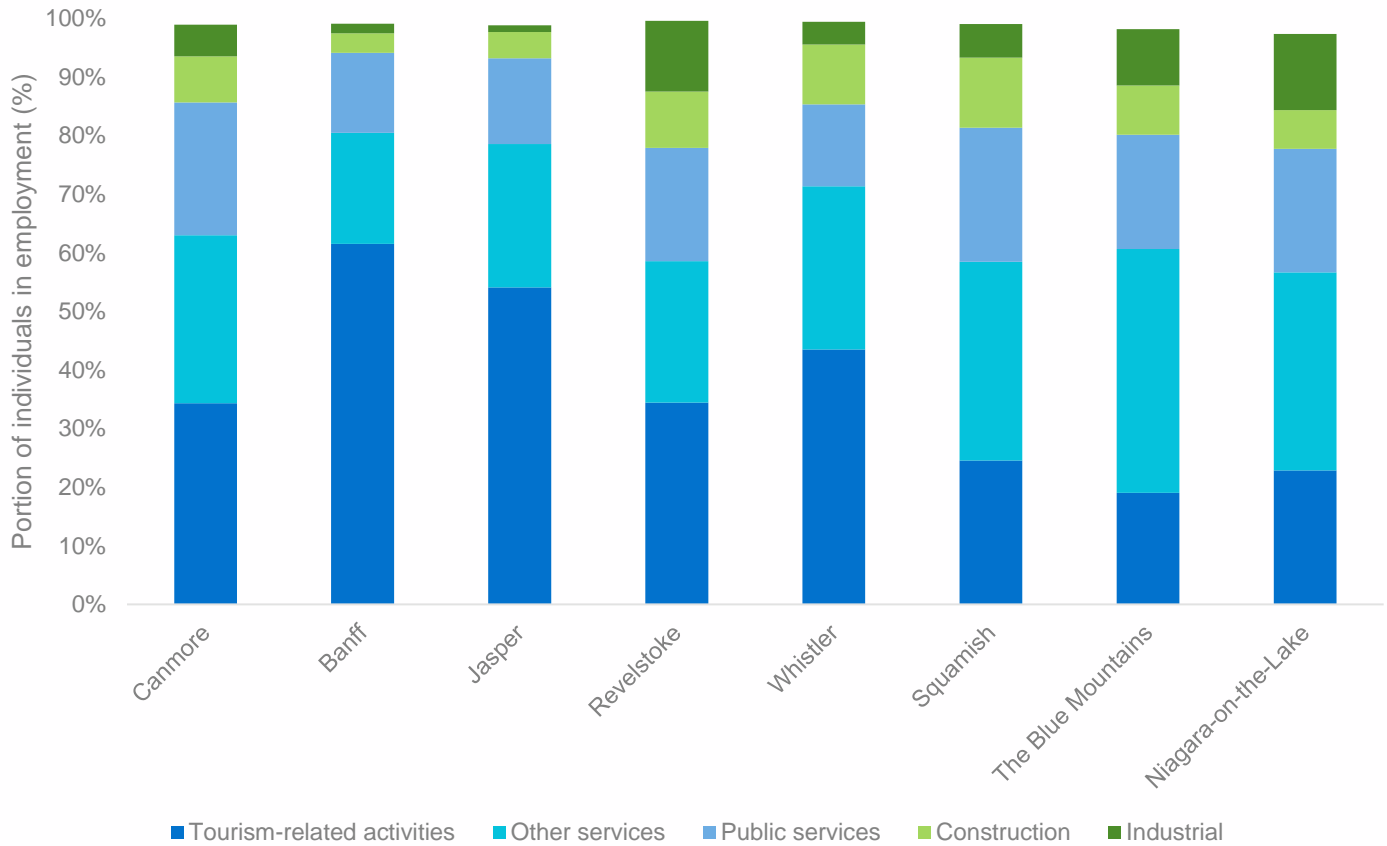


Figure 7 - Industrial composition of comparator locations (Ballad; Census 2021)

²² Other services includes the following industries: wholesale trade; transportation and warehousing; information and cultural industries; finance and insurance; real estate and rental and leasing; professional, scientific and technical services; management of companies; administrative and support, waste management and remediation services; and other services (except public administration).

2.5.2 INCOMES AND COST OF LIVING

Across all comparator locations, Canmore has the highest median individual income at \$50,400 annually (Figure 8). Higher incomes in Canmore are likely associated with its more diverse industrial composition as well as its higher labour participation rates compared to The Blue Mountains and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The household income distribution in both Canmore and across comparator locations is noticeably skewed towards lower and higher-wage positions (Figure 10). Compared to other locations, there is a greater concentration of individuals making over \$100,000 (equivalent to 17.4% of individuals with income).

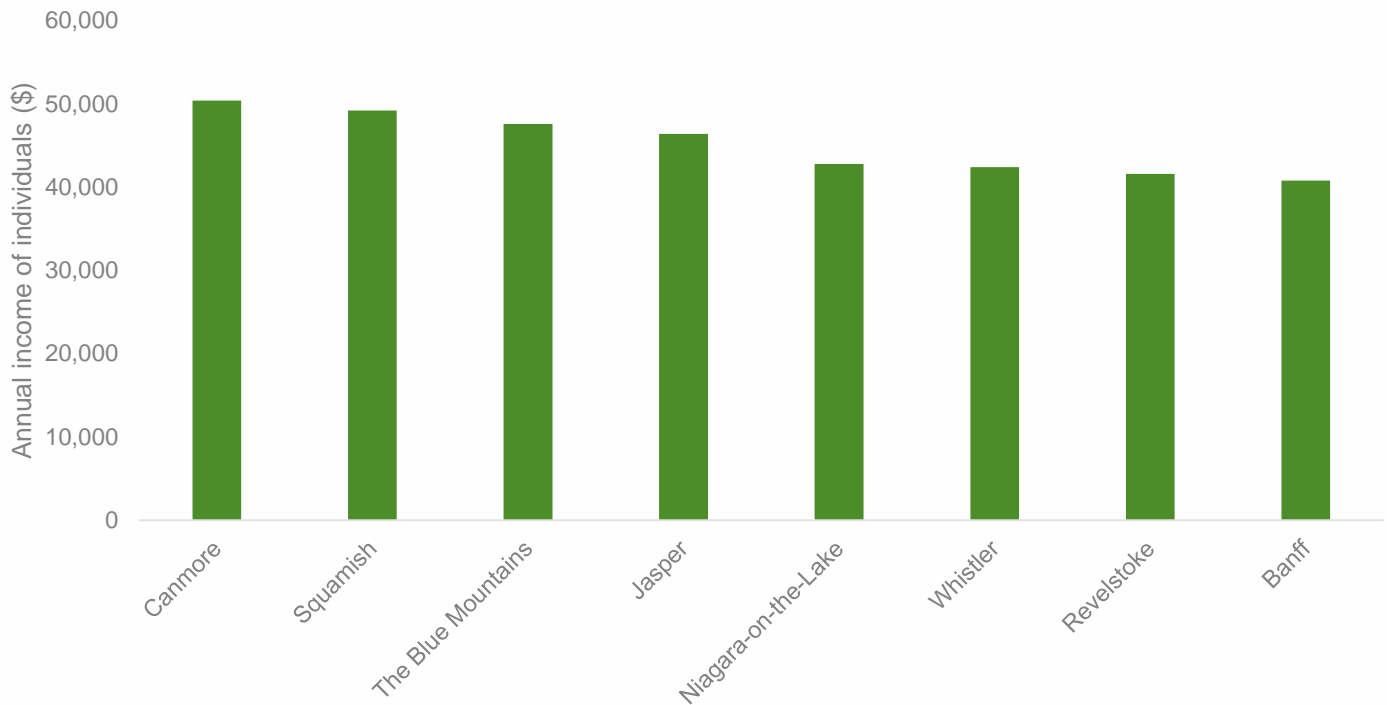


Figure 8 - Median income of individuals in 2019 (Ballad; Census 2021)²³

Canmore's high annual incomes go hand-in-hand with the community's elevated cost of living. Canmore's living wage is 38.8% (a difference of \$9.15) higher than Revelstoke, which has the second-highest living wage out of compared locations. Due to a limited number of communities who had calculated their annual living wages, some of the comparator locations were substituted in Figure 9 for similar locations that had calculated their annual living wage for 2022.²⁴

²³ Salary data is from 2019 instead of 2020 to better account for externalities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic

²⁴ A full list of living wage rates can be accessed at Living Wage Canada: <https://www.livingwage.ca/>

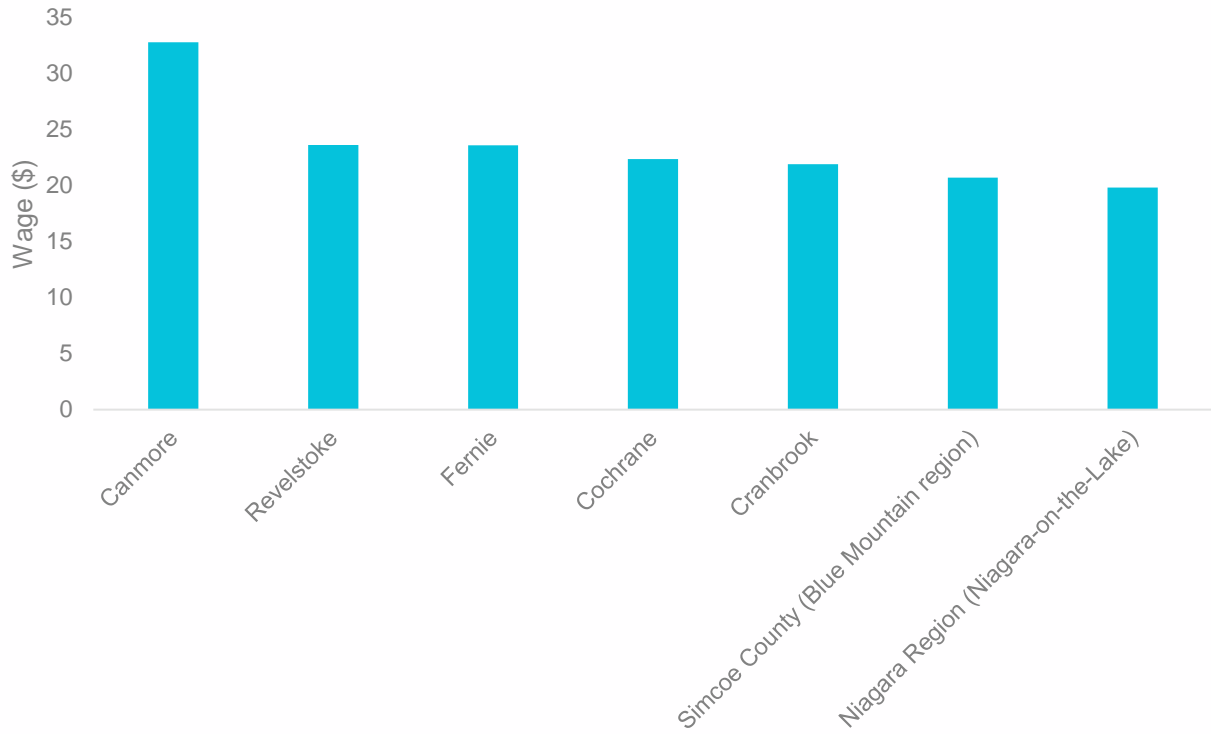


Figure 9 - Living wage in comparator and similar locations (Ballad; Living Wage Canada)

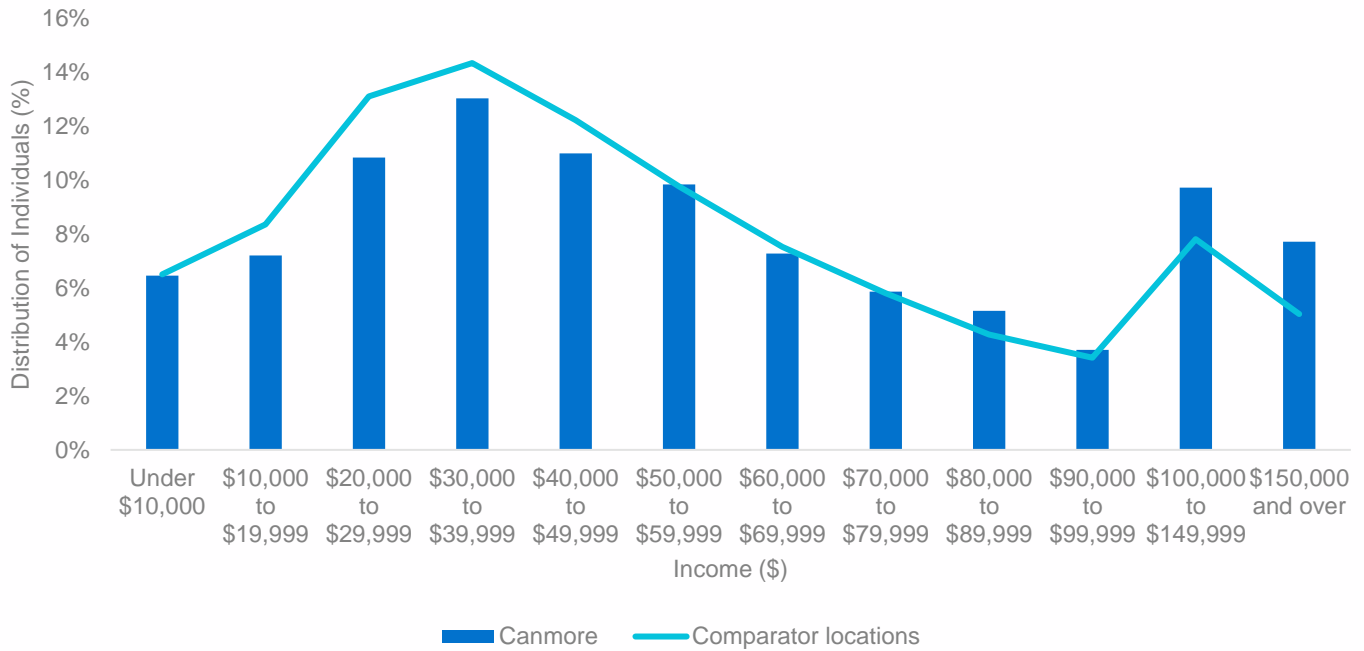


Figure 10 - Income distribution of Individuals in 2020 (Ballad; Census 2021)²⁵

²⁵ Because income distribution data from 2019 is unavailable, data from 2020 incomes is used

2.5.3 HOUSING

Housing is a challenge for many communities with similar characteristics to Canmore. Banff, Squamish, and Revelstoke all have a dwelling-to-labour force participant ratio of 0.75 or under, while Whistler (1.05), Niagara-on-the-Lake (1.03) and The Blue Mountains (1.66) have a higher number of dwellings per labour force participant (Table 10).

Highly lucrative vacation homes and an active short-term rental market are having significant effects on housing availability in many tourism-oriented locations. In Jasper, Whistler, and Canmore, the ratio of dwellings to labour force participants decreases significantly when accounting for dwellings occupied by usual residents.

Table 10 - Housing characteristics (Ballad; Census 2021)

Location	Total dwellings	Dwellings occupied by usual residents	Dwellings per labour force participant	Dwellings occupied by usual resident per labour force participant
Whistler (BC)	10,065	5,597	1.05	0.58
Squamish (BC)	9,906	9,191	0.67	0.63
Canmore (AB)	9,173	6,804	0.95	0.70
Niagara-on-the-Lake (ON)	8,578	7,857	1.03	0.95
The Blue Mountains (ON)	7,396	4,348	1.66	0.97
Revelstoke (BC)	3,739	3,354	0.75	0.67
Banff (AB)	3,287	2,930	0.67	0.59
Jasper (AB)	1,910	1,674	0.95	0.65

2.5.4 IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Canmore (21.0%) compares favorably with other locations in terms of attracting and welcoming immigrants. Banff (27.3%) and Niagara-on-the-Lake (26.3%) have the highest portion of immigrants in their total population, while Revelstoke has the lowest portion of immigrants at 11.7%.

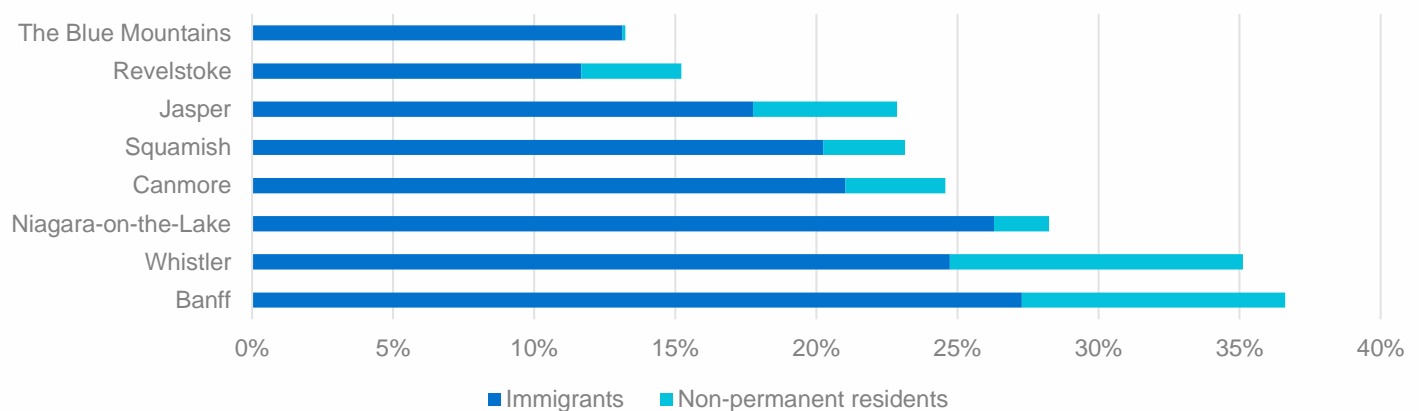


Figure 11 – Immigrant status as a percentage of total population (Ballad; Census 2021)

3 Local Perspectives on Canmore's Labour Market

3.1 Engagement Overview

In addition to statistical modelling of Canmore's economic and labour market outlook, Ballard's team carried out primary research with Canmore's businesses and labour force from April to June 2023. The engagement process facilitated a more localized understanding of:

- The prevalence of labour shortages and their driving forces;
- Contrasts between the expectations of business owners and those of labour market participants; and
- Potential policy solutions that could make an immediate contribution to the community's attraction and retention of labour.

3.1.1 ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES, AUDIENCES, AND METHODS

Based on the contents of the RFP, as well as the Project Charter created by Ballard and reviewed by the Project Steering Committee, the objectives of engagement were to:

1. Gather inputs and insights from all impacted stakeholders regarding their interests and concerns as they relate to labour market needs, growth, and sustainability;
2. Contribute to the development of accurate and localized data sets on various labour market performance measures;
3. Inform the development of actionable recommendations associated with labour market recruitment, retention, and skill development;
4. Keep impacted stakeholders informed about the project from planning to completion; and
5. Align with the Town of Canmore's existing Public Engagement Policy (COM-001).

Prior to project initiation, anticipated engagement audiences were broadly described as local businesses and labour market participants. The project initiation process, involving Ballard and the PSC, has allowed us to further define audiences as:

- Long-term residents and labour market participants
- Seasonal workers
- Newcomers
- Temporary foreign workers and holiday workers
- Remote workers based in Canmore
- Commuters
- Members of the local Indigenous community
- Business owners
- Business managers
- Current and potential investors
- Human resources and employment professionals
- Tourism industry professionals
- Education and training administrators

For engagement with businesses, the Town of Canmore provided Ballard with a database of 634 registered commercial businesses,²⁶ including associated contact information.

Based on the requirements set out in the RFP, as well as Ballard's assessment, the engagement process focused on the following data-gathering activities:

1. **Interviews with PSC, Stakeholder Organizations, and Select Business Owners:** Interviews allowed our team to explore subject matter to a greater depth than would be achieved in a public forum, probing areas of participants' expertise. They were conducted throughout the engagement period, assisting our team to understand the range of ideas, issues, concerns, and values within the community, as well as to assess ideas and recommendations emerging from the research process.
2. **Employer and Labour Market Participant Surveys:** These two surveys allowed for broad, highly localized input and results that could be compared for trends, preferences, and changes. They were promoted through multiple channels and venues, making them our most highly accessible form of cross-community engagement.
3. **Strategic Planning Workshop:** The session, focusing on PSC members, provided a structured format to review and reflect on findings from research and engagement, as well as to refine emerging recommendations.

3.1.2 PROMOTION AND PARTICIPATION

A comprehensive and diverse communications plan supported and promoted the engagement programme. Specific communications methods included:

- Project page on mycanmore.ca
- Facebook, Twitter, and e-newsletters on all project partners' platforms
- Posters
- Handouts in the form of a reusable bookmark
- Press release
- Direct emails to local businesses
- Drop-in business visits
- Pop-up engagement at Elevation Place
- Booths at Mountain Market and the Job Resource Centre's Spring Hiring Fair
- Presentations at local meetings, including BOWDA and Downtown BIA AGMs
- Outreach and social media promotion to community groups

These efforts resulted in the following participation numbers:

- 168 completed surveys with business owners across a wide range of sectors;
- 399 completed surveys with labour market participants in Canmore;
- 25 completed in-depth interviews with cross-industry business owners identified by the Project Steering Committee (PSC);
- 8 completed in-depth interviews with representatives of the Town and other organizations representing key project stakeholder groups.

²⁶ This database does not currently include home-occupying vendors or busking licenses.

These engagement numbers are significant, corresponding with around one-quarter (24.2%) of commercial-based businesses listed in the Town’s business directory²⁷ and one-in-twenty (4.1%) participants in Canmore’s labour market. While it considers the entirety of the Town’s business community and labour market, our engagement process was designed to provide additional focus to sectors where labour shortages were expected to be most severe. It also anticipated that demands on management and workers in more seasonal businesses would increase following the May long weekend. The findings presented here should be interpreted in this context.

Table 11 outlines how the engagement process corresponds with the composition of the business community (compared to the Town of Canmore business registry) and the composition of the labour market (compared to Census 2021 data).

Table 11 - Engagement by sector

	Businesses in Canmore	Surveyed	Labour market in Canmore	Surveyed
Mining, quarrying, oil & gas	0	0	165	9
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, & hunting	0	0	35	3
Management of companies	2	1	10	10
Utilities	3	1	50	6
Information & cultural industries	8	2	95	9
Wholesale trade	11	3	90	0
Finance & insurance	14	4	245	9
Transportation & warehousing	14	1	255	5
Educational services	16	3	595	24
Health care & social assistance	22	11	1,165	36
Administrative & support,	23	1	445	11
Arts, entertainment, & recreation	27	9	690	38
Professional, scientific, & technical services	31	5	1,030	43
Real estate, rental & leasing	36	3	185	2
Manufacturing	45	3	275	6
Other services	49	11	425	11
Construction	54	16	765	34
Accommodation & food services	131	36	1,560	57
Retail trade	148	57	1,080	27
Total	694*	168	9,700**	399***

*Total includes 60 businesses classified as “Unknown”

**Total includes 90 labour market participants classified as “Unknown”

***Total includes 32 labour market participants working in public administration

This level of engagement adds a considerable degree of robustness to the analysis presented in this report, with the coverage ratio across businesses reaching high levels in the community’s major employers like health care and social assistance (50%), retail (38.5%), construction (29%), and accommodation and food services (27.5%).²⁸

²⁷ As noted above, the database does not include home-based businesses, which are assumed to be mainly sole-proprietor ventures.

²⁸ This high coverage ratio relates mostly to survey delivery. Additional in-depth interviews provided further insight regarding business owners’ opinions, the local labour market, and changes that could be implemented over the medium- and longer-term.

3.2 Engagement Results and Discussion

3.2.1 LABOUR SHORTAGES BY SECTOR

Current labour demand in Canmore is largely driven by increased consumer activity, a continuing rebound in international tourism, and a still-strong residential property market. This combination of factors can make it difficult for businesses to determine their hiring needs and find appropriate staff through a timely process. On the one hand, there is anecdotal optimism that the worst of labour shortages have passed, with some businesses learning lessons from previous years and hiring well in advance of seasonal increases in demand. On the other hand, most businesses across multiple industries have vacancies (Figure 12).

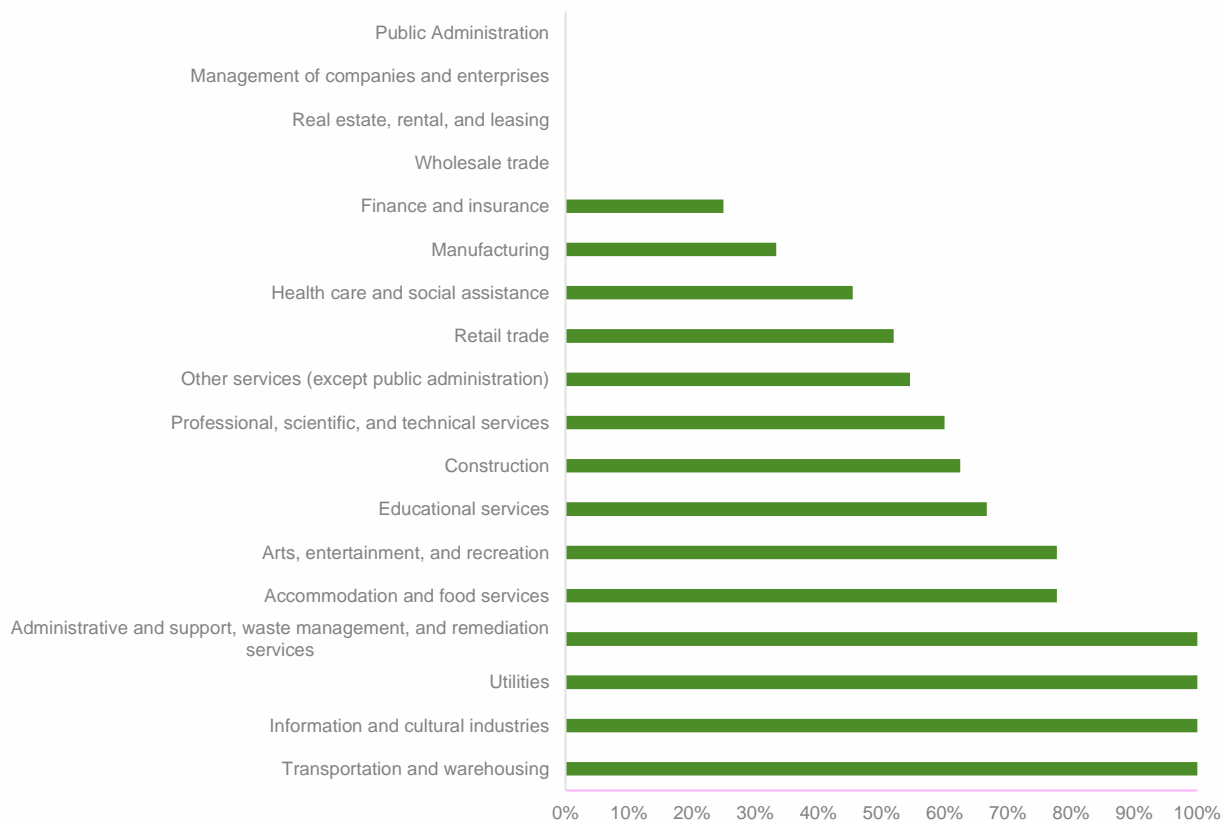


Figure 12 – Share of businesses with vacancies, by sector (Source: Employer survey)²⁹

Across all businesses surveyed between April 2023 and June 2023, more than half (58%) had open vacancies, corresponding with 460 positions. Instead of directly extrapolating this figure of 460 positions, we make some adjustments to account for:

1. **Timing:** It is likely that many businesses that were surveyed during the April–June period have by now filled vacancies that were identified at the time of survey; and

²⁹ Note that this data is reported as was collected in the Ballard-conducted Canmore Employer Survey, and is limited to the responses collected in that survey. Survey responses categorized as from the Public Administration sector (as defined by NAICS) did not report vacancies; however, in its capacity as project partner, the Town of Canmore reports approximately 360 job postings in 2023.

2. **Sample bias:** To some extent, businesses that participated in the survey are more likely to be those that are suffering most from labour shortages, potentially skewing results upwards.

Accounting for these two factors, we estimate that total vacancies in Canmore likely falls within the range of 600–650 positions at the time of this report.

Most vacancies are concentrated in consumer-oriented sectors, especially those that see spikes in demand during peak seasons. The average number of vacancies per businesses is highest in accommodation and food services (9.3) and health care and social assistance (6.3) (Figure 13).

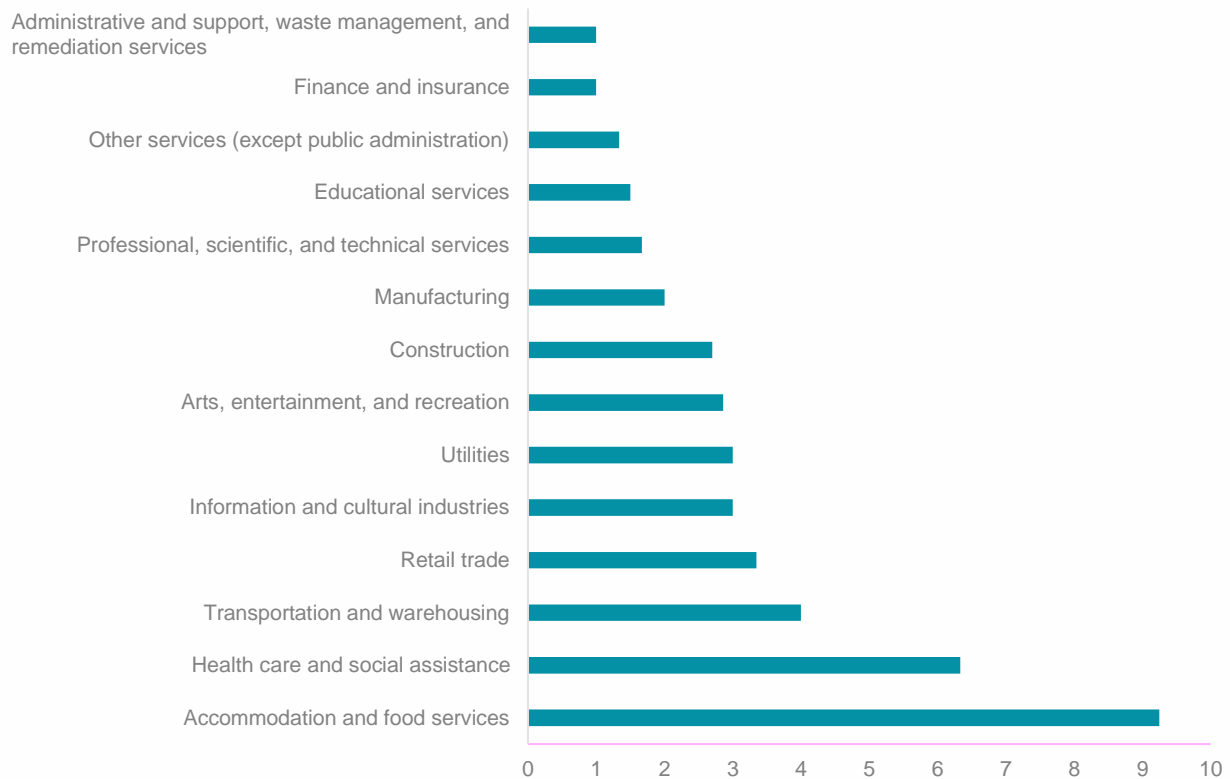


Figure 13 - Average number of vacant positions (Source: Employer survey)

It should be noted that these numbers may be skewed by the larger average size of businesses in these sectors, with hotels and hospitals often employing hundreds of workers. Businesses in slightly smaller sectors such as construction, retail trade, and arts, entertainment, and recreation all have averages within the 2.5–3.5 range. Correspondingly, of the 460 vacancies estimated in the community, more than 59.9% are concentrated in businesses with over fifty employees (Figure 14).

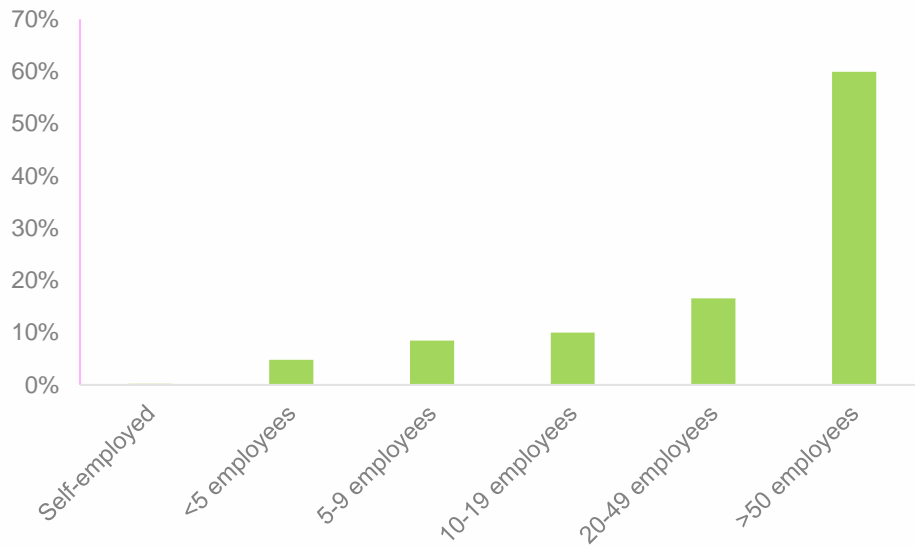


Figure 14 - Vacancies by business size (Source: Employer survey)

3.2.2 EFFECTS OF SHORTAGES ON BUSINESSES

Labour shortages are having material effects on businesses, leading them to shorten opening hours, reduce services, and, ultimately, turn business away (Figure 15).³⁰

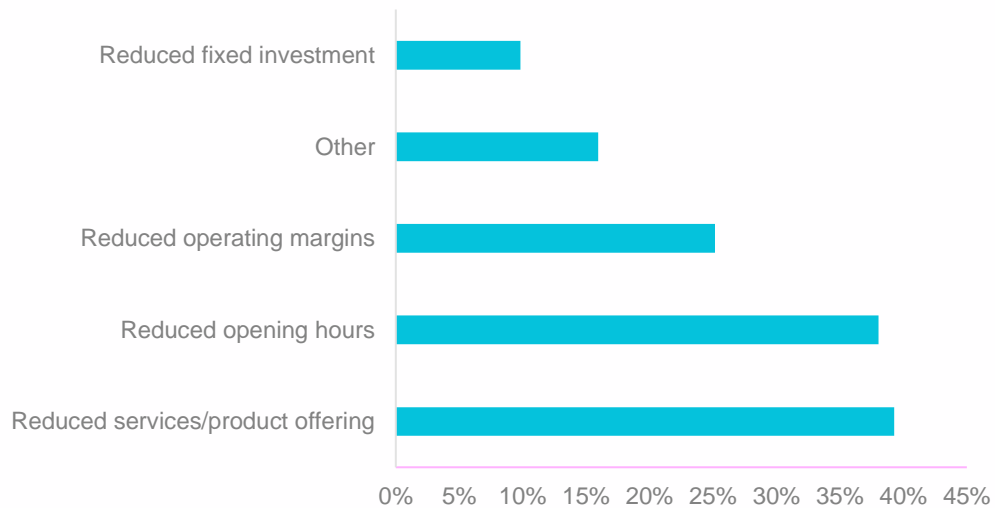


Figure 15 - Labour shortage effects on businesses (Source: Employer survey)

³⁰ Some respondents listed multiple answers regarding the effects of shortages on their business. As such, these figures are not additive, as some of the 39.3% of businesses that have reduced services are also the same 38.0% that have reduced their opening hours.

In addition to the difficulties associated with understaffing, business owners and managers also spoke about the resources they invest in reviewing job candidates and the challenges encountered during prolonged or unsuccessful hiring processes, including:

- Applicants not showing up to interviews, wasting valuable time and resources;
- Applicants from outside the community not onboarding and starting employment once they encounter housing difficulties; and
- Turnover in the labour market that employers attribute to job-hopping for marginal (e.g., \$0.50) increases in hourly pay.³¹

Based on these observations, employers say that they have, at times, lowered their hiring standards and interviewed candidates lacking the preferred qualifications or levels of experience. These decisions have, in turn, prompted concerns around sustaining the expected quality of service in Canmore. The longer that these effects from labour shortages persist, the greater the reputational risks for Canmore as a tourism destination and as a location for new investment.

Business owners have also signalled that competition for labour between competitors both within and across sectors has intensified. In the latter case, skills gained within hospitality are viewed as transferable to other key areas of Canmore's economy. Within this competitive space, there are notable differences between businesses and their success in recruiting and retaining staff. For example, those with well-defined corporate cultures take a proactive and intentional approach to their management of labour supply (see also Section 8). They retain employees over the long term by outlining advancement opportunities and offering better salaries, benefits, and housing.

3.2.3 MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR LABOUR SHORTAGES

In many cases, the mitigation measures available to business owners are limited (Figure 16), especially for businesses whose models rely on thin operating margins. Almost one-third (29%) of businesses had no mitigation measures in place; a further 41% stated that their only mitigation strategy was to have staff work longer hours or to do so themselves. Although working more hours provides a short-term solution, it is unlikely to be conducive to effective operations over a sustained period. Other strategies identified in the survey included using family and friends for staff coverage, with existing staff and ownership covering the remaining shortfall. Some businesses with other locations cope with shortages through "borrowing" staff from Banff or Cochrane, while larger organizations can lean on remote staff located elsewhere across Canada. Critically, findings suggest that many business managers and owners are more occupied by day-to-day operations than long-term strategic planning.

³¹ While business owners and managers attribute job hopping primarily to wages, employees on low wages may change jobs for multiple reasons, e.g., number of hours, scheduling, location, workplace culture, etc.

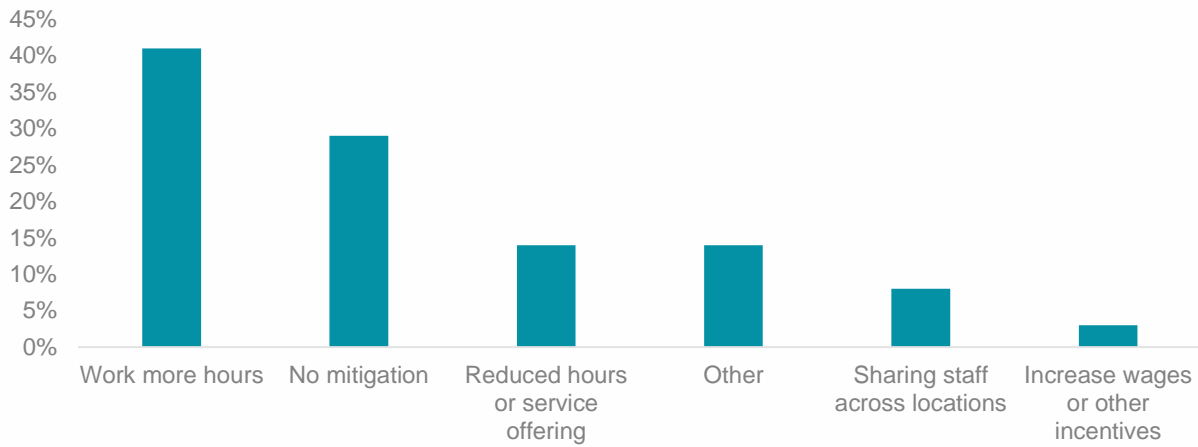


Figure 16 - Mitigation strategies currently in place at businesses in Canmore (Source: Employer survey)

Amongst employees, some of whom already work multiple jobs to stay in Canmore, the pressure of working overtime further undermines labour retention. Many labour market participants expressed the view that more is expected of the employees that stay, often without significant changes in compensation. Somewhat validating this viewpoint, only 3% of businesses stated that they have considered increasing their wages and other incentives as a mitigation measure to resolve their labour shortages, which could be attributed to tight margins within an already stressed economic environment.

Average weekly working hours (Figure 17 below) concentrate around the 35- to 40-hour range for most sectors, including in those with the most shortages. However, the number of people working more than 40 hours across sectors (Figure 18 below) is not evenly distributed, with accommodation and food services (40.3%) and construction (47.1%) recording higher numbers of staff working longer hours than other sectors.³²

In sectors that experience fluctuations in demand between high and low seasons, some businesses keep their staff employed during slower times to ensure a dependable supply during busier times, calculating that it is worth the impact to their margins. For employees, this strategy allows them to move away from the uncertainty of the gig economy, with positive outcomes for their personal and financial well-being.

Other businesses are moving to alternative strategies that are less labour intensive, including online sales of some services and products, new technologies, or accessing federal immigration programs (e.g., Temporary Foreign Worker Program) for the first time.

³² 'More than 40 hours' is a broad category—this figure includes respondents recording as many as 80 hours/week.



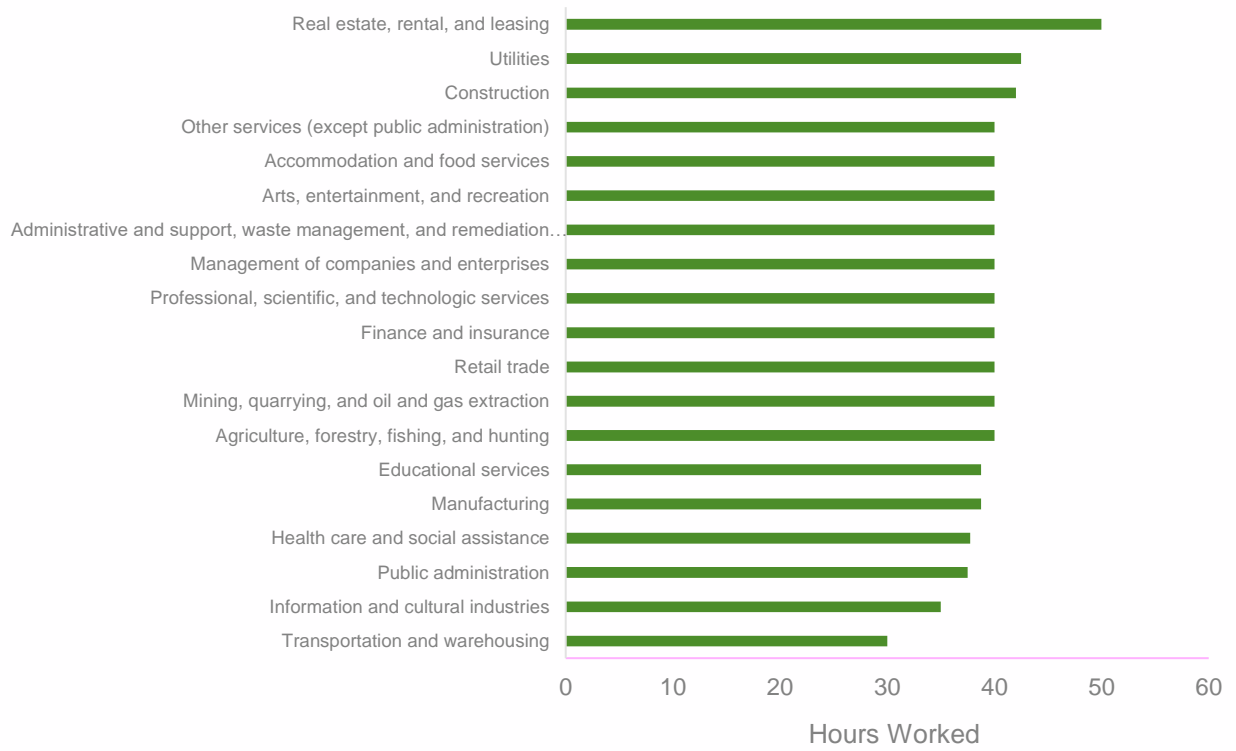


Figure 17 - Average weekly hours by industry (Source: Employer survey)

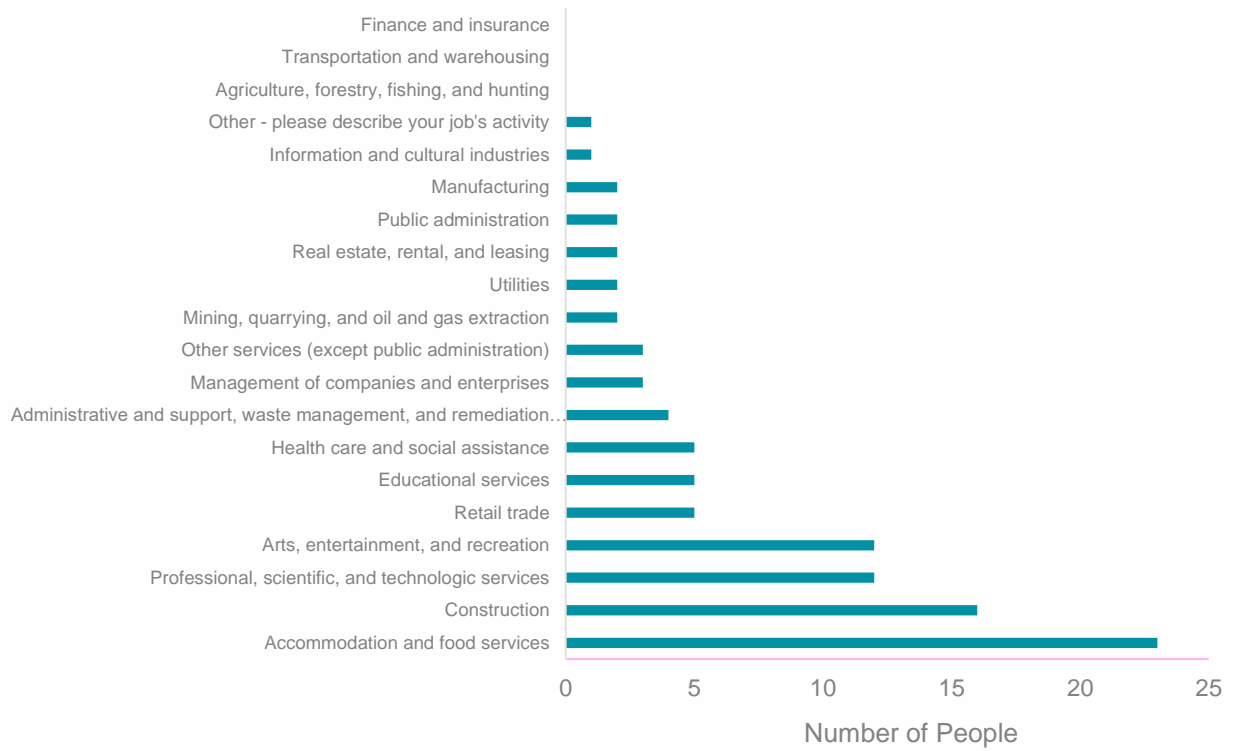


Figure 18 - High-hour workers by industry (Source: Employer survey)

3.2.4 LABOUR OUTLOOK ACCORDING TO BUSINESSES

Businesses that participated in this study are optimistic that the worst of labour shortages have passed, stating that the environment has improved compared to previous years when they competed with CERB payments and when travel restrictions limited access to foreign labour markets.

Nonetheless, most businesses in multiple sectors currently have vacancies, pointing to continued challenges, and they anticipate that shortages will persist in the near term. In our survey, we asked businesses how confident they are that they will fill vacancies and classified responses as either positive (“confident” or “very confident”) or negative (“not at all confident” or “slightly confident”). Figure 19 presents the ratio of positive to negative responses—sectors scoring above zero are confident that they will fill vacancies, while those below are less confident.

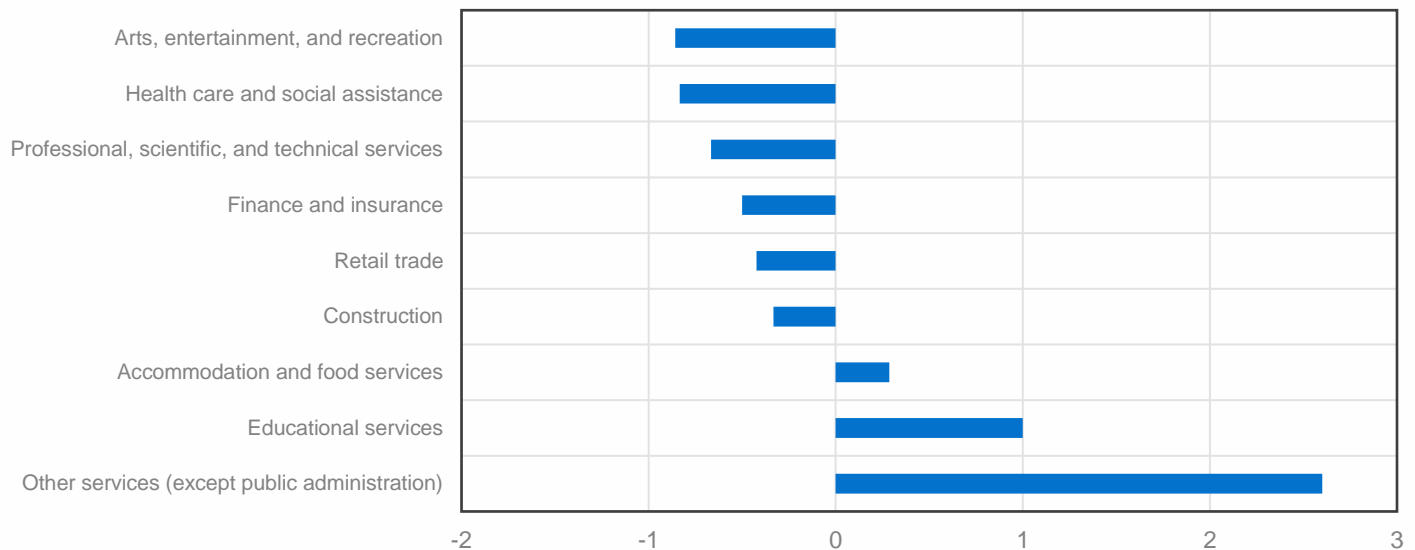


Figure 19 – Business confidence in filling vacancies (Source: Employer survey)

Only businesses in other services, educational services, and accommodation and food services are positive that vacancies will be filled. Every other sector was pessimistic, including large employers such as construction, retail trade, and health care and social assistance.

Among the three sectors with a more positive sentiment, both educational services and other services comprise a small share of the local labour market, so their effects on levels of confidence in Canmore are limited. By contrast, the positivity demonstrated in the accommodation and food services sector is more encouraging for the local labour market.

The degree of certainty that vacancies will be filled may reflect the overall volume of labour shortages at the business itself and the difficulty of finding the skills needed to fill vacant positions. It is therefore unsurprising that accommodation and food services is relatively confident, given that its workforce is highly transient and holds transferable skills. The challenge facing this sector is that worker preferences have changed since COVID, resulting in fewer applicants. In other sectors, the average vacancy is much lower (often just 1–3 vacant positions in total) but they may require a more specialized skill set.

3.2.5 SECTOR-SPECIFIC DRIVERS OF LABOUR SHORTAGES

3.2.5.1 RETAIL TRADE

Many retail businesses expressed low confidence that their vacancies will be filled. Staffing difficulties are driven by low margins and limited capacity to increase salaries, exacerbated further by limited opportunities for tips or gratuities. As a result, businesses find it hard to provide their staff with a salary that is: a) sufficient to secure a sustainable standard of living in Canmore; and b) competitive relative to other sectors (e.g., restaurants and bars).

These factors contribute to higher staff turnover compared to other sectors. During engagement, employers attributed this trend to workers seeking wage increases; however, preferences around scheduling and commuting are other possible contributors. It is also not uncommon for retail staff to hold multiple jobs, which can weigh on their effectiveness and flexibility, and further encourage job switching. Ultimately, this degree of flux can prevent businesses from developing a strong culture and identity.

3.2.5.2 HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The healthcare sector faces multiple challenges:

- Lower skilled and lower paid workers (e.g., porters) do not receive tips or other benefits that might narrow the gap to the living wage;
- Hiring is often governed by collective agreements, which limits employers' scope to compete on salaries;³³
- The scale of the employers (often hundreds of workers in a relatively small community like Canmore) means that shortages are commonplace in the conduct of businesses;
- The niche skills for more specialized occupations can be difficult to source in the local labour market.

Among higher skilled positions, there is a supply deficit in the region, particularly for medical professionals. Shortages in healthcare staff and skills are becoming increasingly common across Alberta, especially in rural areas. Furthermore, provincial and federal regulations can often act as barriers for foreign workers to enter the sector easily. Canmore's healthcare industry suffers the most severe shortages, with a vacancy rate of 23.5%, higher than any other industry in the town.³⁴

In closely related sectors such as childcare, there has been a decline in the number of applicants with the necessary qualifications, resulting in childcare providers hiring staff that have not yet reached proficiency. As childcare providers must comply with provincial standards (e.g., caregiver-to-child ratios), shortages in the sector affect other areas of the economy, as parents who cannot access childcare are limited in their ability to work.

Unfortunately, sourcing immigrant labour to plug labour gaps is not as readily available an option as it can be for other major sectors. International applicants on temporary visas (e.g., Temporary Foreign Worker Program, Working Holiday Visa, etc.) are explicitly excluded from working in the sector until they pass a medical exam. These additional demands imply higher costs and delays that, for applicants that are highly mobile, are often prohibitive given the cost of living in Canmore.

³³ Some private sector franchise operators noted that corporate level decisions made on salary structure severely negate their ability to compete with non-franchise operators in the same sector.

³⁴ Based on Ballard's employer survey

3.2.5.3 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Public sector employers face competition for labour on two fronts—with local private companies who may have greater flexibility regarding wages and benefits, as well as with other public sector employers (i.e., other municipalities) where there may be a lower cost of living. This dual challenge can make it difficult to fill positions and retain staff over the long term. In the case of the Town of Canmore, one of the community's most significant employers, the number of replacement hires in 2022 was more than 135% above its five-year average, signalling the challenges faced in retaining staff.

These dynamics are also borne out by the Town's hiring data, which shows that it takes 165 days to fill a position in the lowest salary range (\$20–23). This period shortens with salary increases in the five lowest bands but lengthens again for higher salary ranges. This trend underlines the difficulties facing the Town in competing with the private sector based on salary alone.³⁵

3.2.5.4 ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICES

Several restaurants and bars have highlighted the effects of labour shortages across multiple service areas. For large-scale employers (e.g., hotels) that require high numbers of seasonal workers across multiple departments (e.g., housekeeping, front-of-house, kitchen), the lack of job applicants affects opening hours, service offerings (e.g., reduced menus), and overall quality of experience.

Given the potential for high compensation in hospitality work, as well as the relatively large number of operators in this sector that offer staff lodgings, businesses are considerably more optimistic. Instead, their challenges are:

1. Ensuring that staff have the requisite technical skills;
2. Developing staff for more senior and managerial roles; and
3. Overcoming demographic pressures and encouraging younger labour market participants to consider hospitality as a viable career path (i.e., not just a summer job).

The pandemic resulted in a widespread loss of skills and managerial experience in the sector—for some businesses, as much as 30% of their most experienced staff have left in the past three years. These managers are not showing signs of returning to hospitality and are less likely to do so in Canmore due to the higher cost of living.

The sector also faces severe demographic challenges as younger Canadians are no longer choosing to enter hospitality in the same numbers, resulting in higher dependence on foreign labour markets to fill this gap. While the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program provides a vital source of labour supply, the costs and delays in application processing mean that it is not a quickly deployed solution. Furthermore, the criteria for applicants often exclude operations that cannot provide year-round employment, which rules out many local businesses.

3.2.5.5 PROFESSIONALS SERVICES

For roles that require unique and specialized skillsets, Canmore's local labour market is often unable to match employer needs, while challenges in securing long-term housing can often limit sourcing these skills from outside the community. Local employers may also experience competition from employers located outside of the community, who can offer competitive wages in communities with lower living expenses.

³⁵ Beyond salaries, the Town of Canmore does offer a competitive package when other factors are considered, including work-life balance, opportunities to gain a diverse range of skills and experiences, and learning and development support.

Barriers to hiring skilled and professional workers are corroborated in survey results. Much like the hiring data from the Town, engagement with the business community reveals that vacancies are concentrated in both lower paying and higher paying positions. This reflects the challenges that employers face when recruiting for higher paying, skilled positions.

3.2.5.6 CONSTRUCTION AND SKILLED TRADES

Employers in the construction and skilled trades industries experience similar barriers to filling labour shortages as those in professional services. The local labour market often does not meet the skills and certification requirements needed from employers in these sectors, while potential employees may choose to work and reside outside of Canmore due to the community's high cost of living.

Shortages of skilled trades workers (e.g., journeyman mechanics, electricians) have affected the local business community. As an example, a limited supply of skilled workers can lead to delays for equipment repairs, impacting business operations. Additionally, a shortage of skilled workers may impact residents in Canmore who are more likely to face long wait times for repair and maintenance work.

3.2.5.7 REGULATED SECTORS

For highly regulated sectors (e.g., cannabis retail), the requirements needed to start working are often prohibitive in a high-cost location such as Canmore. For example, securing a background check and attaining the Qualified Cannabis Worker (QCW) designation can take multiple weeks, with these processes even longer for non-Canadians and those arriving on temporary visas. Given that workers have options to move elsewhere or find another job more quickly in the current environment, these delays reduce the available pool of labour significantly.

3.2.6 SALARIES AND LABOUR SHORTAGES

While labour shortages are widespread across sectors and positions, salary offerings appear to be a determining factor, with shortages most concentrated in businesses with lower-paying (i.e., \$15–20 per hour) positions and higher-paying (\$30+) positions (Figure 20).

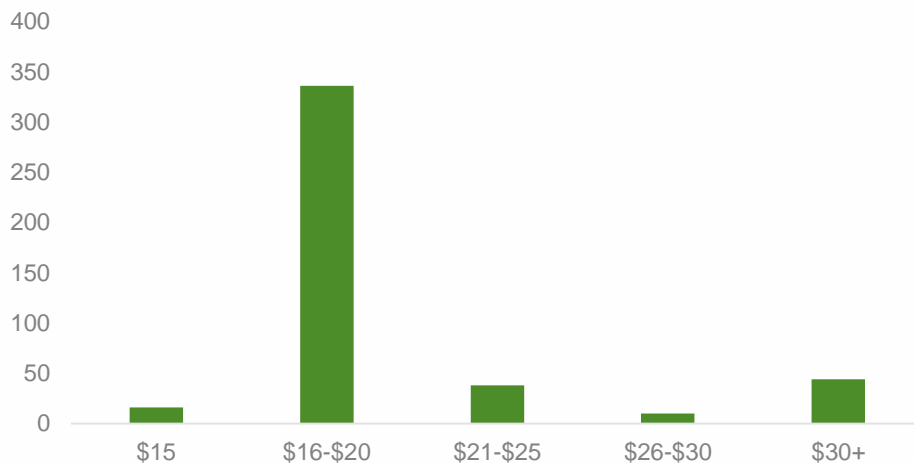


Figure 20 – Number of vacancies, by starting salary (Source: Employers survey)

Unsurprisingly, lower-paying positions are unlikely to attract the same number of applications as higher-paying ones; however, even higher paying positions (i.e., over \$30 per hour) seem to have difficulties filling vacancies. Based on both current economic trends and engagement with both employers and labour market participants, this dynamic reflects the fact that:

- Net pay for many high earners in the community is significantly lower than in other communities, which incentivizes qualified staff to relocate elsewhere.
- Higher earners are likely to be older and looking to purchase property, expand their families, and start saving for retirement. Canmore’s high cost of living and expensive real estate market are prohibitive barriers to achieving these goals for many workers.
- Higher earners are likely to be closer to retirement. These vacancies could become structural as a greater proportion of Canmore’s labour market leaves their prime working years.

Figure 21 shows the composition of Canmore’s economy according to the starting salaries offered by employers, with an overwhelming proportion concentrated around the \$16–20 mark, while Figure 22 shows the minimum salary that labour market participants responding to our survey would accept. The contrast in expectations between employers and employees is striking—only 7.6% of the employers included as part of our engagement stated that the average starting salary they offer is over \$30 per hour, whereas almost half (49.9%) of labour market participants expect a salary of at least \$30 per hour.

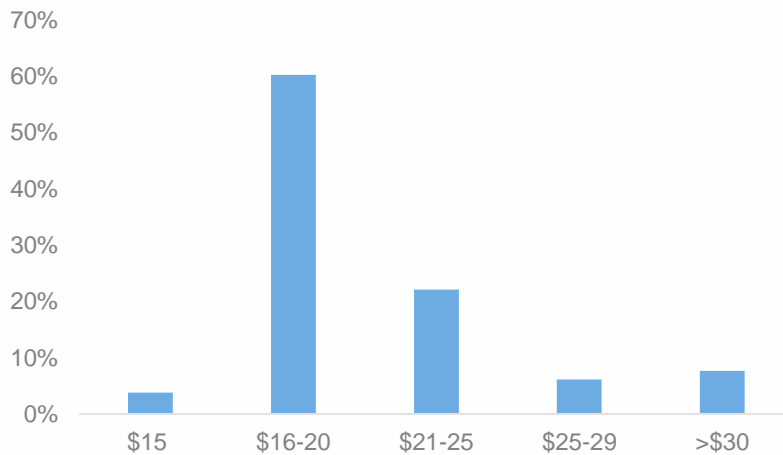


Figure 21 - Average salary offered by Canmore's employers (Source: Employers survey)

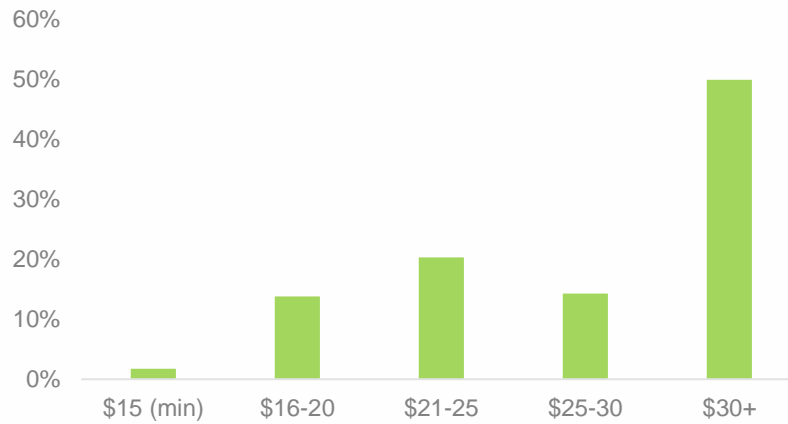


Figure 22 - Expectations of labour market participants (Source: Labour market survey)

The disparity may be driven in part by the questions posed—whereas employers were asked about starting wages, respondents to the labour market survey may already receive considerably higher salaries. To better contextualize these dynamics, Figure 23 reviews salaries according to position. As expected, lower incomes are skewed to entry level positions, while more senior and technical positions command higher earnings. However, some 40% of senior level positions are only compensated within the \$21—30 range, suggesting a potential expectation gap between businesses and labour market participants.

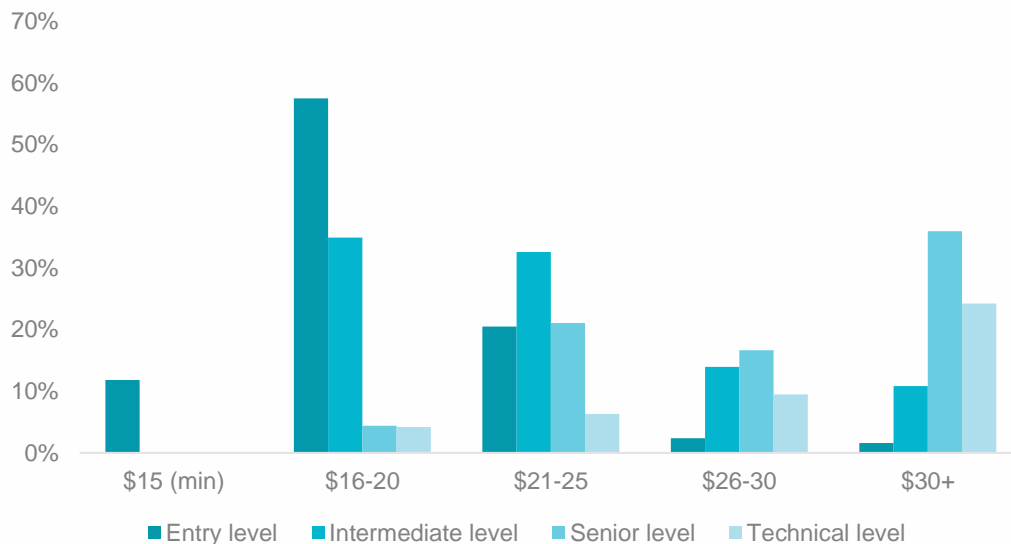


Figure 23 - Salaries according to position (Source: Employers survey)

During engagement, businesses signalled that they have had to offer a more competitive salary and benefits structure in recent years. Many of them offer additional incentives (e.g., retention bonuses, healthcare, paid tuition for professional development, etc.) that are not easily captured in a wage analysis. As with salaries, employers differentiate across their workforce in how to allocate these benefits. For example, because they receive fewer tips and gratuities, staff accommodation is often reserved for back-of-house staff in restaurants or for those working in housekeeping.

3.2.7 BARRIERS TO WORKING IN CANMORE

During engagement, labour market participants were asked about barriers encountered when applying for and accepting work within the area, as well as the factors influencing their decision to stay in Canmore long-term (Figure 24 and Figure 25).

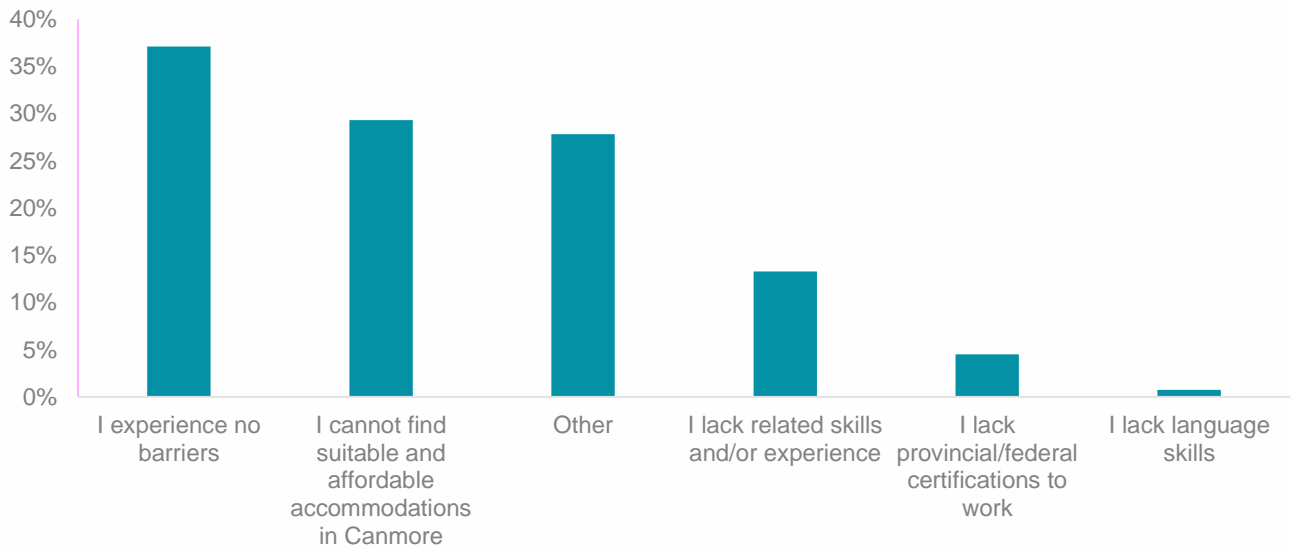


Figure 24 - Barriers when applying for jobs (Source: Labour market participant survey)³⁶

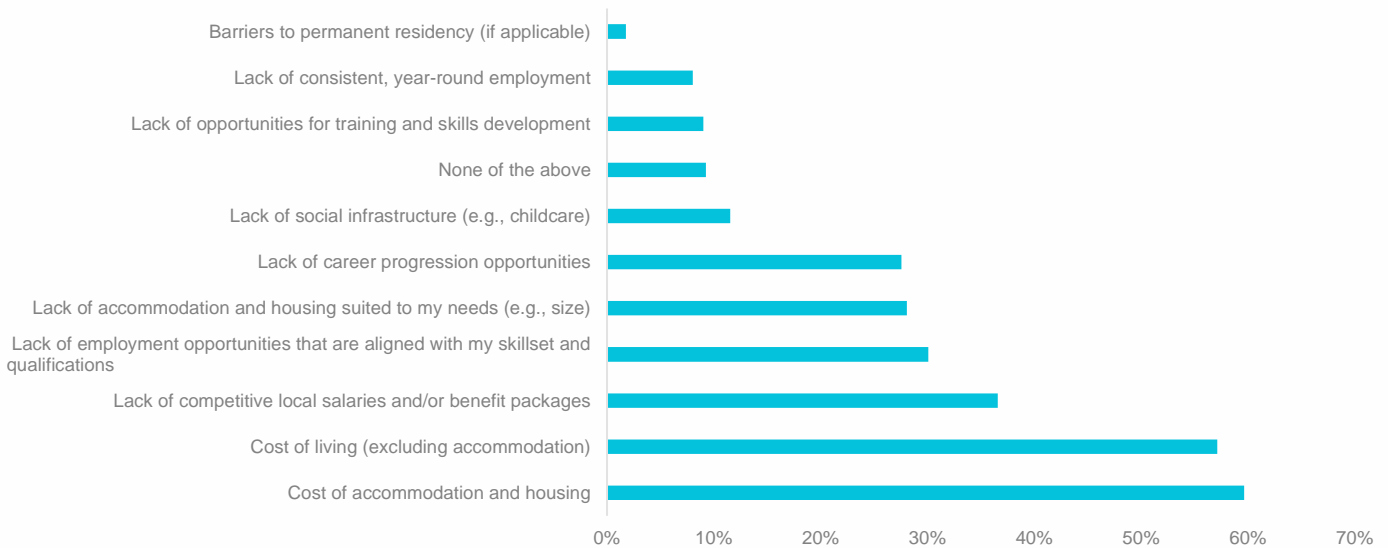


Figure 25 - Barriers to remaining in Canmore long term (Source: Labour market participant survey)³⁷

³⁶ Participants were asked to select all applicable barriers that they face individually, from a list of potential barriers. While their answers are not ranked by any metric, the frequency of an option being selected speaks to how widespread this issue is within Canmore.

³⁷ Participants were asked to select all applicable barriers that they face individually, from a list of potential barriers. While their answers are not ranked by any metric, the frequency of an option being selected speaks to how widespread this issue is within Canmore.

The cost of accommodation and general living expenses were most frequently identified as barriers to remaining in the community. Issues in these areas are complex, driving discussions in many corners of the community. They require a mixture of short- and long-term solutions that extend beyond the scope of a labour market report and must include leadership from additional stakeholder groups not included in this report. While this document does consider matters related to affordability and housing (see Sections 11 and 12 respectively), the discussion and associated recommendations are limited to potential impacts on labour market recruitment and retention.

Beyond those two dominant discussions, the engagement process identified several barriers to long-term employment where collaborative action involving diverse local stakeholders with an interest in labour market improvements could yield positive results. Figure 25 suggests a second tier of issues with direct impacts on employee recruitment and retention, with adequate salaries, appropriate employment opportunities, and paths for career progression cited by between 100 and 150 respondents.

3.3 Summary

Based on the engagement and economic analysis above, the following observations summarize the current state of Canmore's labour market, as well as its outlook:

- Total vacancies in Canmore fall within the range of 600–650 positions at the time of this report and could remain in this range until at least 2025 without collaborative action by leading stakeholders (i.e., the Town, local organizations, and businesses).
- Vacancies are most common in consumer-oriented sectors, especially in those impacted by seasonal variation in demand. To cope with staff shortages, businesses are cutting back on opening hours and reducing services.
- There is a high degree of competition for the existing talent in the Canmore labour pool. Businesses that are successful in retaining existing staff often do so by outlining advancement opportunities, building a strong workplace culture, and offering competitive salaries, benefits, and housing.
- Often the businesses who are successful in developing these areas are larger companies with the capacity to invest more time and resources. Canmore's small and medium businesses aspire to pursue similar strategies but may require guidance and resource supports to achieve this outcome.
- Similarly, long-term strategic planning for local businesses becomes a secondary priority when dealing with the stresses created by labour shortages. Cycles of hiring and training take time and attention from the other aspects of business management, and Canmore's businesses are eager to work towards sustainable solutions to the community's labour challenges.
- Businesses in the accommodation and food services sector are most optimistic about their ability to fill vacancies, with several competitive advantages providing this industry with a high degree of flexibility.
- However, other industries expressed worries around hiring prospects—some compete with accommodations and food services for job candidates with similar profiles (e.g., retail), while others are searching for new hires with specialized skill sets.

- Labour shortages are most common in the lowest wage ranges, but a small concentration of vacancies is also evident in the highest (<\$30/hour) bracket, indicating demand for both entry level and experienced workers within the local labour market.
- Salary expectations exceed what employers feel able to provide at present, given the pressures on their finances in the current economy; however, Canmore's local businesses endeavour to offer strong benefits packages where possible to lower the cost of living and support a healthy work-life balance for their staff.
- Complex issues affecting many aspects of community life—namely, housing availability and the cost of living—are acknowledged as critical labour-adjacent barriers affecting sustainable employment in Canmore. The Town, as well as other key stakeholders with focuses extending beyond economic development, is actively working to alleviate these pressures through multiple initiatives.
- Engagement identified other barriers directly related to business and labour that can be more readily addressed through collaborative action involving businesses, as well as the organizations who liaise with and actively support them (e.g., the Town, the Chamber, BOWDA, the Downtown BIA, the JRC, Tourism Canmore Kananaskis).

4 Overview of Key Themes: Challenges and Collaborative Solutions

Having summarized the current state of Canmore's economy based on research and engagement, the remainder of this document addresses critical barriers to labour recruitment and retention in the community and offers recommendations for their mitigation. It balances the following perspectives: the needs of business owners (e.g., skills, appropriate staffing levels, recruitment channels, etc.) as they look to grow their operations in Canmore; and the needs of labour market participants (e.g., salaries, accommodation, working hours, etc.) who aspire to live and work in Canmore.

Analysis suggests that Canmore's economy is undergoing a gradual shift towards more sustainable year-round employment, as opposed to seasonal labour demand. However, Canmore has a smaller pool of job candidates compared to larger urban centres, making it harder to hire individuals with appropriate experience as well as to identify high performing individuals for managerial positions. As competition for labour increases, it will be necessary for all stakeholders (i.e., The Town, local businesses, representative organizations) to take a collaborative, proactive, and innovative approach in which Canmore considers itself as a competitor with the rest of Western Canada.

The following sections provide a possible path forward, inviting all interested groups to play their part in leading sustainable and impactful change. They first focus on those areas where the business community can provide both leadership and support (i.e., training, hiring, sourcing skills, workplace culture, technology solutions), before addressing larger systemic challenges where ongoing initiatives involving cross-community efforts are already in motion (e.g., social infrastructure, the cost of living, housing).

Each discussion includes a series of recommendations, as well as implementation guidelines. Each recommendation also includes grades for potential impact, estimated financial cost and timeline.

It is important to note that for several organizations assigned to tasks, either as leads or key stakeholders, capacity will be a significant limiting factor. Capacity limits include limited human resources, limited budgets, and limited expertise.

The assignments provided have been based on best knowledge and fit for task completion. However, organizations assigned to recommendations will need to strategize internally to determine prioritization of tasks, budgets, and timelines. This may require direction from associated boards or other leadership groups. Additionally, larger coordination between all relevant stakeholders in Canmore is required to strategically determine how to best complete recommended actions between all available capacities.

The grades for potential impact, estimated financial cost, and timeline are provided on the next page. Please note that for financial cost, the grading is relative and assigned organizations will need to develop budget plans based on prioritization of tasks; accessing funding or grants may also be required.

4.1 Recommendation Grading Guide

- Potential Impact:
 - Small: Will not individually affect the labour market.
 - Moderate: Will individually have some impact on the labour market.
 - Large: Will individually have notable / significant impact on the labour market.
- Estimated Financial Cost:
 - Low: Is expected to cost less than \$30,000.³⁸
 - Medium: Is expected to cost between \$30,000–\$350,000.³⁹
 - High: Is expected to cost more than \$350,000.⁴⁰
- Timeline:
 - Short: Can be achieved within 12 months.
 - Medium: Can be achieved within 1–2 years.
 - Long: Can be achieved within 2–5 years.

³⁸ E.g. administrative costs, consulting costs, project planning costs, etc.

³⁹ E.g. 2 -3 staff salaries, 1–2 year vendor contract, small capital costs, etc.

⁴⁰ On average, costs above \$1.4M for the Town of Canmore will require budget restructuring.

5 Training and Employee Development

Offering upskilling and training opportunities to employees in an affordable way is essential to boosting skills and experience in the workforce. Training and employee development programs can improve retention, reduce the amount of time spent on recruiting and training new hires, and ensure that employees have the skills necessary to take on new or additional tasks.

By improving the range of skills development programs available locally, the community can increase the capabilities of the workforce, create more advancement opportunities for employees, and remove barriers for new businesses to enter the Canmore market.

5.1 Current Dynamics and Needs

Currently many local employers are experiencing skills shortages, with 39% of businesses feeling that new hires are not job-ready and need some sort of training or certification. However, research and engagement identified relatively few acute skill deficits in the local labour pool that require formal training; rather, many of the skills gaps identified can be addressed in-house and on-the-job. In many cases, technical skills are acquired through work experience, while the proximity to learning centres in Calgary opens access to specialized, formal training outside the community. Even in sectors such as childcare, which is seeing a large need for qualified staff, most credentials can be acquired online, and practicums are delivered in-person at the childcare facilities in Canmore.

However, these dynamics are not uniform across the business community and labour market:

- Employers in the tourism-adjacent sectors were most likely to respond that their employees were job-ready (77%), reflecting the relatively low barriers to entry for most positions in the sector (e.g., servers, guides, housekeepers, etc.).
- Employers in the professional services sector were least likely to say that their hires are job-ready (40%).
- Employers in skilled trades (67%) and professional services (50%) sectors were most likely to respond that their new hires needed skills training to reach industry standards (e.g., certification), reflecting the fact that these positions are often specialized in nature.

While many firms prefer to do their own training, particularly as it relates to company-specific procedures (e.g., customer service, post-of-sale, etc.), we find that in construction and hospitality industries, employers' benefit from a centralized approach to training delivery:

- **Construction:** Skilled trades in the construction sector are in high demand in Canmore, with the lack of labour supply resulting in increased equipment repairs and project delays. Encouragement should be given to students who are already living in the community to pursue qualifications in construction-related sectors—for example, through apprenticeship training.⁴¹

⁴¹ Construction will also be impacted by the recent provincial support for trades (<https://globalnews.ca/news/9984803/alberta-government-2000-trade-apprenticeship-spots/>).

- **Accommodation & food services:** Some employers in the hospitality industry noted the need for Red Seal chefs and culinary arts training, as well as potential small-scale training programs for specific hospitality skills such as customer service, front-of-house service and procedures, food hygiene, soft skills, and language. There appears to be a strong uptake of basics in hospitality training provided by Tourism Canmore Kananaskis, which bodes well for demand for potential future programs.

Additionally, following the large exodus from the hospitality sector that took place during the pandemic period, companies would like to identify staff members with management potential and place them on a path for professional development. During engagement, they highlighted the need for specialized training in:

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI);
- Indigenous relations;
- Job specific software; and
- Strategic management.

As previously noted, employers in skilled trades and professional services industries are the most affected by skills shortages and are most likely to require skills training. This need will likely intensify as Canmore continues to attract businesses in these industries. Expanding training and skills development opportunities for the community will be key to filling vacancies in the medium-to-long term. Areas for potential training programs identified during engagement include:

- Tourism management training;
- Machine operating and advanced driving license courses;
- Soft skills training, which can be applied in various professional environments;
- Culinary and Red Seal training.

While recognizing the benefits of training and development programs, employers also repeatedly voice concerns about capacity to support such efforts. A major challenge that businesses are facing is finding the time and resources to allow their staff to train during work hours, especially given that they are already facing shortages during peak seasons. Simultaneously, for workers juggling two to three jobs it is difficult to make time for training opportunities.

Training and development programs are likely to be more valued in skilled trades and professional services compared to other industries. More than other sectors, employers in the professional services industry (38%) found that providing professional development and on-the-job training was effective in recruiting and retaining workers. Certifications add more skills directly to workers' earning potential and are more often rewarded with higher pay and advancement in these industries.

Management training is highly desired across most industries by both employers, who are experiencing a shortage of skilled managers, and employees, who value the opportunity for advancement to managerial roles. However, in the hospitality sector specifically, it can be difficult to commit employees to training programs, especially if workers do not see the direct benefit.

The highly transient nature of the labour force also creates concerns that employees will leave after they acquire new skills, resulting in a loss to the business. These concerns are especially prevalent among small employers; for a business employing five workers, losing even one worker is the equivalent of losing 20% of the workforce. However, absence of appropriate training may negatively affect the quality of services and the productivity of workers, with subsequent risks to the reputation and profitability of these businesses.

5.2 Current Providers

These results point toward a gap in the training and development courses offered in Canmore. There are local resources available for skills training and certifications, however, these are private options that are usually targeted towards businesses.

There are also some local certification providers, such as Pure Mountain Medic who provide first aid and safety training in the Bow Valley. Similarly, there are ample online resources for WHMIS training, ProServe certifications, and more that can be completed remotely.

However, employers report that local courses do not meet their training needs. There are cases where employers are having to send workers to Calgary or Cochrane for food safety courses and sometimes choose to provide their own customer service skills courses, reporting that the courses locally offered are insufficient and do not adequately satisfy the needs of employers.

The Town has existing partnerships with external organizations such as Business Link to deliver training programs that promote entrepreneurship and business growth. These partnerships can be further expanded on to bring a wider range of training programs to the community.

The closure of the Bow Valley College Canmore campus in 2020 played a significant role in the decrease in training infrastructure and opportunities in the town. Reduced funding from the provincial government, combined with the inability to service the educational needs in Canmore,⁴² reduced the viability of the campus. Closure has created a gap in the market for a training services provider that can bring relevant services to the town.

5.3 Opportunities

As Canmore looks to diversify its local economy and attract stable, year-round industries, future training needs may differ from those known at present. As there currently appears to be some misalignment between training programs offered and those required, as well as the challenges between online and in-person formats, a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) would benefit Canmore.

Developing a periodic TNA process for Canmore with business input would involve surveys of businesses to identify specific training needs, number of staff requiring training, re-training opportunities for individuals with transferable backgrounds, frequency of training, etc. This process would help develop a training calendar informed by current and evolving needs. Efforts like this can create longer term training programs that consistently support career path development.

Barriers to accessing training programs signal the need for training supports that are targeted and delivered appropriately for the labour force. Training programs are common in several of Canmore's larger organizations and contribute positively to staff retention. Tourism Canmore Kananaskis' recently launched Peaks Academy signals a proactive step in skill development and staff retention efforts. Further collaboration among members of the Canmore Business Alliance could make a major contribution to resolving labour shortages through upskilling. Providing local businesses with a list of online resources that are related to major industries can inform employers of the many training supports available to them.

⁴² As noted by the Dean of Regional Stewardship, Leah Wack, in 2020.

This collaboration can also be undertaken with a long-term strategic lens. Training and developing the local population can help build skills within the town and ease the pressure on businesses to rely on foreign labour. To create more buy-in, facilitating partnerships between external educational institutes and the local high school can help promote training programs in fields such as skilled professions and introduce pathways to different trades programs and certifications for Canmore youth.

Opportunities exist to provide training and skills development through partnerships with academic institutions. Many institutes offer remote courses and certification courses in industries where local training programs are not provided (e.g., food safety). The American Hotel and Lodging Education Institute, for example, offers several affordable online courses for workers in the hospitality industry that can be completed at one's own pace. These courses allow for flexibility and access to resources for hospitality workers in the town.

Additionally, the Job Resource Centre offers funding supports for certifications and training (through the Exposure Courses program⁴³), targeting unemployed and underemployed jobseekers. This funding helps supports training needs and local programs expanding these initiatives would have significant effect in filling existing gaps.

Training and development can also be pursued by employers through registration in the Workplace Inclusion Charter (WIC). Businesses who take part in the WIC have access to free resources to help build an inclusive workplace and are provided with material that can be shared with employees to encourage interpersonal skills development.

Employers also have access to the Canada Alberta Job Grant Program, where employers can have 2/3rds of their training costs covered for up to \$10,000 per worker, for training that is at minimum three-days long.⁴⁴ Stakeholders in the town also have the option to partner with external workforce development service providers who can set up local training facilities and access external grants and funding to create and deliver training programs for the local population. Such programs can be tailored to accommodate barriered and precariously housed individuals, by partnering with external training service providers, using external funding from sources such as the Alberta at Work from the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, and providing additional supports such as living expenses, professional services, and work gear.

5.4 Recommendations

These recommendations are geared towards creating a well-informed, skilled, and adaptable workforce that can contribute to the economic growth and sustainability of Canmore. By investing in training and development, Canmore can enhance the capability of its workforce, attract new talent, and retain existing skilled workers, which in turn will benefit the local economy.

⁴³ <https://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/AWonline/ETS/4343.html>

⁴⁴ The Canada Alberta Jobs Grant requires employers to contribute 1/3rd of training costs for existing employees, and maximum program contribution is capped at \$10,000 per trainee. For the hiring and training of an unemployed Albertan, up to 100% of training costs could be covered, up to \$15,000 per trainee. More information on the funding is available here: <https://www.alberta.ca/canada-alberta-job-grant>

Recommendation 1: Create a dedicated webpage with a list of available online training resources for workers and employers in the town to access.

- Create a webpage on the Job Resource Centre with the purpose of sharing online training resources for both workers and employers to access, including but not limited to:
 - Courses from the American Hotel and Lodging Education Institute Training Programs that target key skills and training requirements in Hospitality.
 - Online courses and certifications offered by colleges and other post-secondary educational institutes that are valuable to employers.
 - Online dual credit courses for high school students.
 - Online certifications that are valuable for employers.
- Work with industry groups to compile a list of resources that can best serve employers' training needs to also be accessible through the town website.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Town of Canmore, Job Resource Centre, Tourism Canmore Kananaskis
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 2: Undertake initiatives to promote and create awareness about the existing training facilities and educational programs available regionally in Bow Valley.

- Launch targeted information campaigns using local media, social media, and community events to promote existing training facilities and programs.
 - Distribute informational brochures, flyers, and maintain an updated web portal with information on available training programs, schedules, and enrollment procedures.
- Partner with regional training facilities to host open houses, workshops, and educational fairs showcasing the available training programs and facilities. Invite community members to participate in free trial classes, interact with instructors, and learn about the benefits of enrolling in the offered programs.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Town of Canmore, Educational Institutions
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 3: Undertake a comprehensive training needs assessment to understand the current and future training and development needs in Canmore, to better align with the economic development goals.

- Hire or collaborate with experts in training and development, and local economic development to design a comprehensive Training Needs Assessment (TNA). This could include defining the scope, methodology, and the key sectors to be assessed.
- Engage with local businesses, educational institutions, industry associations, and other stakeholders to collect data on current training programs, skill gaps, and future training needs. Utilize surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gather insights.
- Analyze the collected data to identify the key training needs, skill gaps, and opportunities for training program development. Develop a detailed report summarizing the findings, recommendations for training program development, and strategies to align training with Canmore’s economic development goals.
- Share the TNA report with stakeholders, solicit feedback, and organize forums or workshops to discuss the findings and recommendations.
 - This step will help in refining the recommendations and ensuring buy-in from local businesses and educational institutions.
- Create a process for periodic review and collection of information to stay up to date on the town’s training needs.

Lead	Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 4: Collaborate with local educational institutions and industry associations to develop training programs tailored to Canmore’s economic development goals.

- Initiate dialogues with local educational institutions, industry associations, and businesses to identify the specific training needs that support Canmore’s economic development goals.
- Collaborate on designing curriculum for training programs (including scholarships) that address identified skills gaps and are tailored to the unique requirements of Canmore’s job market.⁴⁵
- Launch awareness campaigns to promote the new training programs among local businesses and prospective students and facilitate easy enrollment and access to these programs.
- Establish a continuous dialogue between the Town of Canmore, local businesses, and training providers to ensure alignment of training programs with economic development goals.
- Periodically develop and publish reports on the skills demand in Canmore, highlighting the sectors with significant skills gaps and the emerging industries. These reports can serve as a guide for educational institutions to tailor their training programs and for individuals and employers to make informed decisions regarding training and development.

Lead	Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce
Key Stakeholders	Town of Canmore, Local School Districts, Educational Institutions
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

⁴⁵ This could be modeled after SAIT’s recent partnership with private industry: <https://www.sait.ca/news/2022/10/15-million-province-wide-investment-campaign-announced-to-fund-scholarships-for-careers-in-construction>

Recommendation 5: Invite an external workforce development and training service provider to bring tailored training programs, infrastructure, and external workforce development funding resources to Canmore.

- Create a Request for Proposal for an external training service provider to set up a training centre in the town.
- Work with the external partner to gather information on training needs and create customized in-person training programs to meet Canmore’s skills demand. This initiative can bring vital training to the town in fields such as:
 - Programs in skilled trades that require in-person delivery (e.g., Red Seal chef training, construction, machine operating, etc.)
 - Management training through courses that are better facilitated in-person in the town, saving on the costs of sending workers to Calgary or elsewhere to obtain this training.
- Work with the external partner to secure provincial and federal funding through programs such as the Canada Alberta Job Grant (that will partly cover training costs for businesses that utilize these programs).
 - For training less than two weeks in long, the Job Resource Centre can help to fund 90% of an individual’s training up to a maximum of \$2,500.
- Work with the external partner to explore funding opportunities with the Ministry of Seniors, Community, and Social Services for training programs accommodating barriered individuals in the town.

Lead	Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance, Job Resource Centre
Potential Impact	Large
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 6: Re-engage the business community with lunch and learn sessions aimed at enhancing managerial capabilities and industry-specific knowledge.

- Identify key topics and skilled facilitators for the sessions, and schedule them at convenient times for business owners and managers.
 - Topics could range from effective management practices, latest industry trends, to technological advancements pertinent to Canmore’s business landscape.
- Promote the lunch and learn sessions through various channels such as local business associations, social media, and the town’s website. Offer a simple registration process to encourage participation.
- Collect feedback from participants after each session to understand the effectiveness and relevance of the content.
 - Use the feedback for continuous improvement of future sessions, ensuring they remain beneficial and engaging for the attendees.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short (ongoing initiative)

Recommendation 7: Enhance collaboration between local businesses and high schools to foster work experience opportunities and promote the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) as well as other programs to better prepare students for the workforce.

- Form a committee comprising representatives from local businesses, high schools, and possibly local government to coordinate efforts in promoting work experience and RAP.
 - This committee should work on creating structured programs and events to connect students with local businesses.
- Conduct awareness campaigns within high schools to educate students about the benefits of work experience and RAP.
 - Invite local trades journeymen to promote their fields and inform students of the opportunities available in Canmore.
 - Facilitate a list of journeymen who are willing to take on students.
 - Connect interested students to financial resources such as the Apprenticeship Incentive Grant (AIG), the Apprenticeship Completion Grant (ACG), and the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Scholarships.
- Engage with local businesses to increase awareness about the advantages of participating in such programs, which could include fresh perspectives, potential future employees, and community engagement.
- Work with educational institutions and local businesses to develop structured work experience and apprenticeship programs that provide meaningful experiences for students while adding value to local businesses.
 - Include setting up mentorship programs, internship opportunities, or project-based assignments.
- Implement a system to monitor the progress of these partnerships, collect feedback from both students and businesses, and make necessary adjustments to improve the effectiveness and impact of the work experience and apprenticeship programs over time.
- Facilitate a partnership between the high school and post-secondary educational institutes such as SAIT to bring in-person dual credit programs in key fields (e.g., culinary training) to Canmore through the high school.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Local School Districts, Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce, Educational Institutions
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 8: Encourage businesses to proactively tap into available resources and funding opportunities to address their specific training needs.

- Register for the Workplace Inclusion Charter to access a no-cost toolkit and recognition to create more inclusive workplaces.
- Join the 2023 Bow Valley Workplace Inclusion Charter.⁴⁶
- Register and apply for the Canada Alberta Job Grant to partially cover training costs up to \$10,000 per worker.
- Utilize training opportunities such as Peaks Academy to ensure staff have the skills needed for work.

Lead	Local Businesses
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

⁴⁶ [Bow Valley Workplace Inclusion Charter](#)

Recommendation 9: Work with First Nations partners to access funding for dedicated Alberta First Nations Training to Employment Program.

- Engage with collaborative networks such as Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) and Circle for Aboriginal Relations (CFAR).
- Invite a First Nations Band, Treaty Council or Tribal Organization, to initiate a First Nations Training to Employment Program project.
- Partner with an employer and service provider to create training programs.
- Apply for funding through the Alberta First Nations Training to Employment Program (FNTEP).

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Town of Canmore, Local Businesses
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 10: Share information on grant programs or subsidization of training opportunities to assist eligible businesses in covering the costs of short-term training programs, enhancing the skill set of their workforce and thereby contributing to the economic development of Canmore.

- Share information via newsletters and emails about upcoming and new funding opportunities that are relevant for employee training.
- Launch an awareness and outreach campaign to inform local businesses about the availability of the Business Benefits Finder⁴⁷, the various benefits of the tool, and how to use it.

Lead	Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance, Educational Institutions
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

⁴⁷ https://innovation.ised-isde.canada.ca/innovation/s/?language=en_CA

6 Improving Hiring Processes

The hiring process, defined as the process of identifying, communicating, attracting, and securing labour needs, plays an important role in maintaining a healthy supply of labour. At the firm level, understanding the target talent pool and tailoring job openings according to their characteristics bolsters the calibre of applicants and can ease recruitment challenges. On the community level, supporting both employers and job searchers in the hiring process can increase job-matching efficiency in a tight labour market environment.

This section will present the findings from our engagement with employers and labour market participants and discuss how representative organizations and employers can play a role in improving hiring processes in Canmore.

6.1 Current Trends and Practices

When survey respondents were asked what their primary channels for recruitment and job seeking were, both employers and workers reported different recruitment methods at similar levels. Figure 26 shows that among all respondents, online job boards, local job boards, and referrals were used most often.

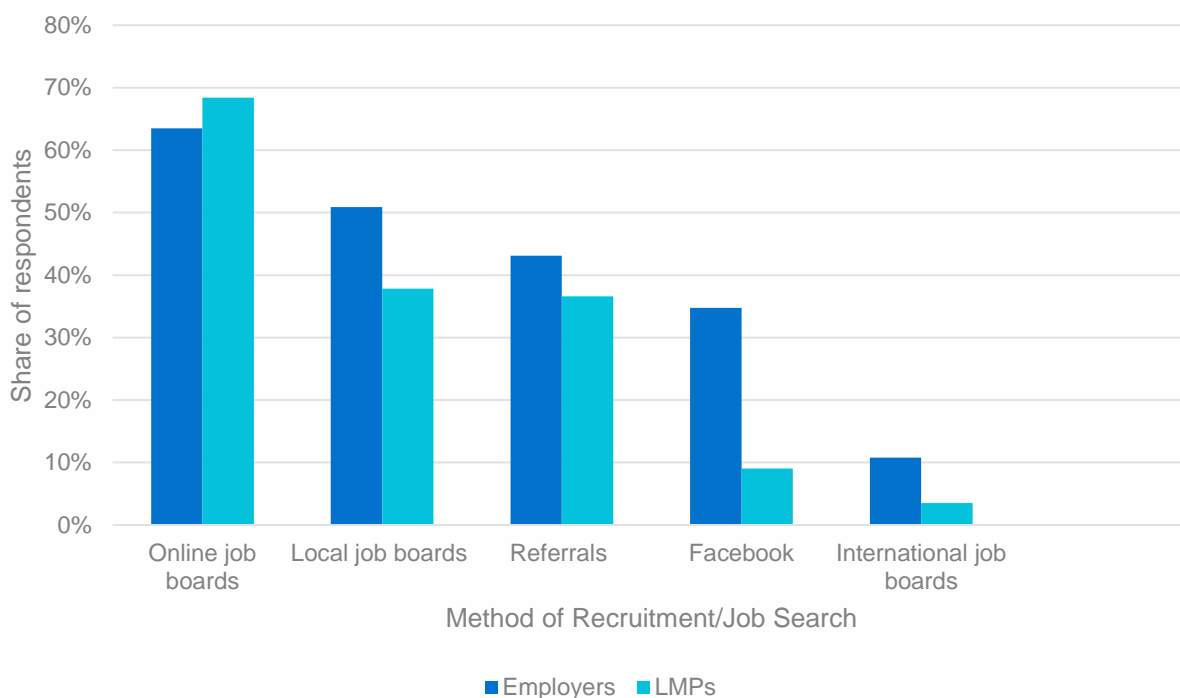


Figure 26 - Recruiting platforms and spaces, from most to least frequently used (Source: Employer survey, labour market participant survey)

While both groups used online job boards at the highest rate, both expressed dissatisfactions in using those platforms. Employers found that although online platforms attract the greatest quantity of applications, this number falls significantly when only high-quality or realistic applications are considered. Businesses report spending a great amount of time reading through applications that are not ideal for their vacancies. Also, even if a potential hire is found, they often come from outside the community, which can result in delayed start dates and issues related to securing accommodation and work permits. If a qualified applicant meets these criteria, multiple employers in the same sector compete to hire them.

Workers noted that although online job boards had advantages like storing resumes and personal information for ease of applying, they experienced delayed responses from recruiters or receiving no response at all.

Reported experiences with the Banff Canmore Job Resource Centre (JRC) are mixed, although the fact that these applicants are usually based in the community (or elsewhere in the Bow Valley) provides them with a considerable advantage. Furthermore, while employers expressed caution regarding the suitability of these candidates for higher-tier positions, they were generally seen as a good fit for various entry-level positions. It is important to note that some candidates, such as for higher-tier positions, may not disclose the assistance they may have received through various agencies.

Among workers the JRC is seen as a strong resource to support various aspects of the job seeking process such as writing resumes, helping individuals find the right job to fit their skillset, and hosting job fairs. Many respondents noted positive interactions with JRC staff. However, several workers expressed similar sentiment as employers regarding the JRC when it comes to higher-tier positions. There is also an identified gap in its support for out-of-town job searchers, and it isn't clear whether some supports are available virtually or not.

Almost uniformly, employers and workers have expressed a preference for hiring and looking for positions based on word-of-mouth or referrals from others whose opinions they trust. Applicants identified through these processes often live in the community and have their housing secured. Being known within the community, available to start immediately, and less likely to leave at the end of the season were all reasons employers favoured this method of recruitment.

However, without enough applicants in Canmore who fit this profile, it remains necessary to hire using other promotional spaces. Workers have been able to find success through referrals, with many stating that Canmore's labour market functions according to "who you know". These dynamics are especially prevalent among immigrant communities, with employers often reaching out to their employees to source more workers from the same network. However, this can create an obstacle for out-of-town job searchers who do not have access to local networks to find openings in the community.

It should be noted that there are different channels used to target different segments of the labour market. For example, large employers are more likely to use international labour as they have greater access to the Temporary Foreign Worker program. Smaller businesses, on the other hand, have noted that the costs of accessing foreign workers (including processing fees, airfares, accommodation) are prohibitive, especially if using a lawyer or consultant to assist with this process (for further discussion, see Section 7 below).

Different sectors hire differently as well. For example, businesses operating in professional services or technology are more likely to use LinkedIn or similar platforms, especially if they are not confident that they can source the required skills locally. In the case of operators in accommodation and food services or retail, they do not have as great a need for specialized skill sets and as such advertise with the JRC or other local channels.

Employers were also asked what types of barriers they usually faced when recruiting employees to fill a vacancy. Figure 27 shows that all sectors struggle to find sufficiently skilled applicants, especially construction, with 80% of employers in the sector reporting it as a barrier to recruitment. Retail trade shows a similar trend, with a high share of employers reporting a lack of sufficiently skilled applicants and experiencing shortages the most at the intermediate level. This view is in line with the fact that most employers in the sector are recruiting for intermediate level positions, as seen in Figure 28 signalling a skills gap in the community.

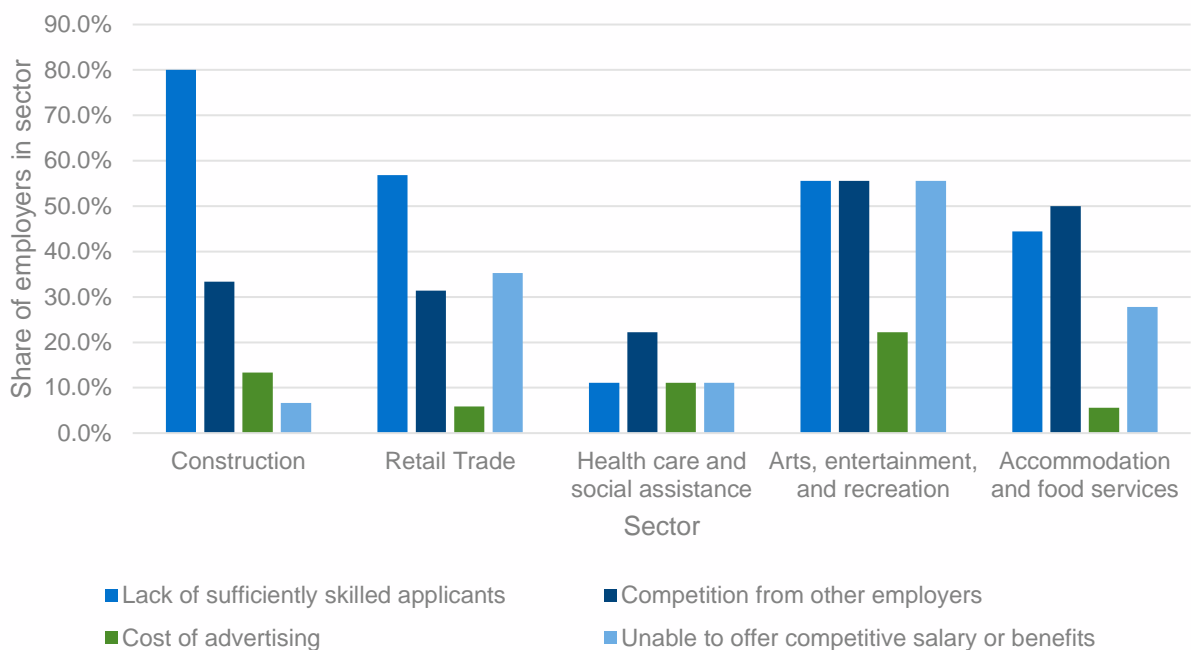


Figure 27 - Hiring process barriers to recruitment for employers by sector (Source: Employer survey)

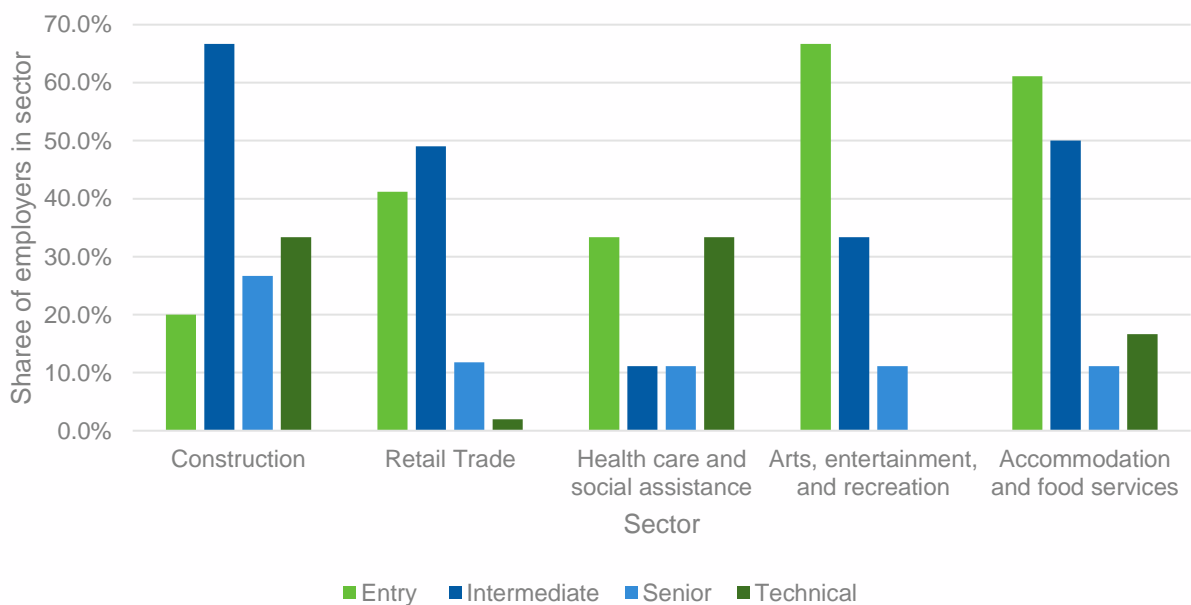


Figure 28 - Skill level at which shortages are most acute by sector (Source: Employer survey)

Across all businesses, shortages at the entry and intermediate level were reported at the highest rates at 41% and 46% respectively, providing the JRC an opportunity to target those gaps to help ease labour market vacancies in the community.

6.2 Opportunities

Regarding hiring processes, several best practices exist, such as a comprehensive applicant tracking system to create and maintain a talent pool. As a single applicant is most likely to be qualified for multiple positions, having the ability to track all applications allows for better recommendations to suitable employers. Tracking applicants would also allow for the collection of longitudinal data on an applicant's path to securing a job and learning what methods work for recruitment. Lastly, this system also increases accessibility and convenience for job seekers.

As discussed above, a gap identified in current hiring processes is the inaccessibility of hiring portals to out-of-town job searchers. To address this gap, resources currently offered on an in-person basis should be made available in a remote setting. As an example, job fairs could attract more candidates with a virtual component. Direct hiring from outside the community can also assist in addressing specific sector shortages. Engaging in these settings brings more exposure for employers, growing a larger pool of job candidates. Furthermore, virtual interviews would also make out-of-town hiring more accessible.

Another best practice could include procuring a HR consultant who can provide expert guidance and support to better serve job searchers and employers. This resource could be especially useful to improve recruitment with higher-skilled positions and sectors. Additionally, dedicating a section in a monthly community newsletter to provide advice on HR-related issues can create a strong sense of community and provide valuable insights into hiring practices.

Lastly, an HR community of practice, organizing physical seminars and sharing best practices for effective recruiting, would be greatly impactful. Small businesses are the least likely group to have a dedicated department for HR, so establishing a community of practice can support them to bolster their hiring processes. Also, hosting business socials can create opportunities for referrals and networking, strengthening the local labour ecosystem.

By implementing these strategies, the local labour market will be greatly enhanced – and will be more able to attract a skilled workforce.

6.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to help local business owners in Canmore refine their hiring processes to attract, recruit, and retain quality candidates, while also addressing the unique challenges faced in sourcing both local and external labour.

Recommendation 11: Offer referral-based hiring initiatives to utilize trusted networks for acquiring suitable candidates and to reduce the time spent on sifting through applications.

- Encourage current employees to refer potential candidates from their networks.
- Offer referral bonuses to employees who provide successful hires.
- Hold industry specific networking events and hiring events to expand professional connections and allow business owners and potential candidates to meet in person.

Lead	Local Businesses
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance, Job Resource Centre
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 12: Enhance online recruitment strategies to attract higher-quality candidates and to streamline the online recruitment process.

- If not already implemented, use filtering tools on online job platforms to screen out unqualified applicants (for example, those seeking visa sponsorship when it is not offered with the job).
- Provide clear and detailed job descriptions on online platforms to attract suitable candidates. Job descriptions should include details that attract candidates such as employee benefits, available accommodation supports, salary ranges (if possible), and company culture.
- Set up an automated response system to acknowledge applications and keep candidates informed about the recruitment process to address the issue of delayed responses.

Lead	Local Businesses
Key Stakeholders	Job Resource Centre, Canmore Business Alliance
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 13: Engage with the Job Resource Centre (JRC) to take advantage of local resources for finding candidates, particularly for entry level positions.

- Collaborate with the JRC to post job openings and attend local job fairs.
- Consider suggesting a referral process within JRC, where employers can share their needs and are referred to potential candidates.
- Provide feedback to the JRC regarding the quality of candidates referred to ensure a better match over time.

Lead	Local Businesses
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance, Job Resource Centre
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 14: Use specialized online platforms to efficiently recruit qualified professionals for skilled positions.

- Utilize professional networking sites like LinkedIn for recruiting specialized or higher-skilled positions.
- Join industry-specific online forums or platforms to post job openings and engage with potential candidates.

Lead	Local Businesses
Key Stakeholders	Job Resource Centre
Potential Impact	Low
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short (ongoing initiative)

Recommendation 15: Formulate cost-effective strategies for international recruitment to help alleviate the financial burdens associated with hiring from abroad.

- Explore group sponsorship or collaborative recruitment initiatives with other local businesses to share the costs of recruiting international workers.
- Seek grants or subsidies available for international recruitment from federal or provincial governments.

Lead	Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce
Key Stakeholders	Local Businesses, Canmore Business Alliance, Job Resource Centre
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 16: Provide additional employer resources through the JRC website and in-person coaching

- Incorporate an Employer section on the JRC site to provide resources to local employers, aiding in recruitment processes, formulating interview questions, drafting job descriptions and advertisements, composing contracts, and conducting wage comparisons.
- Establish an 'applicant tracking' system on the JRC website.
- Explore merging job matching services with a referral system for employers, thus improving the employability of applicants.

Lead	Job Resource Centre
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 17: Develop and cultivate strong human resource strategies for local businesses.

- Put out a Request for Quotes for a HR consultant who can provide guidance on how to attract certain skills and experience levels.
- Create an HR Best Practices Community where local small businesses can access comprehensive HR resources.
- Organize business events for local professionals to engage and network such as regular business luncheons.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 18: Provide additional employee resources on the JRC website.

- Improve access to online tutorials and virtual appointments for resume and cover letter building and review.
- Offer webinars or workshops on job readiness.
- Enhance the JRC website by incorporating a "job readiness" section featuring resume and cover letter preparation tips, interview preparation, and archived webinars.
- Provide additional resources for settling in Canmore to attract out-of-town job seekers and to assist them in the transition. The Staff Housing Guide on the website is a strong template for other topics such as childcare and child education environment, navigating the local housing market, community events, and Canmore culture.

Lead Job Resource Centre

Key Stakeholders N/A

Potential Impact Small

Estimated Financial Cost Low

Timeline Medium

Recommendation 19: Engage with job seekers outside of Canmore.

- Offer virtual hiring fairs to enhance accessibility and visibility for potential applicants.
- Participate in events outside the community to enhance visibility as an organization and a community aiming to attract labour. These could include post-secondary fairs, career fairs, and industry-specific conferences.
- Collaborate with Stoney Nakoda and other First Nations to explore avenues for promoting job opportunities within Indigenous communities.

Lead Job Resource Centre

Key Stakeholders Local Businesses, Canmore Business Alliance

Potential Impact Moderate

Estimated Financial Cost Low

Timeline Medium

7 Sourcing Skills from External Markets

Given the local labour market's current lack of capacity to meet labour demand, securing skills from external markets is one of the key components of Canmore's labour strategy.

Canmore's labour market already relies on a combination of local and external labour—that is, labour sourced from elsewhere in Canada and abroad. Generally, labour arriving from outside the community can provide the following benefits:

1. It fills labour gaps for specific skills and roles, allowing businesses to expand their activities.
2. It can improve capacity within a business for other strategic actions, such as staff training and skill development.
3. Incoming migrants add to the economic activity in the region by taking part in the production of goods and services and creating demand as spenders in the economy.
4. With declining birth rates and aging populations, external labour can prove to be vital for the sustainable growth of the local economy.
5. External labour can bring new skills, ideas, and perspectives that can allow the town to grow and expand into new industries or bring innovations to existing industries, allowing them to gain and maintain a competitive advantage.

Many businesses already recruit from international labour markets, either in the form of Working Holiday Visas or under the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program. These workers fill a gap in the labour market, allowing businesses to avoid having to reduce services or operating hours.

7.1 Current Trends

In the past, a dependable source of labour supply has been attracting people from other provinces or abroad. Canmore has benefitted from the availability of this labour to fill gaps in the local labour supply, with over one-third of current residents having moved to the Town within the past five years (Figure 29). However, labour supply constraints have been aggravated by COVID-19 travel restrictions resulting in a lack of temporary foreign workers in recent years. Given high rates of staff turnover during the pandemic and the drain of skilled and experienced managers from the hospitality sector specifically (see Section 3.2.5.4), it is essential that a new cohort of appropriately skilled workers fill in these gaps. Sourcing and retaining skilled professionals will be one of the biggest tasks for local firms as they continue to recover from the pandemic.

The industries supporting tourism in Canmore contribute the largest share towards aggregate labour demand, while also employing the largest share of external labour in the town.⁴⁸ These industries are labour intensive and their ability to operate is highly dependent on the availability of workers. Wages offered in these industries are also below the average wages offered by non-tourism industries.

⁴⁸ Statistics Canada Census (2021) shows that 34% of in the Canmore labour force work in the retail, other services, and accommodation and food services sectors.

Table 12 – Wage comparison for tourism-related industries compared to others (Source: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-03-26-01; Employers survey)

	Canmore	Alberta	Canada
Tourism Industries	\$18.50/ hour	\$20.71/ hour	\$21.73/ hour
Non-tourism Industries	\$25.76/ hour	\$29.53/ hour	\$28.92/ hour

Meanwhile, sourcing labour in highly skilled roles requires more screening and intensive recruitment methods to best match skills with job requirements. This process is made more complicated with the uncertainty associated when sourcing external labour, through either immigration barriers, housing uncertainty, or the absence of social and professional networks.

Additionally, migrants from both abroad and the rest of Canada face several barriers to long-term residency—namely, the cost of housing, cost of living, and a lack of competitive salaries/benefits.⁴⁹ However, these issues are faced by all residents in Canmore and are discussed further in other sections of this report (see Sections 3.2.6, 11, 12). Migrants uniquely face challenges associated with financial stability and social integration. These challenges often arise even before they start their lives in Canmore. The fear of isolation and uncertainty around employment can be massive deterrents for potential migrants to the town, and addressing these issues can make Canmore a more attractive location for workers to settle long-term.

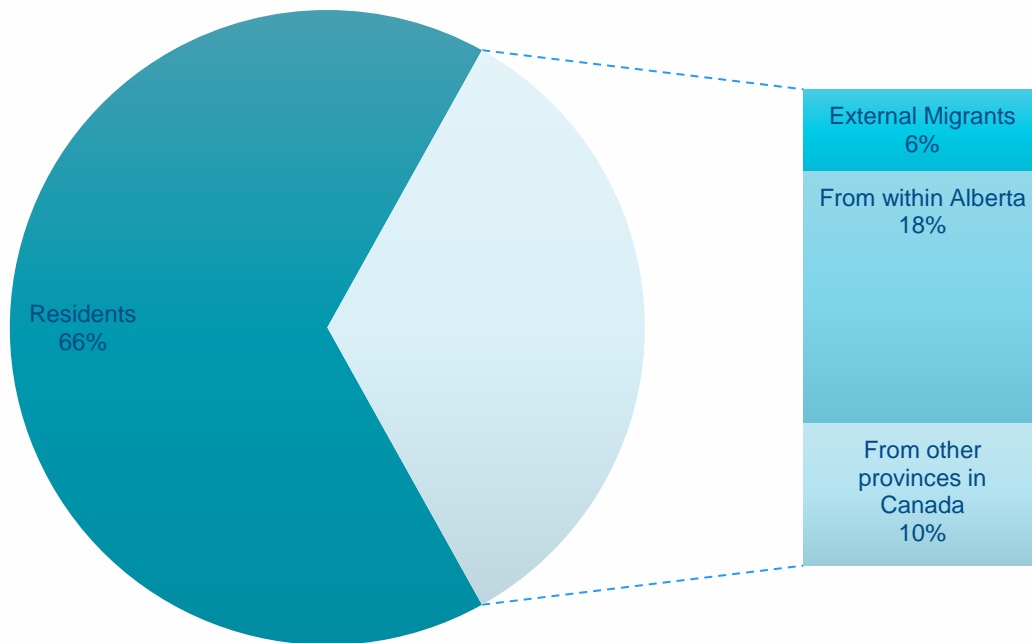


Figure 29: Migrants moving to Canmore since 2016 (Statistics Canada Census 2021)

Even in cases where recruitment is successful, retention becomes a challenge due to multiple factors. For instance, during in-depth interviews with employers, several noted that it can take a long time for new residents to feel settled and included in Canmore. While community groups exist around activities such as hiking, climbing, skiing, mountain biking, etc., there is room for the growth of new groups sharing common experiences, identities, cultures, values, or other hobbies. The establishment of a more diverse range of community groups can serve people’s needs beyond the shared

⁴⁹ Labour market participant survey

interest in the active, outdoor lifestyle. This type of social integration makes it more likely that migrants, whether from abroad or elsewhere in Canada, will come and stay in the community. This will take a coordinated effort among local government, businesses, community organizations, and migrant support agencies, to ensure programming is successful and meets the needs of different migrant groups.

While retaining migrant groups in the long-term is one challenge, recruiting foreign labour is even more barriered by federal and provincial government processes. A commonly used method of filling seasonal vacancies in the Canmore labour market has been to recruit temporary workers through the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program. Despite the success of the TFW Program, many employers are restricted by the cost of applications, which include a \$1,000 application fee and can run into the several thousands of dollars once airfares, legal fees, advisory costs, and travel allowances are added. Furthermore, the period from the beginning of the process to a worker commencing employment can be over a year, meaning that it is not a useful tool for responding to rapid changes in demand. Some advocacy groups in the tourism sector are arguing for changes to visa processes that would allow them to hire seasonal staff quickly, much like the agriculture sector is able to bring in seasonal workers for harvesting. However, some employers state that the costs involved only make sense when workers stay for a prolonged period, meaning efforts should be made to encourage workers to stay in the community in the longer term.

Despite these challenges, recruiting foreign labour specifically remains the most feasible solution for several businesses when the local labour force reaches full employment during the high season. Businesses who primarily employ Canmore residents have on average a lower vacancy rate than businesses who primarily hire foreign labour (vacancy rates of 8.95% and 16.94% respectively).⁵⁰ However, businesses that hire locally expressed less confidence in their ability to fill vacancies. Over 75% of businesses who recruit from outside of Canada expressed a high degree of confidence in filling vacancies, while only 37% of businesses who hire locally did the same. This comparison suggests that businesses have more certainty in being able to fill vacant positions by sourcing foreign labour, despite having greater challenges in doing so. It also underscores the need for sourcing foreign labour, as the local labour market is unable to meet employers' labour demands during the high seasons.

Furthermore, access to seasonal foreign labour varies with the size of businesses. Due to the high costs associated with international recruitment, it may only be feasible for larger employers who can save on the costs of legal fees, airfare, paperwork, accommodation, etc., by hiring a large number of foreign workers during the high season. Conversely, small businesses find it easier to recruit from the local labour market, because it is less costly. Engagement also found that smaller businesses in Canmore had a greater share of workers who were Canmore residents, while larger businesses relied on a significant share of foreign labour.⁵¹ This gap in foreign labour recruitment means that small businesses are more likely to be affected by labour shortages.

Compared to foreign labour, workers from elsewhere in Canada are on average less likely to migrate to Canmore for economic opportunities. When considering recruiting from elsewhere in Alberta and Canada, it is advantageous to target young (18 to 30 years old) workers. Young workers on average have greater economic mobility and willingness to take employment risks, while other demographics that are already established in Canada are less likely to respond to economic opportunities in general. Young workers from elsewhere in Canada are typically looking to establish themselves in a community and have most of their economically productive years ahead of them. Also, while older demographics tend to have well established social and economic ties (i.e., own property), households with sufficient equity may look to Canmore as an area to find employment in higher-level positions and to move to for retirement.

⁵⁰ Employers survey

⁵¹ Employers with 20 employees or fewer, on average employ 70% long-term Canmore residents. Employers with more than 20 employees, on average employ 47% long-term Canmore residents.

7.2 Outlook

Canada's federal government increased its immigration targets towards the end of 2020, citing both social (aging populations) and economic (specific skillsets in key industries) reasons for welcoming over 400,000 new permanent residents annually.⁵² While changes to the TFW Program have been announced to help ease labour shortages, employers in the Bow Valley region estimate that the positive effects of these changes will not materialize until 2024 and onwards.

The provincial government has also introduced tourism and hospitality as a priority sector under the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program, creating a dedicated stream for workers in the tourism and hospitality industries to receive a provincial nomination towards their permanent residency applications. This action looks to directly address labour shortages in these key industries, incentivizing workers to immigrate to the province with the possibility of permanent residency. The program was introduced in April 2023, with nominations starting to be sent within the first two weeks. Canmore employers in the tourism sector will be able to take advantage of this stream to recruit more workers from outside Canada to fill vacancies, with the incentive of an easier path to permanent residency. Additionally, establishing a dedicated tourism and hospitality immigration stream has been marked as a key initiative under the July 2023 mandate letter for the Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism in the recently elected provincial government.

However, newcomers are often attracted to settle in larger urban areas as they are more likely to have established social, financial, and cultural networks. It is the availability of immigrant social networks and stable economic opportunities that attracts new immigrants to settle in bigger cities. While immigrants make choices based on both monetary and non-monetary factors, research suggests that monetary factors have a stronger effect. The weighing of these factors makes a crucial difference in the labour market adjustment process. Prioritization of non-monetary factors may make migrants less responsive to increasing labour demands in regions such as Canmore, making it difficult to source labour from the international market.

While monetary factors include both expected income and cost of living, non-monetary factors such as weather, violent crime rates, recreational activities, and social networks also play an important role. The rise in economic opportunities in Alberta during the early 2000s caused an increase in migration rates to the province, but most significantly among newer immigrants who had previously settled in non-metropolitan communities in Canada. These immigrants prioritized opportunities for economic improvement over the accessibility to social networks. However, settled immigrants in metropolitan areas such as Toronto and Vancouver were not any more likely to move for economic opportunities than Canadian residents.⁵³

This research suggests that Canmore could have greater success recruiting immigrants directly from their country of origin and newer immigrants settled in regions outside metropolitan cities. Direct recruitment is more costly and complex, as it becomes more entangled with a complicated immigration process. However, businesses with the capacity to navigate requirements, end up with a more consistent supply of labour from outside of Canada. Recruiting immigrants settled in non-metropolitan areas may prove more effective if firms are able to offer more attractive economic benefits

⁵² Government of Canada, "Government of Canada announces plan to support economic recovery through immigration". October 30, 2020. Around 60% of these admissions are expected to come in the Economic Class, as well as up to 500 refugees (over 2 years).

⁵³ An in-depth study conducted by Statistics Canada on labour mobility during this period shows that several uncontrollable factors affect the likelihood of certain groups migrating for economic opportunities (Ostrovsky, Hou, & Picot, 2008).

and the community is able to offer better living conditions, recreational opportunities, cultural and religious connections, and support for setting up social networks before or immediately after arrival.

Moving to a new country can present a myriad of challenges. Among the greatest difficulties that newcomers to Canada face within four years from their arrival include finding an adequate job, learning a new language, getting used to the weather, missing support from their homeland, adapting to new cultures or values, financial constraints, recognition of credentials or experience, lack of social interaction, access to professional help, discrimination or racism, and finding good quality housing.⁵⁴ Municipalities and service providers can improve the integration process and foster more inclusive environments by preparing in advance for the arrival of new immigrants, rather than “reacting” to emerging issues in these communities.⁵⁵

Many of Alberta’s municipalities have taken proactive steps towards increasing economic growth and prosperity for residents. These steps are often identified through economic development strategies, in brochures for attracting inward investment, and community labour market needs assessments, etc. This directly affects the popularity of smaller municipalities and rural areas for newcomers, and studies show a growing number of newcomers settling in smaller municipalities in recent years. This number is likely to increase,⁵⁶ presenting an opportunity for Canmore to become a desired destination for the growing group of migrant workers.

7.2.1 MONETARY AND NON-MONETARY REQUIREMENTS FOR SOURCING LABOUR

7.2.1.1 WAGES AND BENEFITS

Monetary compensation is a critical facet to any decision regarding employment. However, wages and benefits vary in importance to employees based on fluctuations in the labour market. When labour markets are weak, with high unemployment and fewer job opportunities, financial gains might matter less to employees when making short-term employment decisions. Conversely, when there is a shortage of labour, workers have more choices of employers and have more power to negotiate higher wages. Financial gains then make more of an impact on where workers migrate, as their opportunities for economic advancement increase.⁵⁷

Firms in foreign labour-dependent industries in Canmore should, to the greatest extent possible, offer comparable wages to other towns in the region to be able to attract workers (see Section 2.5.2). Firms should also factor in the higher cost of housing and provide monetary or non-monetary remedies to these additional costs. Skilled professionals will often find higher wages and more opportunities for career growth in metropolitan cities. For such positions, firms may find it advantageous to emphasize the non-monetary benefits of moving to Canmore.

7.2.1.2 LONG-TERM PROSPECTS: JOB STABILITY AND GROWTH:

Job stability is essential for newcomers and can have significant implications for their job satisfaction, overall well-being, and long-term residency considerations. It provides a sense of financial security, as newcomers can rely on a consistent income to support themselves and their families. It allows individuals to plan, make long-term financial commitments, and feel more confident in their ability to meet these obligations. Stability also enables newcomers to invest in the community and aids in their social integration.

⁵⁴ Holley, P., Jedwab, J., Toolkit for Inclusive Municipalities in Canada and Beyond. July 2019. CCUNESCO.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Statistics Canada. 2018. “Annual Demographic Estimates: Subprovincial Areas”, July 1, 2017, Section 1: Census metropolitan areas.

⁵⁷ A study in the US conducted by Gallup Inc. found that in 2022, when firms recovering from the pandemic faced massive labour shortages, over 64% of job applicants cited higher pay and benefits as “very important” when considering jobs, up from 41% in 2015. In the same period, this factor went from fourth to the most important factor that applicants considered when selecting jobs.

When newcomers feel secure in their positions, they can invest time and effort in acquiring new skills, building expertise, and pursuing advancement opportunities. They can also focus on their career development and growth within an organization. In contrast, frequent job changes can disrupt career progression and hinder professional development, also making it difficult for employers to source skilled and experienced workers from the local labour force.

Newcomers who perceive stability in their jobs are also more likely to develop a sense of commitment towards their employer. They feel motivated to contribute their best efforts, engage in discretionary behaviours, and stay with the organization for the long term. This commitment can lead to increased productivity, lower turnover rates, and enhanced organizational performance.

The labour market participant survey found that after housing and the cost of living, underemployment was the next largest barrier to long-term residency for newcomers. Underemployment, which can include a lack of career growth opportunities and a lack of employment that aligns with skillsets and qualifications, was cited by 26.95% of non-resident respondents as a barrier to long-term residency. Addressing this issue will help migrants feel a sense of stability within their new environment, incentivizing them to invest in Canmore for their future.

7.2.1.3 WELCOMING COMMUNITY

Socially and culturally integrating new members into a community plays a vital role in their well-being and stability. More social networks and connections can help improve the sense of belonging for new migrants. Research shows that greater engagement with the community can boost a migrant’s morale, improve wellbeing, and increase the level of community identification that new members feel. Such affinity has tangible benefits on economic outcomes. Migrants are more likely to invest in the community as well as their workspace, which acts as an extension of their network.

7.2.1.4 INTERNATIONAL IMMIGRANT NETWORKS

Canmore has a growing immigrant community, with 75% of its immigrant population coming from Europe and Asia. The effects of increased networks and community are slowly becoming visible in the immigration patterns in the region. As the immigrant population from certain regions (e.g., Philippines, UK, South Asia etc.) expands, the community in Canmore becomes more diverse and networks of immigrant communities begin to form. This trend creates a positive atmosphere to further recruit workers from these regions, attracting additional migrants who value a diverse community and work environment.

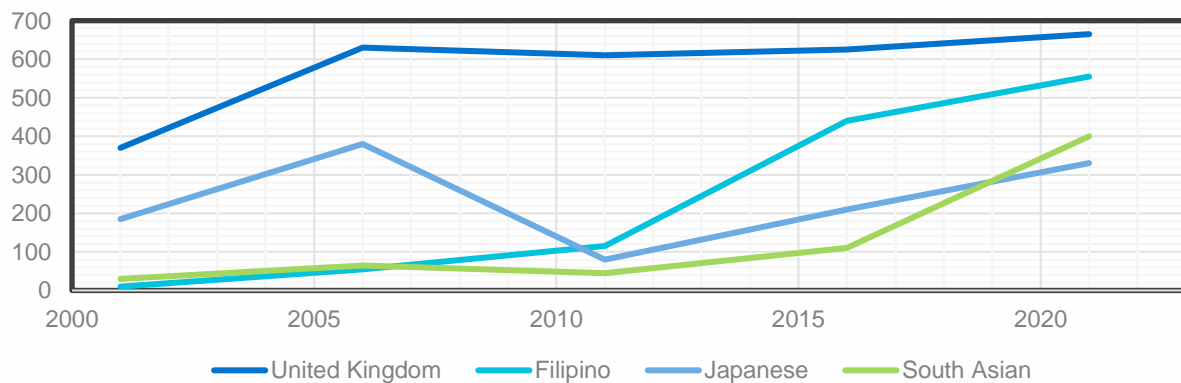


Figure 30 - Visible minority communities in Canmore (Source: Census 2021)

Canmore has further competitive, non-monetary advantages over other non-metropolitan towns, including:

- Less snowfall in the winters compared to neighbouring mountain towns, while also having access to winter activities in nearby regions.⁵⁸
- A diverse array of outdoor recreational activities and nature suited to both the active and comfortable lifestyles.
- Proximity to Calgary, which offers a wide range of benefits not available in many towns, including connectivity and services, without the disadvantages of living in the city.

These factors may be decisive for those considering relocating to Canmore, provided other monetary factors are also on par with competing opportunities. As a tourism-driven economy, Canmore has plenty of jobs in the hospitality industry. Potential migrants must still find well-paying jobs to cover the higher cost of living and provide a higher quality of life than they would in other places. Additionally, stability of employment and the potential for advancement will play an important role in the effectiveness of attracting migrants to settle long-term in the area. For skilled migrants attracted by the benefits of the Canmore lifestyle, monetary factors might not be quite as important.

7.3 Recommendations

Recruiting and retaining foreign labour will be a multifaceted task that involves stakeholders at various levels. To ensure businesses can easily recruit temporary seasonal workers, stakeholders must work towards easing the financial burdens associated with such recruitment. Smaller businesses in particular face more challenges with the costs of international recruitment. Meanwhile, recruitment from within Canada still remains a viable option for these firms, although associated with its own set of challenges. Recruitment of skilled professionals should take a long-term approach, as sourcing and training workers for these positions can be expensive, time consuming, and unfeasible if turnover remains high. While changes in immigration policy have created further advantages for recruitment, retaining these workers will involve actions across various stakeholders in the town.

Firms must offer competitive wages to source and retain these workers, while local community organizations and cultural groups will play a key role in the social integration of the newcomers. Additionally, support services for immigration, mental health, employment, financial planning, among other factors, can foster an environment that supports the transition of newcomers into long-term residents, securing a stable labour supply in the town.

The following recommendations aim to leverage the collective strength of the local business community in Canmore to address labour shortages, improve the integration of newcomers, and create a more supportive environment that attracts external talent.

⁵⁸ According to Canmore Real Estate Group, “While Canmore is a mountain town that becomes a winter wonderland, it receives much less snow than nearby Banff and Exshaw. Residents of Canmore can easily access world class skiing and winter sports in surrounding areas, but winter tends to remain sunny for most days.”

Recommendation 20: Continue to promote the dedicated webpage on the Town of Canmore website with migrant support resources.

- Continue to update the website and list resources in Canmore and the surrounding region that provide support services for new migrants, including but not limited to:
 - Bow Valley College Rural Mentorship Program.
 - Bow Valley Immigration Partnership:
 - Settlement Services.
 - Foreign Worker Support.
 - Learning Council.
 - Bow Valley Muslim Community and other cultural community groups.
- Compile and provide additional resources on how employers can best help migrant workers settle into the workplace.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	Job Resource Centre, Bow Valley Immigration Partnership
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 21: Form a consortium with fellow local businesses to collaborate on a recruitment campaign to increase the outreach and effectiveness of the campaign.

- Identify and reach out to local businesses facing similar labour challenges.
- Establish a collaborative initiative with other local businesses to share the costs and resources required for recruiting external labour, particularly from international markets.
- Organize joint recruitment fairs, either virtually or in person, to attract a wider pool of potential employees.
- Share access to recruitment agencies or platforms, reducing individual costs.
- Collaboratively develop marketing materials that highlight the benefits of working in Canmore across multiple businesses and industries.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Local Businesses
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 22: Utilize the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program to fill labour gaps, especially in the tourism and hospitality sectors, by recruiting workers from abroad.

- Take full advantage of the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program, particularly the stream dedicated to the tourism and hospitality sectors, to recruit workers from abroad. Become familiar with the eligibility criteria and application process of the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program, particularly the stream dedicated to the tourism and hospitality sectors.
 - Engage with immigration consultants to understand the process and ensure compliance.
- Promote available positions under this program through various channels such as online job portals, social media, and recruitment agencies.
- Offer support to prospective employees during the immigration process by providing necessary documentation and guidance.
- Stay updated and engage with federal and provincial government bodies to understand any upcoming changes in immigration policies that may facilitate easier recruitment of external labour.

Lead	Tourism Canmore Kananaskis
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance, Local Businesses
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 23: Promote the Bow Valley Immigration Partnership (BVIP) to further develop Canmore’s international immigrant settlement and integration process.

- Advertise BVIP resources in places with higher visibility among migrants:
 - JRC & Town of Canmore website.
 - Job boards used for international recruitment.
 - Newcomer community events.
 - Businesses with a large migrant work force.
- With the guidance of BVIP, introduce a mentor program, matching new immigrant employees to suitable mentors that may have similar heritage, work experience, and personal backgrounds (families, age demographic, etc.).
- Work with BVIP to provide long-term in-person services in Canmore through creation of a Canmore office responsible for services such as:
 - Outreach events.
 - Drop-in hours.
 - Info sessions.
 - Distribution of resources among businesses.
 - Interpersonal skills courses and learning services in English, math, writing, etc.

Lead	Bow Valley Immigration Partnership
Key Stakeholders	Job Resource Centre, Canmore Business Alliance
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 24: Work with a professional immigration consulting service provider to create a comprehensive guide for employers seeking to recruit from outside Canada.

- Draft a Request for Proposal (RFP) detailing the objective of developing employer resources for foreign labour recruitment, with the primary outcome being a comprehensive guide for employers interested in recruiting foreign workers.
- Hire a qualified professional consultant to create this guide tailored towards businesses and key industries in Canmore, outlining:
 - Legal and administrative procedures.
 - Cost saving methods and funding opportunities.
 - List of resources for special circumstances.
 - Checklist for businesses for every step in the process.
- Share the final comprehensive guide with business owners to help ease the process and reduce costs of frequent immigration consulting services used by businesses.
- This project can be undertaken in collaboration with other towns and communities in the region with similar industries to share the costs and benefits.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 25: Stay informed and engaged on immigration policies to advocate for policy changes that could benefit the local labour market and to stay updated on immigration policies that might impact recruitment efforts.

- Subscribe to updates from federal and provincial government bodies regarding immigration policies and labour-related announcements.
- Participate in discussions, forums, or public consultations related to labour and immigration policies, representing the interests of Canmore businesses.
- Collaborate with industry associations to advocate for favorable policy adjustments that could ease the recruitment of external labour.
- Establish a network with other local businesses to share insights and updates on immigration policies and their implications.

Lead	Local Businesses
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 26: Engage with government bodies to foster relationships to better understand and influence policies that impact labour recruitment.

- Schedule regular meetings or discussions with local government representatives to express concerns and propose solutions related to labour market challenges.
- Collaborate with regional and provincial business chambers to have a unified voice in advocating for favourable labour and immigration policies.
- Participate in government-led initiatives aimed at addressing labour market issues, sharing insights from the local business perspective.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Local Businesses, Town of Canmore
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Long

Recommendation 27: Design recruitment campaigns targeting younger demographics within Canada to attract younger individuals who are more likely to take employment risks and are looking for communities to establish themselves.

- Develop marketing materials that highlight the benefits and opportunities available in Canmore for younger individuals, such as vibrant community life, outdoor recreational activities, and career growth potential.
- Advertise on platforms popular among younger demographics, like social media channels, university job boards, and youth-centric job fairs.
- Offer internships, apprenticeships, or entry-level positions that provide a pathway for career development within your business.
- Engage with educational institutions for campus recruitment drives and to build awareness about job opportunities in Canmore. (Specific Lead: Job Resource Centre)

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Job Resource Centre, Local Businesses
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Long (ongoing initiative)

Recommendation 28: Initiate direct recruitment drives in countries with established immigrant communities in Canmore to lower the barrier for new immigrants by leveraging existing immigrant networks in Canmore.

- Research and identify countries with already established immigrant communities in Canmore.
- Partner with recruitment agencies or platforms specializing in international recruitment to target these specific countries.
- Highlight the existing immigrant communities in Canmore in recruitment materials to show support and cultural inclusivity.
- Collaborate with local immigrant support organizations to create welcome packages or orientation programs for newly recruited international workers.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Local Businesses, Bow Valley Immigration Partnership
Potential Impact	Large
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Long

Recommendation 29: Partner with municipalities in Alberta and British Columbia to lobby for eased regulations on seasonal workers and advocate for policy adjustments that facilitate the recruitment of seasonal workers, addressing the specific labour demands in Canmore and similar towns.

- Identify towns with similar labour market conditions and challenges.
- Form a coalition to jointly lobby provincial and federal authorities with well-articulated demands for policy adjustments.
- Explore partnerships with other towns in Alberta and BC to lobby for changes in regulations regarding seasonal workers in the hospitality sector.
- Engage with industry associations to strengthen lobbying efforts.
- Develop a shared communications strategy to raise awareness about the labour challenges faced by businesses in Canmore and other towns, and the benefits of easing regulations on seasonal workers.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Town of Canmore (Town Council), Local Businesses
Potential Impact	Large
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Long

Recommendation 30: Organize a welcome event for incoming workers to introduce them to the community, services, resources, and help them network.⁵⁹

- Design a comprehensive welcome package for incoming workers that includes essential information about the community, local services, resources, and a calendar of local events. This package could also have discount vouchers or introductory offers from local businesses to help new workers settle in and explore Canmore.
- Organize a welcome event with a networking component where incoming workers can meet local business owners, community leaders, and other residents. Include some interactive activities or icebreakers to encourage mingling. Providing a platform for newcomers to form connections can help in their smooth integration into the community.

Lead	Bow Valley Immigration Partnership
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

⁵⁹ The Bow Valley Community Week should be used as an example of prospective events: <https://bvpartnership.com/community-week>

8 Supporting Workplace Culture

During engagement, several business owners and managers spoke about how development of a positive workplace culture has supported their labour attraction and retention efforts; others expressed a desire to take a more intentional approach to this aspect of their company management but lack the necessary capacity to do so.

This section will briefly explore how local companies have approached fostering a healthy workplace culture. The most immediate outcome of this approach is improved employee engagement, which in turn increases the likelihood that staff will remain committed to their employer; however, further research considered here indicates long-term contributions to company improvements on other key performance metrics including profitability, decision-making, and innovation.

Finally, this section concludes with recommendations to help companies in Canmore who wish to better articulate their mission, vision, and goals to current and prospective employees.

8.1 Findings

Many businesses in Canmore report difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified staff. These challenges include efforts to offer competitive wages and benefits (see also Section 3.2.6), as well as competition from other employers. Through in-depth interviews conducted with the business community, businesses consistently mentioned their culture as a foundation of their success.

Company culture (also referred to as corporate culture or organizational culture) plays a significant role in workplaces and shapes an organization's performance. The Business Development Bank of Canada defines company culture as a company's beliefs, values, attitudes, and how these factors influence the behaviour of its employees.⁶⁰

Research suggests that companies with a diverse and inclusive workforce perform better on key performance metrics including profitability, innovation, decision making, and employee engagement.⁶¹ Similarly, research finds that fostering inclusivity and diversity in the workplace is correlated with a significantly greater likelihood of outperformance and is a critical success factor in an organization, while those lacking diversity may lag.⁶²

Businesses in Canmore recognize the importance of a well-defined and unifying company culture. When asked about elements of their culture that contribute to successful recruitment and retention, they identified the following:

- **An inclusive work environment:** Employers stated that establishing an environment where management and staff are friendly, welcoming, and willing to help newcomers, was critical to their recruitment and retention practices.
- **A tailored salary and benefits package:** Offering competitive wages and benefits packages are key to ensuring that employees feel valued (see also Section 3.2.6). However, it is also important that employers understand their staff and ensure that the benefits they offer align with their priorities. For example, an RRSP may be seen as less

⁶⁰ [BDC: Organizational Culture.](#)

⁶¹ [World Economic Forum: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 4.0. June 2020.](#)

⁶² [McKinsey and Company: Diversity Wins: How inclusion Matters. May 19, 2020.](#)

important by younger workers or those on working holiday visas, who may prefer to have a flexible work schedule or options for remote working.

- **A positive reputation in the community:** A strong reputation is particularly integral to business' ability to attract workers, especially as word-of-mouth is the one of the most preferred communication channels for both those looking to hire and those looking for work (see also Section 6.1). Employers with a positive reputation are thus able to attract a greater number, and likely a greater quality, of candidates than their competitors. At the other extreme, employees who leave an organization after negative experiences may share their perspective with others and make it more difficult for that company to attract new staff.
- **Flexible working arrangements:** Employers recognize that their staff value an accommodating schedule and options to work virtually, where appropriate. Higher expectations regarding flexible arrangements are particularly common in the post-COVID economy. They can benefit not just the employee, but also the employer, as the right conditions can boost staff productivity.

These local perspectives on company culture broadly align with current best-practice, with research highlighting the following workplace components that contribute positively to recruitment and retention:

- Inclusivity and a sense of belonging in the workspace.
- An effective and supportive leadership team.
- Communication of core values, including the business' contributions to the community.
- Identified pathways for career progression and promotion within the organization.
- Regular employee engagement events to foster relationships and understand employee needs and preferences.
- Industry-leading compensation, benefits, and perks.

Engagement revealed a capacity gap between large and small businesses in relation to cultural development.

Fostering an intentional company culture is often easier for larger companies that are more likely to have the necessary time and resources. Larger employers, such as Canmore General Hospital or Basecamp Resorts, employ hundreds of workers and have dedicated human resources (HR) teams tasked with improving the work environment and well-being of employees. These businesses tend to have structured onboarding and training processes, as well as resources to promote employee health through wellness programs.

Smaller businesses, by comparison, state that they are under-resourced, resulting in employers having less time and resources to focus on employee well-being. This sentiment reflects survey responses presented in Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, which found that under-resourced businesses in Canmore are focused on day-to-day operations and are perhaps less likely to think strategically about their cultural dynamics. This trend is particularly prevalent in sectors with seasonal highs and lows: smaller employers are often understaffed, leaving management to pick up on everyday tasks, resulting in less time to improve policies or operations.

Some businesses reported that employee expectations regarding company culture have changed following the pandemic, with prospective hires looking for an inclusive workplace and strong benefits. Employees are also more interested in company values and want to work for an organization that gives back to the community. As one employer stated, "You need to make sure people know what they are working for and what the mission, vision, and values are. People want to follow a great cause and a leader who cares about the community."

Engagement with labour market participants provides further evidence of this sentiment in the Canmore labour pool. Aside from the compensation and workplace flexibility identified above, workers stated that they would like to see more information regarding company culture (e.g., company mission, vision, and values) provided on hiring platforms and additional context regarding the broader Canmore community.

Ensuring that employees understand a company's values, goals, and overall strategic direction is imperative to building basic organizational structure within any business. Likewise, conveying these values within job postings can give potential hires an understanding of the business, allowing them to compare their own values against those of a business to ensure a good fit.

Additionally, given the change in employee expectations, employers should ensure that the proper feedback channels exist to verify worker needs on a regular basis. Workers want to be well compensated, have flexible work arrangements, and work for a company whose values align with their own.⁶³ Employers need to be proactive in anticipating and responding to these expectations.

Where some elements of cultural life extend beyond the walls of the workplace, i.e., in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, other organizations can play a leading role in creating this atmosphere at a community-wide level. Programs and resources like the New to Banff website, the Banff Ambassador Program, or the Revelstoke Welcome Week are examples of useful resources that help connect newcomers to a community. The efforts of the Town and other organizations whose key function is to support the business community are especially important for smaller businesses that do not have dedicated HR functions in place, and have less capacity to provide newcomers with adequate resources and information about life in Canmore.

8.2 Current Initiatives

Businesses are already recognized through the annual Bow Valley Business Excellence Awards, which can serve as a motivating force in culture development. Award categories such as the Community Impact Award, Workplace of the Year Award, and Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Award all encourage the creation of a robust company culture within the business community.

There is an opportunity to create a marketing program for award winners, which would also serve as an educational opportunity for other employers, featuring them in social media campaigns. This marketing campaign could potentially impact the labour market by demonstrating the cultural practices of winning organizations to both other companies and prospective employees.

⁶³ While we heard anecdotally that some employers are of the mindset that individuals moving to Canmore are looking for a "mountain lifestyle" and would accept wages that are enough to meet basic needs and can accommodate their lifestyle, changing expectations in recent years among the more diverse workforce point to higher expectations among labour market participants in terms of their salaries and benefits, flexible scheduling, and greater work-life balance.

8.3 Recommendations

Responsibility for consciously creating a strong organizational culture rests mainly with the business community. However, the organizations leading this project can play a role in supporting businesses by facilitating events and learning opportunities, providing insight as to how company culture can be cultivated to support hiring and retention efforts. Each recommendation aims at fostering a positive company culture that aligns with community values, thus aiding in better recruitment, retention, and overall business and community growth.

Recommendation 31: Establish programming to assist business owners in developing and improving their company culture, which in turn will support recruitment and retention efforts.

- Organize regular workshops and seminars led by industry experts focusing on company culture development, employee engagement, and retention strategies. These sessions should provide practical tools and strategies for business owners to establish their mission, vision, and goals, foster a positive work environment, align company values with employee expectations, and implement recognition and reward systems.
- Create an online platform where business owners can access resources like guides, best practices, and toolkits on company culture development. Additionally, this platform could facilitate networking and peer-to-peer support by enabling local business owners to share experiences, challenges, and solutions regarding culture improvement and employee retention.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 32: Enhance understanding and implementation of cultural best practices in the workplace.

- Host a series of seminars facilitated by HR specialists to educate the business community on cultural best practices.
- Launch awareness campaigns to share resources⁶⁴ and best practices concerning cultural inclusivity and respectful workplace behaviour. These efforts could include distributing informational materials, hosting webinars, and organizing community forums where individuals can share experiences and learn from each other.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

⁶⁴ Such as the BVIP Workplace Best Practices: <https://bvipartnership.com/workplace-best-practices>

Recommendation 33: Encourage businesses to hold quarterly or annual team meetings to discuss core values, goals, and strategic direction.

- Assist businesses in setting up a regular schedule for quarterly or annual team meetings. Provide templates or guidelines for setting agendas that ensure core values, goals, and strategic direction are discussed.
- Offer training sessions or resources on how to effectively facilitate these team meetings to ensure productive discussions and engagement from all team members. They could include training on how to foster open communication, how to collect and address feedback, and how to ensure that the meetings result in clear action plans.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 34: Advocate for the inclusion of anonymous feedback mechanisms within businesses for staff to provide valuable insights to employers.

- Assist businesses in developing or selecting anonymous feedback tools such as suggestion boxes or online anonymous survey platforms. Provide guidelines on how to ensure anonymity and encourage honest feedback.
- Organize workshops or provide resources to educate employers on how to analyze and act upon the feedback received. They could address how to identify common themes, address concerns, and communicate actions taken in response to staff feedback.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 35: Assist businesses in articulating and communicating their organizational culture effectively through job postings to attract candidates who align with the company's values and culture.

- Organize workshops or webinars featuring experts in employer branding and culture communication. These sessions can educate business owners and HR personnel on how to articulate their company culture, values, and work environment accurately and attractively in job postings.
- Create an online resource hub on an industry group website or a dedicated platform, providing guidelines, templates, and best practices for communicating company culture in job postings. This hub can also feature successful case studies from local businesses, providing real-world examples and insights.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Job Resource Centre
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 36: Establish a marketing program for winners of local awards such as the Bow Valley Business Excellence Awards through social media campaigns.

- Organize a marketing session through social media for winners of local awards to raise awareness of Canmore's employers, employment opportunities, and business best practices.
- Create short videos profiles on what makes the winner's business unique, what they love about Canmore, or 'day in the life of an employee' promotional videos.
- Post promotional and marketing content on various social media pages to spread awareness of Canmore as a unique and sustainable place to work and share with the business community to spread awareness of cultural best practices.

Lead	Tourism Canmore Kananaskis
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance, Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

9 Integrating Productivity-Enhancing Technologies

Improving Canmore’s labour recruitment and retention is undoubtedly crucial to providing a healthy environment for businesses to continue to grow in the short and long term. Many of the issues facing Canmore are structural, and so recommendations to improve labour market conditions are usually long-term solutions. For businesses looking to mitigate labour shortage impacts in the short term, adopting productivity-enhancing technologies can be an effective strategy. Moreover, their implementation will improve productivity well beyond current labour shortage issues—as staff gain more experience with new technologies, returns on these investments can be long-lasting.

This section covers general findings surrounding technology that could apply to all businesses as well as sector-specific recommendations focused on food services and retail trade, and health care and social assistance. Finally, this section concludes with recommendations on how businesses can integrate productivity-enhancing technologies and how appropriate project partners can support integration.

9.1 Technology Solutions for Multiple Sectors

Business owners may be hesitant to invest in productivity-enhancing technologies as they tend to be associated with high up-front costs in the form of the price to purchase, as well as the time commitment required by managers to first learn the new technology themselves and then share this knowledge with employees.

However, implementing the right technologies can have a drastic impact on supporting understaffed establishments and improving profit margins. The first part of this section broadly covers the topic of information technology and identifies new technologies that could be implemented in diverse sectors with potential for short-term impact.⁶⁵

9.1.1 FORMALIZING DATA COLLECTION

Incorporating formalized data collection process with business operations is integral to an informed decision-making process that results in fewer errors and more efficiency. Instead of relying on intuition or observation, data collection provides business owners the intel needed to act strategically.

Areas of improved data collection could include; number of customer visits per day, number of employees by hours and position, inventory levels, units sold and at what price, operating costs, etc. In turn, insights could help to resolve issues related to pricing, employee scheduling, advertising, and product offerings.

For example, if an owner has collected information on when they implemented an advertising campaign on social media, and has tracked customer visits over time, they can identify the impact of the advertising campaign. From there, the owner can decide if it makes sense to continue spending on advertising through social media or if another platform is more worthwhile. This approach is also relevant when reviewing different hiring platforms and recruitment methods.

⁶⁵ The [Business Development Bank of Canada defines information technology as](#): “a company’s networks, hardware, software and data storage and the management systems that apply to them.”

Development of a formal data collection process is feasible for most businesses as the information is likely available but may need to be organized in a coherent manner to be readily analyzed. The recommended level of data sophistication will depend on multiple factors including the type and size of business and business goals. Some business owners may choose to store information in digital spreadsheets such as Microsoft Excel that allows for basic statistical analysis. Others may find it profitable to invest in more advanced data products and hire specially trained individuals to perform more sophisticated analysis that can facilitate more optimal decision-making. Irrespective of the size of operations, all businesses can benefit from a formal and ongoing data collection process.

9.1.2 DIGITIZING PROCESSES

In tandem with data collection, digitizing all documents and communications related to business operations is a necessity for enhancing productivity, building resiliency, and supporting business continuity. The time associated with creating, updating, and searching for documents can be substantially lowered by keeping all records in a digital format. With most of the administrative tasks falling on managers, digitization would allow them to spend more time on other, more strategic tasks that help boost productivity of employees. In fact, our employer survey showed that of the businesses that had mitigation strategies in place to manage labour shortages, 53.7% reported managers and/or owners need to work more hours to cover employee shifts, which ultimately results in less time for business planning and management (see also Section 3.2.3). Any process that reduces the time required to perform administrative tasks such as payroll, record keeping, and employee scheduling should prove valuable for many businesses in Canmore today.

9.1.3 AUTOMATING PROCESSES

Implementing automation in any part of business operations should improve productivity by alleviating the workload of both employees and managers. However, it is important to note that Canmore is well known for its hospitable service supported by its frontline employees, and experiences for both residents and visitors built around connections rather than transactions. Therefore, any efforts to automate services and other processes must complement the work of frontline employees without taking from the hospitality experience. In fact, with an intentional implementation of automation, employees should have more time to interact with customers and establish personal connections for an improved Canmore experience.

Any repetitive tasks with an identifiable pattern performed on a computer are most likely replaceable with a Robotic Process Automation (RPA) software. RPA is a technology that is capable of automatically completing administrative tasks that are usually performed by humans. By investing in RPA software, members of the workforce can allocate their time more efficiently towards specialized tasks that do require human input (examples are explored further below).

Businesses could also take advantage of emerging artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Whereas RPA technology emulates repetitive human interactions using scripts, AI can receive unstructured information to solve complex problems using machine learning. AI is therefore a powerful investment to ease the pressures of labour shortages, especially in businesses with labour-intensive processes.

Examples of productivity-enhancing AI include intelligent chatbots that can support customers, semi-automation of payroll process, and natural language processing such as Open AI's ChatGPT to help in administrative tasks, especially those that involve drafting written documents.

Generally, automation can improve productivity by reducing the time required to complete a task otherwise performed by a person. It requires little to no supervision of delegated tasks, can eliminate random clerical errors, and automatically collects useful data for business analysis.

There are several other areas where technological improvements would add significant value to Canmore's business community and economy. The following section identifies productivity-enhancing technologies relevant to food services, retail trade, and healthcare and social assistance.

9.2 Technologies for the Food Services Industry

The food services industry has been especially impacted by the labour shortage in Canmore due to its labour-intensive nature. Owners and managers in this sector have been working longer shifts, reducing opening hours, and offering fewer products to customers due to a shortage of workers. These strategies risk undermining the high quality of service for which Canmore is known. Food service business owners may consider investing in the following to boost worker efficiency and compensate for less available labour:

- **Online systems for customer use:** Businesses should take advantage of consumers' ease of access to the internet. Providing an alternative avenue for customers to explore and order product offerings allows employees to allocate more time towards engaging with customers and efficiently serving a larger customer base. For example, a restaurant that implements online ordering offloads the time required for an employee to take a takeout order by phone and then communicate to the kitchen the order. This time can then be allocated towards serving customers in-person. Below are specific technologies related to online systems for customer use:
 - Online ordering
 - Online table reservations
 - Self-ordering at tables via personal devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets)
 - Text-to-order to replace phone-to-order systems
- **Automated employee scheduling software:** Employers can save time by using software that produces optimized employee schedules based on worker availability and business goals as they relate to labour. The software is capable of adjusting the schedule depending on if the business is looking to minimize labour costs, provide equal time to all employees, or other objectives. The AI also uses historical data and demand patterns to schedule the optimal number of employees given the expected level of demand. Communication between employees and employers is streamlined with built-in functions for communicating shift changes, providing shift updates, and requesting time off.
- **Smart kitchen machinery:** At a time when labour supply is constrained for the food services sector in Canmore, investing in tools to empower staff to produce more meals in less time not only improves productivity but can alleviate part of the stress of operating in an understaffed environment. Business can upgrade old equipment and purchase new equipment that replaces manual and repetitive tasks.
- **Data analytics software:** As previously discussed, data analysis is instrumental to managerial decisions. The market for data analytics software offers a range of products. Businesses can choose tools that suit their specific needs, in turn providing managers with more time to support staff and engage in strategic business planning. For the food services sector, the following software is recommended:
 - Perishable inventory management
 - Optimal pricing and menu offerings

9.3 Technologies for the Retail Trade Industry

Retail trade faces similar customer-facing labour needs as food services; however, in many cases businesses also sell products online, dividing staff resources between in-person sales and online order fulfillment. However, the period of economic recovery since COVID-19 has shown that customers are still interested in the brick-and-mortar experience of retail shopping. By improving both online channels for shopping and streamlining the in-person process through the following technologies, retail owners can prevent decreased profit margins from labour shortages.

- **Automated employee scheduling software** (see explanation under Technologies for Food Services)
- **Data analytics software** (see explanation under Technologies for Food Services):
 - Inventory management
 - Optimal pricing and product offerings
- **Intuitive tools for employees:** Managers can employ various tools designed to make onboarding, training, and familiarization with a store's layout a less time-consuming task.
 - Training software
 - Task management software
 - Modern inventory search systems
- **In-person AI powered chatbots:** AI chatbots are capable of supporting employees by providing an additional channel for customer support. One of the acute impacts of labour shortages in the retail trade sector is the challenge for workers to serve all customers in a timely fashion, which can lead to customer dissatisfaction and potential loss of business. In-store chatbots allow businesses to better manage increased demand with a smaller workforce. Implementation can be as simple as setting up a user-friendly tablet in the store that customers can easily use to search for products or check in-store availability. Businesses can also invest in more sophisticated technology with data collection capabilities to produce automated recommendations based on search trends.
- **Modernized online shopping website:** Although the brick-and-mortar experience is still valued by customers, especially in the Canmore context, consumers appreciate the flexibility of shopping on demand. Therefore, establishing a well-functioning website with the listed features can direct traffic to a platform that demands less labour:
 - User-friendly interface
 - In-store availability checks
 - Entire inventory offering
 - Options for delivery methods
 - Online customer-support chatbots

9.4 Canada Digital Adoption Program

Economic research strongly suggests investing in the right technology has a positive effect on productivity both for individual businesses and the wider community.⁶⁶ When businesses adopt technologies in line with best practices, it not only benefits their own profitability—it can also have positive spillover effects to the local community by exposing other businesses to new technology, incentivizing wider adoption. Despite their benefits, evidence suggests that a lack of knowledge regarding newer technologies, especially AI, poses a major obstacle to the integration of productivity-enhancing technologies in small-business operations.⁶⁷

The Canada Digital Adoption Program (CDAP),⁶⁸ a federal initiative aimed at supporting small and medium-sized businesses looking to use technology to build their business, is a strong resource to help bridge the knowledge gap in technology that Canmore businesses may be experiencing. The program is also useful for businesses who are aware of their technological needs but are struggling to finance the costs of upgrading to more productive systems.⁶⁹

The program is divided into two streams: the “Grow Your Business Online” stream and the “Boost Your Technology” stream:

- **Grow Your Business Online:** subsidizes costs that businesses incur when implementing an e-commerce platform to their operations (up to a maximum value of \$2,400).
- **Boost Your Technology:** subsidizes costs that businesses incur working with a “digital advisor” to develop a strategic plan that includes recommended technologies and an implementation plan (up to 90% of the eligible costs, to a maximum grant value of \$15,000). After the business receives their digital adoption plan, they are potentially eligible for a zero-interest loan of up to \$100,000 that can be used to execute recommendations from the plan.

Despite its potential for a large impact on improving productivity, this second stream is more complex and may be challenging for some businesses to navigate.⁷⁰ Moreover, there is a risk that businesses will not be able to effectively improve productivity if they do not receive a digital adoption plan that is tailored to address their unique struggles with labour shortages. Developing an effective contract will be crucial to mitigating this risk. As such, an entity such as the Town of Canmore Economic Development Team could dedicate time and resources to supporting small businesses who may not have the resources to effectively navigate this process. An ongoing initiative in this space includes the Town of Canmore’s partnership in the Digital Economy Program, aiming to help small businesses expand online.⁷¹

Based on Canmore’s composition of businesses, most businesses should be eligible for at least one of the streams, while many will likely qualify for both. It should be noted that businesses are required to cover a portion of the costs incurred in these processes, and the grants are not disbursed upfront, which means businesses are required to pay for incurred costs and submit proof of payment for eligible costs. Businesses should carefully read the program’s detailed guide before deciding to pursue these grants.

⁶⁶ “Digitization: Productivity”, Bank of Canada Staff Discussion Paper

⁶⁷ U.S. Chamber of Commerce Technology Engagement Center

⁶⁸ Canada Digital Adoption Program website

⁶⁹ Additional information available from Digital Mainstreet and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

⁷⁰ Boost Your Business Technology: Program Guide

⁷¹ <https://www.mydigitalbusiness.ca/>

Table 13 – Eligibility criteria for the Canada Digital Adoption Plan (CDAP Information Page)

Grow Your Business Online	Boost Your Technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a for-profit business (including for-profit social enterprises and co-operatives) • Is registered or incorporated • Is consumer-facing (sells goods and services directly to end consumers) • Has at least one employee (other than the owner) or had at least \$30,000 in annual revenue in the most recent tax year • Commits to maintaining a digital adoption strategy for six months • Agrees to participate in follow-up surveys, share data about the experience, and have its name published as a grant recipient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a for-profit business • Has between 1 – 499 full time equivalent employees • Has at least \$500,000 of annual revenues but not more than \$100,000,000 in one of the previous three tax years from the date of submitting a grant application

9.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations provide a path for businesses to gain insight regarding their own productivity levels, find resources to help identify appropriate tools, and secure funding to integrate productivity-enhancing technologies.

Recommendation 37: Educate the business community on benefits of productivity-enhancing technology.

- Using findings from this theme as a starting point, conduct research into benefits of productivity-enhancing technologies with a focus on effects on small businesses, businesses in the tourism sector, and businesses struggling with labour shortages.
- Synthesize information in various media products (slide deck presentation, pamphlets, posters, etc.) and share information through various platforms, keeping visibility and accessibility in mind.
- Facilitate dialogue by encouraging businesses to share questions, concerns, and thoughts related to the information provided.
- Organize informational sessions and workshops to educate businesses on the latest technology trends and training opportunities relevant to their industry.
- Create an online resource hub with guides, case studies, and tutorials to help businesses self-assess their technology and training needs.

Lead	Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 38: Continue to raise awareness on the Canada Digital Adoption Program (CDAP), which supports businesses to develop strategic plans to implement technology, assist in applying and provide advisory support for approved businesses.

- Awareness activities (Town of Canmore, Canmore Business Alliance):
 - Develop and distribute informative materials (brochures, emails, website content) detailing how the program functions, the potential benefits, and application process of the CDAP.
 - Organize informational sessions or webinars to introduce businesses to the CDAP, explaining how it reduces the cost of assessing business' current state of technology and how to improve it.
 - Establish a helpdesk or consultation service to assist businesses in navigating the CDAP application process, ensuring they can access the support available to them.
- Application activities (Local Businesses):
 - Visit the CDAP page to check eligibility, instructions on how to apply, and more information on the different grants available.
 - Apply to the program using the online application system.
 - If approved, select an appropriate digital advisor and develop a work plan with the digital advisor.
 - After the digital advisor develops a Digital Adoption Plan, apply for zero-interest loan with the BDC.
 - With funding, purchase technology products and/or services as per the Digital Adoption Plan.
- Advisory support activities (Town of Canmore, Canmore Business Alliance):
 - Once a business has access to Digital Advisor Marketplace system, research different digital advisors to assess ideal candidates to meet needs of the specific business.
 - Support the business, according to level of need, to develop a contractual agreement between the digital advisor and the Canmore business. This could include researching appropriate costs for digital advisor services, assessing necessary contract components to mitigate risks and protect business from damages or loss, developing a work plan for the digital advisor, and any other supports businesses may need in working with the digital advisor.
 - Follow up with the business periodically to ensure the process is running smoothly.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance, Local Businesses
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 39: Understand current productivity performance using the BDC Business Performance Benchmarking Tool.

- Collect relevant business data. The tool requires information on number of employees, annual revenue or sales, and net income to assess performance. To adjust for the fluctuating number of employees that seasonal businesses experience, these businesses can report a weighted average of employees throughout the year, or, if data on employee hours are available, convert employee hours to equivalent full-time employees and use this value when inputting number of employees in the assessment.
- Access the tool by following this [link](#) and complete the assessment.
- Use the information in the detailed report to understand business' productivity performance and how technology can improve it.

Lead	Local Businesses
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 40: Evaluate the feasibility of upgrading and implementing discussed technologies.

- If BDC's performance report identifies productivity as an area of improvement, identify which recommended technologies under this theme (both general and industry-specific) have already been implemented in business operations and which have not been implemented.
- For technologies already implemented, research if there is a net benefit to upgrading product to a better model. For example, if the employer already uses an employee scheduling software, research other available employee scheduling software on the market and compare its performance to current software with special attention to how it can improve productivity. Points of comparison include price, product features, and ease of use for employees and/or customers. If there is a net benefit, upgrade the technology at the earliest convenience.
- For technologies not already implemented, research available options on the market and determine their net benefit. Important information to collect includes price, different products on the market, product features, quality of product, product longevity, shipping times (if applicable), ease of use for employees and/or customers, training requirements, maintenance requirements, and estimated return-on-investment. If there is a net benefit, upgrade the technology at the earliest convenience.

Lead	Local Businesses
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low to Medium (varies depending on technology)
Timeline	Low to Medium (varies depending on technology)

Recommendation 41: Periodically communicate available business grants, programs, and financing that could support technological improvements relevant to the local business community.

- Launch an awareness and outreach campaign to inform local businesses about the availability of the Business Benefits Finder⁷², the various benefits of the tool, and how to use it.
- Develop a communications plan to detail how to disseminate findings to the business community.
- Create an ongoing project to execute periodic searches for new business supports that may not be captured by the Business Benefits Finder and share findings with the business community through effective communication channels. These could include the Town website, social media, and community newsletters.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Local Businesses
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short (ongoing initiative)

⁷² https://innovation.ised-isde.canada.ca/innovation/s/?language=en_CA

Recommendation 42: Advertise financial assistance programs such as grants or low-interest loans to help businesses mitigate the initial costs of investing in new technologies or training programs.

- Collect information on potential programs through government, financial institutions, federal agencies etc.
 - Investigate programs such as the Business Scale-up and Productivity program.⁷³
- Launch an awareness campaign to inform businesses about the availability of these financial assistance programs.
- Host application workshops to guide businesses through the process of applying for grants or loans, ensuring they understand the criteria and required documentation.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

⁷³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/prairies-economic-development/services/funding/business-scale-up-productivity/program-applicant-guide.html>

10 Developing Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure, as defined by the Community Foundations of Canada, includes policies, practices, and relationships that enable us to create a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable society, from the grassroots to the global, and spanning healthcare, education, culture, and democratic processes.⁷⁴ These policies and practices influence the standard of living in a community through access to and improvements in healthcare, education, housing, and public transportation services. While not directly related to labour recruitment and retention, social infrastructure plays a role in supporting employee well-being and quality of life, ultimately improving Canmore’s ability to effectively attract and maximize talent in the community.

This section examining social infrastructure in Canmore focuses closely on childcare services, as this topic was raised during engagement with employers, labour market participants, and representatives of key stakeholders in the community. While childcare is one of many services that impact everyday life in Canmore, labour-related challenges in this particular industry have impacted the ability of providers to increase the provision of spaces, with consequences for the rest of the labour market.

10.1 Childcare

There is evidence of notable gaps in social infrastructure in critical areas, particularly in childcare. Approximately 12% of respondents to the Labour Market Participant Survey said that the lack of adequate social infrastructure was a barrier to living in Canmore, of which 11% referred to limited childcare options affecting the number of hours they can work and the types of jobs they can accept. Furthermore, 78% of labour market participants who cited social infrastructure as a barrier said that removing barriers would have a ‘large effect’ on their decision to stay in Canmore long-term (Figure 31).

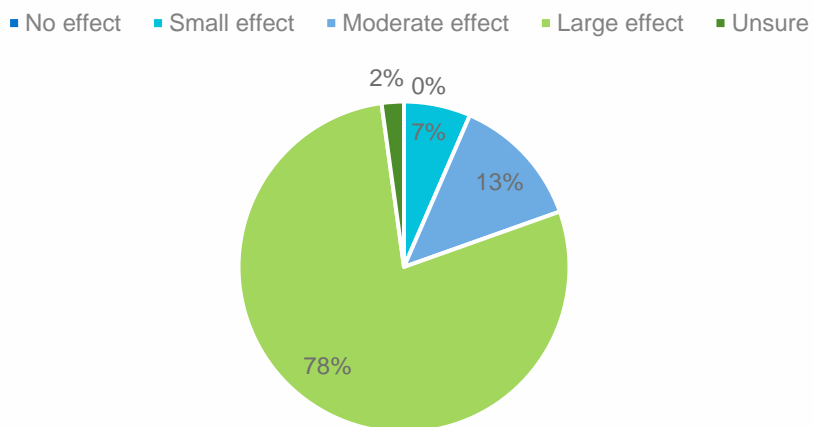


Figure 31 - Effect of social infrastructure on an individual's decision to stay in Canmore (Source: Labour market participants survey)⁷⁵

⁷⁴ [Community Foundations of Canada: Investing in Social Infrastructure Post-COVID. March 31, 2021.](#)

⁷⁵ Note that 0% of respondents responded 'no effect' in the above chart.

The gap in childcare services is well documented in the January 2023 Childcare Assessment carried out by the Town of Canmore.⁷⁶ The report highlights six childcare locations, with most providers reporting an average waitlist time of 16–17 months. 28% of respondents to the Childcare Assessment report stated that childcare hours did not meet their needs, and 22% stated that available days did meet their needs. Hours and days of operation barriers were the most reported barriers behind space availability and cost of care.

Studies show that increasing the provision of childcare spaces has a positive effect on labour supply, especially among women. Expanding operating times could unlock a larger supply of labour to match the heavy emphasis on Canmore's tourism sector and its irregular hours. The effects of increased childcare spaces in Canada are well documented, with some of the notable benefits of high quality and accessible childcare being increased workforce participation, support for lower-income households, and positive social and economic return for every dollar spent on childcare.⁷⁷ Childcare operators have access to numerous grants through the Canada-Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.⁷⁸ Funding available through the agreement includes affordability grants that can be used to pay for overhead costs and staff wages, grants for creating new childcare spaces or programs, wage top-ups for staff, and funds to offset the cost of Early Childhood Educator (ECE) professional development.

Notwithstanding Canmore's childcare coverage of only one-in-four children (23%), childcare providers in the community are unable to access some of the provincial and federal funding available through the agreement. In particular, funding through the Space Creation Grant, which provides funding for new licensed childcare spaces, is specifically for areas classified as "high-need". Although Canmore is classified as a 'Childcare Desert' by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (a childcare desert is classified as having a coverage rate of under 33%⁷⁹), it is categorized as a low-need community based on the grant's criteria defining "high-need" communities as those with a coverage rate of under 8%. Therefore, despite the high demand evident in the long wait-times for care, operators are unable to access a significant portion of funding that has been made available through the Space Creation Grant.

Canmore's high demand for childcare is reflective of the community's tourism-based economy. As mentioned in Section 3.2.3, labour market participants working in the accommodation and food services sector and in arts, entertainment, and recreation work longer hours than other sectors, i.e., outside of 9 to 5 business hours and on weekends. These households are more likely to require extended hours and drop-in services. Despite this demand, there is a lack of flexible care options available, with no weekend, evening, or early childcare options available before 7 a.m.

Given the cost of living in Canmore (see also Section 11), adequate childcare coverage is essential for both single-income and dual-income households to ensure that individuals can work to meet their basic needs. However, the current state of insufficient childcare in the community creates barriers for parents, particularly those trying to return to the workforce. According to a report from TD Economics, workforce participation of women with children under six is directly correlated with the availability of hybrid work in an industry.⁸⁰ As a town with high reliance on tourism-related industries like accommodation and food services, Canmore likely experienced a decrease in the participation of women with children in the labour force, providing a competitive disadvantage for employers in these industries.

⁷⁶ <https://www.canmore.ca/your-government/council/your-council/clips/post/council-clips-january-17-2023>

⁷⁷ Childcare Resource and Research Unit: Why Canada can't work without good childcare: How early childhood education and care supports the economy

⁷⁸ [Government of Alberta: Overview of the Federal-provincial child care agreement.](#)

⁷⁹ [Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives: Is my community a childcare desert? New map shows availability across Canada. May 16, 2023.](#)

⁸⁰ [TD Economics: The Space Between Us: The Availability of Childcare will Define Canada's Workplace. June 20, 2023.](#)

These effects also extend to employers, as the Canmore Childcare Assessment found that childcare needs impact their ability to remain adequately staffed.⁸¹ As a result, their focus is increasingly likely to be directed towards day-to-day operational needs, rather than long-term strategic planning (see also Section 3.2.3).

High demand is not the only barrier affecting the provision of adequate childcare; in addition, there are structural and geographical challenges limiting the ability of local childcare centres to offer services. Given the town's mountain location in a wildlife corridor placing limits on the town's size, there is little additional land available to construct new facilities such as childcare centres. Similarly, regulations on childcare centres make redeveloping existing spaces into childcare centres timely and expensive. Meanwhile, past attempts at expanding day-home coverage (including the Town's decision to allow day-homes in higher density buildings) seem to have resulted in little change due to landlords and condo boards prohibiting the operation of day-homes in their buildings. A complex regulatory environment has made it difficult for landlords and potential day-home operators to understand the existing rules and regulations surrounding in-home childcare in the community. The Town of Canmore could assist in this setting by making information in this area more accessible through their website to increase understanding of these rules and encourage residents to open in-home care centres.

Shortage of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) is also a significant barrier to increased accessibility. Regulations around staff-to-child ratios require a certain number of ECE trained staff per child, and a shortage of these workers limits the number of childcare spaces available, even if there is physical space for more children in care. The following are some of the factors limiting the supply of ECE's in Canmore:

Wage and cost of living disparities: ECEs in Alberta earn an average of \$16.79 to \$19.88 per hour. As part of the federal-provincial childcare program, wage top-up grants are available and increase average hourly earnings to \$19.43 for Level 1 ECEs and \$28.50 for Level 3 ECEs.⁸² ECE wages fall well below the Canmore living wage of \$32.75 (or \$29.00 for single individuals and \$47.15 for a lone parent, including benefits), even with the inclusion of wage top-ups.⁸³ The difference between the living wage and ECE salaries may prevent potential workers from working in Canmore, especially for Level 1 ECEs.

Need for certification: An ECE certification is required to work in a licensed childcare facility. A Level 1 ECE certification can be attained through completion of the online Child Care Orientation Course funded by the Government of Alberta, while Level 2 and 3 certificates require completion of a one-year certificate program or a two-year diploma program, respectively. Thus, there are barriers (e.g., education and certification, time, cost, residency status) to achieving a higher-level ECE certificate.^{84,85}

Transient community: Canmore is reliant on workers from other provinces and from abroad (i.e., Temporary Foreign Workers) as a source of labour to fill local supply gaps, with over one-third of current residents having moved to the area within the past five years. However, many of these workers are only in Canmore seasonally and gravitate towards positions in retail, accommodation, and food services rather than longer-term positions in social assistance. Additionally, given the low wages associated with working as a Level 1 ECE, some labour market participants may be more inclined to work in industries with higher salaries, greater flexibility, and no certification requirements.

⁸¹ The Canmore Childcare Assessment (ibid.) finds that 95% of employers state that their staff's childcare needs affect their availability, and 63% mentioned that their staff's childcare needs affect their wages.

⁸² Government of Alberta: Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Guide. January 2023.

⁸³ Town of Canmore: Canmore's 2022 Living Wage Report. December 20, 2022

⁸⁴ The Child Care Orientation Course is funded by the Government of Alberta and can be completed without cost to the participant.

⁸⁵ Additional barriers include language proficiency and access to an electronic device and a stable internet connection. To register for the Alberta Child Care Orientation Course, applicants must be at least 16 years and a Canadian citizen permanent resident, or work/study visa holder, legally residing in Alberta.

Housing shortages: Limited housing availability greatly affects the ability of businesses in Canmore to recruit employees. This constraint also impacts the ability of childcare organizations to recruit and retain workers, as they are forced to compete for workers with businesses who offer accommodation support. The high cost of accommodation in Canmore contributes to the high cost of living that workers experience, and effectively deters potential employees from moving to the town. (see also Section 12).

10.1.1 CASE STUDIES

Representative groups such as this project's partners, as well as the Canmore Business Alliance, have an important role to play in promoting the development of childcare spaces in the area, especially through zoning and other development incentives. Joining forces to advocate for additional funding from provincial and federal partners could also increase spaces from the current level available. The following comparative cases highlight communities who face similar childcare challenges:

10.1.1.1 CASE STUDY 1: REVELSTOKE, B.C.

Revelstoke experiences recruitment challenges and barriers to opening childcare centres due to staff shortages. The lack of childcare resulted in parents unable to return to work, contributing to labour shortages in the city. A 2021 case study of Revelstoke's childcare strategy by the Tamarack Institute highlighted the Revelstoke Child Care Society's successful recruitment strategy that resulted in a high number of childcare spaces per capita. The study found that by hiring local, offering professional development opportunities, and creating community partnerships (e.g., local school district, Community Futures), the city built a qualified workforce within the community rather than relying on recruitment from other municipalities.⁸⁶

10.1.1.2 CASE STUDY 2: WHISTLER, B.C.

As a tourism-oriented municipality, Whistler shares many of the same childcare challenges as Canmore. Operators noted difficulty recruiting and retaining staff due to the high cost of living and lack of qualified personnel. These issues, combined with long waitlists for parents, contributed to labour shortages in Whistler. To combat the major shortage in qualified ECEs, Whistler recently proposed a fully subsidized ECE training program to qualified students. By concentrating resources to increase access to ECE training and relevant qualifications, Whistler is looking to fill staff vacancies through training of the local labour market.⁸⁷

10.2 Transportation

Aside from childcare, engagement participants mentioned only a few additional gaps in the community's social programming and supporting infrastructure. Seven respondents to the labour market participant survey highlighted paid parking as an issue. Participants expressed concern over the short, free-parking time allocated to residents of Canmore, many of whom mentioned that three hours of free parking is not enough to cover the length of their shifts, and that it is unrealistic to expect staff to move their vehicles many times during a shift. However, as downtown Canmore has numerous free parking stalls within a short walking distance this is likely not a critical gap in infrastructure.

⁸⁶ [Tamarack Institute: Case Study: Revelstoke's Long-Term Strategy Offsets Childcare Shortages. 2021.](#)

⁸⁷ [Pique News Magazine, Whistler Institute Looks to Fill Daycare Gap by Offering ECE Training, July 16, 2023.](#)

An additional concern related to paid parking was the additional cost constraint that paid parking places on employees who commute from outside of Canmore to work in the town. One employer stated they rely on workers from areas outside of Canmore to meet their staffing needs, but due to high transportation costs, they are now having trouble recruiting staff from outside the community. Ensuring that transportation costs remain affordable for individuals commuting from outside of Canmore is vital to filling gaps in the local labour force, especially as many individuals find that they are priced out of the Canmore housing and rental market.

To ensure that parking does not impact commuting workers, Canmore's council approved a Town Centre Non-Resident Employee Monthly Parking Permit available during the off season. While this parking pass is intended to alleviate some of the concerns raised by employers and their out-of-town staff, interviewees suggested that limiting the availability of the pass to off-peak seasons could restrict its effectiveness; however, it should be noted that this was a sentiment expressed during the study, and no data regarding uptake or parking numbers has been assessed to verify this claim. Combining an off-season parking permit with public transit between surrounding towns may be one option to alleviate some of the perceived transportation cost barriers that commuting workers claim exist.

There may be an opportunity to improve existing transportation corridors between Canmore and surrounding communities. Respondents to the employer's survey suggested expanding public transportation to the neighbouring communities of Exshaw and Dead Man's Flats. There is also an opportunity to further collaborate with the Stoney Nakoda First Nation by providing transportation service between the Nation and Canmore. A collaborative effort between communities to support a transportation network would benefit employers in Canmore and elsewhere in the Bow Valley who are looking to hire staff from inside and outside of their community.

10.3 Healthcare

A severe shortage of healthcare workers has affected communities across the country, with nursing shortages affecting care and waiting times in municipalities throughout Canada, including in Canmore. These shortages have had noticeable effects on the delivery of essential services in the community, including the closure of the Canmore General Hospital's operating room in February 2023 caused by a nursing shortage.⁸⁸ The labour market challenges in healthcare and social assistance are among the most severe in the Town. The sector has vacancy rates (23.5%) and second highest average number of vacancies across all industries in the community (see Figure 12 and Figure 13 in Section 3). Due in part to these factors, employers in healthcare and social assistance are pessimistic about their ability to fill their vacancies with qualified applicants and have the second-lowest confidence ratio of all industries in Canmore (Figure 19).

Additionally, employers in healthcare and social assistance face further hiring challenges due to the prevalence of collective agreements, which limit the employer's scope to raise salaries to match that of competitors in other sectors. The need for specialized skillsets and provincial and federal regulations regarding the hiring of foreign workers are additional barriers to hiring to fill vacancies. Employers need to take further actions to address the labour shortages in Canmore's healthcare industry. Through advertising to new hires and targeted recruitment to attract qualified staff, employers in this industry will be better equipped to attract employees to work and reside in the community.

⁸⁸ [Rocky Mountain Outlook: Canmore Hospital OR Closed on Weekends due to Dire Nursing Shortage. February 3rd, 2023.](#)

10.4 Education

Other concerns raised by participants include expanding the selection of post-secondary courses offered online at Bow Valley College, which closed its Canmore Campus in August 2020.⁸⁹ Education and training programs are examined in-depth in Section 5. At the time of the Canmore Campus closure, Bow Valley College cited decreasing enrollment, but noted that the community would still have access to online course offerings and other satellite campuses in neighbouring Banff and Cochrane.

10.5 Recommendations

These recommendations aim at enhancing the quality of life and economic sustainability in Canmore by addressing critical areas that impact the community and its workforce. They address some of the fundamental challenges facing Canmore, focusing on creating a supportive infrastructure that enhances the community's social and economic vibrancy.

Recommendation 43: Create a dedicated section on the Town of Canmore website for information on opening and operating childcare facilities to alleviate the information barrier for residents.

- Compile necessary guidelines and town-specific considerations for opening childcare facilities.
 - Primarily, information from the Government of Alberta should be used.⁹⁰
- Create a resource library with helpful documents and links.
- Promote this information through local community channels to increase awareness.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 44: Establish clear guidelines and share information on legal and insurance requirements concerning in-home childcare facilities for landlords and condo management personnel in Canmore to alleviate concerns and foster support for such establishments.

- Compile and clarify legal and insurance requirements for opening in-home childcare centres and ensure they are in accordance with the Town of Canmore's bylaws.
- Develop an informative guide aimed at landlords and condo management boards outlining the process, legalities, and benefits of allowing tenants to open in-home childcare centres.
- Establish a direct communication channel between the Town of Canmore and landlords/condo management boards for inquiries and further clarifications.
- Create a section on the Town of Canmore website dedicated to this information, ensuring easy access for landlords and condo management boards.
- Encourage and facilitate discussions between prospective in-home childcare providers and landlords to address concerns and find mutually beneficial solutions.
- Monitor and gather feedback from landlords, condo management boards, and childcare providers to identify any ongoing challenges and adjust the guidelines and informational resources as necessary.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Small

⁸⁹ [Notice of Bow Valley Canmore Campus closure.](#)

⁹⁰ <https://www.alberta.ca/child-care-staff-and-operators>

Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 45: Foster partnerships with the local school system to raise awareness about childcare as a viable career path, targeting the local high school demographic as a potential solution to the labour shortage in the childcare industry in Canmore.

- Engage with local school boards and institutions to introduce programs or workshops focused on educating students about the career opportunities and benefits of working as an Early Childhood Educator (ECE).
- Develop an outreach program that brings current ECE professionals into schools to share their experiences and provide insights into the profession.
- Establish a mentorship or internship program connecting interested students with local childcare facilities to gain hands-on experience and exposure to the profession.
- Collaborate with local colleges or training centres to provide information sessions on obtaining necessary certifications for a career in childcare.
- Advocate for competitive wages and benefits for ECE professionals in Canmore to attract and retain talent.
- Partner with local housing authorities or organizations to explore affordable housing solutions for ECE professionals.
- Promote success stories of individuals who pursued a career in childcare through local media and social platforms to build a positive image of the profession.
- Organize community events or job fairs focusing on childcare as a career, providing resources and information on how to pursue a career in this field.
- Establish a webpage on the Town of Canmore's website dedicated to providing information on childcare careers, educational pathways, and local job opportunities.
- Conduct periodic surveys to measure the impact of these initiatives and gather feedback for continuous improvement.

Lead	Local childcare businesses
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance, Local school district
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 46: Form partnerships among local childcare providers, schools, and colleges to introduce an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) dual credit program at the local high school. This initiative aims to lessen the certification barrier for newcomers, provide students with a pathway to work in the childcare sector, and address staff shortages.

- Engage in discussions with local childcare operators, Canadian Rockies Public Schools, and Bow Valley College to outline the structure and feasibility of the ECE dual credit program.
- Develop a curriculum for the program ensuring it aligns with ECE certification requirements and establish a system for students to earn both school credits and ECE credentials.
- Promote the dual credit program among high school students, emphasizing the benefits of gaining industry-recognized credentials alongside their regular studies.
- Coordinate with local childcare facilities to provide practical training opportunities for students, allowing them to gain hands-on experience in the field.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the program in increasing the number of certified ECEs in the community and adjust the program as necessary for better outcomes.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Local school districts, Bow Valley College, Local childcare businesses
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 47: Enhance the hiring effectiveness and service adjustment of existing childcare centres by conveying hiring best practices and community needs data. This will aid childcare centres in better understanding and meeting the demand for extended hours of service and efficiently recruiting staff to fill vacancies.

- Conduct or utilize existing studies to gather data on community needs, particularly focusing on the demand for extended hours of service in childcare centres.
- Compile or source a set of hiring best practices tailored to the childcare sector, which can help childcare centres in efficiently recruiting and retaining staff. (Specific Lead: Job Resource Centre)
- Through the Town of Canmore’s channels, disseminate the hiring best practices and community needs data to all existing childcare centres.
- Organize workshops and seminars to provide childcare center operators and their hiring personnel with practical insights on implementing the provided hiring best practices and understanding the community needs data. (Specific Lead: Job Resource Centre)
- Establish a feedback mechanism for childcare centres to share their experiences, challenges, and successes in implementing the provided hiring best practices and adjusting their services based on community needs data.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Job Resource Centre
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 48: Lobby the provincial government to reconsider the classification of Canmore as a ‘low need’ community in terms of childcare needs, to better reflect the actual challenges faced by childcare operators, parents, and businesses, and enable access to the Space Creation Grant for expanding childcare spaces.

- Collect and document comprehensive data showcasing the actual childcare space needs, hiring challenges, and the ripple effects on the labour market and community at large in Canmore.
- Form a coalition involving childcare operators, the Town of Canmore, local businesses, and other stakeholders to unify the lobbying effort towards reclassification of community need.
- Lobby relevant provincial authorities, presenting the collated data and making a compelling case for the reclassification of Canmore’s status to better access grant funding.
- Launch a public awareness campaign to garner community support and broader awareness on the misclassification issue and its impact on the local economy and families, thereby bolstering the lobbying effort.

Lead	Town of Canmore (Town Council)
Key Stakeholders	Childcare operators, Canmore Business Alliance
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 49: Review and update municipal plans and policies to prioritize the incorporation of childcare spaces in Canmore's future growth plans, ensuring that the community's childcare needs are met amidst physical expansion constraints.

- Undertake a thorough review of existing municipal plans and policies to identify areas where childcare space prioritization can be incorporated and proceed to update these policies accordingly.
- Explore and implement zoning amendments that facilitate the inclusion of childcare centres in new and existing development plans, addressing the limited availability of land and suitable buildings.
- Engage with local developers, childcare operators, and the community to gather input on the proposed policy updates and zoning amendments, ensuring a collaborative approach to addressing childcare space needs.
- Establish partnerships with private developers to incentivize the inclusion of childcare facilities in their development projects, providing mutual benefits and addressing the community's childcare needs.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	Bow Valley Builders & Developers Association, Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Canmore Business Improvement Area
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Long

Recommendation 50: Form partnerships with universities to attract new healthcare graduates and offer cooperative placement opportunities in Canmore to alleviate healthcare worker shortages and enhance local healthcare services.

- Establish formal partnerships with universities offering healthcare programs and create a framework for continuous collaboration to attract new graduates and provide co-op placements in Canmore.
- Design and launch a co-op placement program that provides real-world experience to healthcare students, while also addressing the staff shortages in Canmore's healthcare sector.
- Develop a targeted marketing and outreach campaign to promote Canmore as a desirable location for healthcare professionals to start their careers, highlighting the benefits and opportunities available.
- Create a supportive and nurturing environment for new healthcare graduates, offering mentorship programs, competitive compensation, and a clear career advancement pathway to encourage long-term retention.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Canmore General Hospital, Alberta Health Services
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Long

Recommendation 51: Implement a widespread advertising campaign targeting recent healthcare graduates from medical schools across Canada and the US to attract and fill staff vacancies at Canmore General Hospital/AHS.

- Create an appealing advertising campaign that highlights the benefits and opportunities awaiting healthcare graduates in Canmore, including competitive compensation, quality of life, and the chance to make a significant impact in a community in need.
- Identify and list medical schools and universities across Canada and the US whose graduates would be a good fit for the healthcare positions available in Canmore.
- Utilize online job boards, social media, and other digital platforms to disseminate the advertising campaign to a wider audience of recent healthcare graduates.
- Establish connections with career centres of the target universities to advertise the available healthcare positions in Canmore, and possibly organize virtual or in-person recruitment events to interact with interested graduates.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Canmore General Hospital, Alberta Health Services

Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Long

Recommendation 52: Expand public transportation options between Canmore and surrounding communities to mitigate transportation difficulties, facilitating easier commuting for out-of-community workers and thus aiding employers in filling open vacancies.

- Conduct a feasibility study to understand the logistics, costs, and benefits associated with expanding public transportation services to surrounding communities.⁹¹
- Engage with local and regional transportation authorities to explore options for extending existing public transportation routes or creating new ones connecting Canmore with nearby areas.
- Survey local employers to understand their needs and the potential benefits of expanded transportation options for their potential employees from surrounding communities.
- Launch a public outreach and awareness campaign to inform residents and potential workers from surrounding communities about the expanded transportation options and gather feedback to ensure the services meet the needs of the community.
- Based on the findings, implement additional transportation services especially during peak seasons to cater to the influx of workers. Establish clear schedules and promote these services among both employers and workers in Canmore and surrounding communities.

Lead	ROAM Transit
Key Stakeholders	Town of Canmore, Bow Valley municipalities (that are not currently on bus routes)
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	High
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 53: Conduct an Education Needs Assessment to understand local demand for education and address the disparity between labour market needs and available educational services in Canmore.

- Conduct surveys among local businesses and job seekers to identify the skills and education gaps.
- Analyze the data, compile a report highlighting the findings and recommendations to address the identified gaps.
- Share the findings with the community in a public forum to gather further input and foster dialogue.
- Engage with educational institutions to discuss potential introduction or expansion of courses and training programs based on the identified needs.

Lead	Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce
Key Stakeholders	Town of Canmore, Bow Valley Builders & Developers Association, Community Futures
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Medium

⁹¹ This should be informed by the Transit Feasibility Study currently being conducted by the M.D. of Bighorn and Kananaskis once complete.

11 Managing the Cost of Living

Affordability is a key determinant of a community’s ability to attract and retain a sustainable workforce. Canmore is broadly perceived as an expensive place to live—as previously highlighted in Figure 25, the cost of living in Canmore was raised as a barrier to remaining in the community by 57.1% of labour market survey respondents.

This section examines the effects of high living expenses on the decision making of local labour force participants, as well as the efforts of businesses to support their employees. It also provides recommendations to help improve affordability and thereby increase the likelihood that individuals in critical roles are inclined to remain in Canmore.

11.1 Cost of Living, Salaries, and Working Hours

Local challenges related to affordability have been previously highlighted in Alberta’s 2023 Living Wage Network Report, which estimates Canmore’s hourly living wage at \$38.80/hour.⁹² This calculation is a weighted average of three different family types and accounts for the wage impact of benefits such as childcare subsidy programs and other community initiatives.⁹³

A more detailed breakdown of living wages for different family types is provided in Table 14.

Table 14 - Living wages by family type in Canmore, 2022 (Alberta Living Wage Report 2023)

Family Type	Living Wage (\$/hr)
2 adults and 2 children (two incomes)	\$36.69
Lone parent family (one income)	\$49.38
Single individual (one income)	\$35.19

It is important to note that the living wage required for a community is affected by various factors such as benefits, complimentary meals, paid vacation days, training, and development opportunities etc. Supplementing a worker’s effective wage through additional forms of compensation impacts their living wage and reduces the wage needed to live comfortably in a community.

Table 15 compares several communities across the Canadian Rockies, demonstrating the relatively high cost of living in Canmore. Considering that starting salaries in Canmore range from \$15–20 across multiple sectors, most local entry-level opportunities do not offer a living wage to staff in any household scenario. As a result, new workers may at first glance feel discouraged from viewing long-term residency and employment in Canmore as sustainable.

⁹² Additional information about the living wage in Canmore, as well as the Town of Canmore’s Living Wage Report, is available on the [Town of Canmore’s website](#).

⁹³ The living wage is defined as the hourly wage a worker needs to earn to cover their basic expenses and participate in the community. The calculation considers the hourly rate of pay needed for a household to maintain a modest standard of living once government transfers have been added and taxes have been subtracted. It assumes that each adult is working full-time hours and includes more than the basics of food, clothing, and shelter. It also considers unexpected costs, small investments in education, childcare, and participating in the community.

Table 15 - Living Wage across the Canadian Rockies (Living Wage Canada)

Community	Weighted Average	2 adults and 2 children	Lone parent family	Single individual
Canmore	\$38.80	\$36.69	\$49.38	\$35.19
Squamish	\$24.08	\$24.08	N/A	N/A
Revelstoke	\$24.60	\$24.60	N/A	N/A
Fernie	\$23.58	\$23.58	N/A	N/A
Cochrane	\$22.35	\$25.25	\$27.70	\$20.05
Cranbrook	\$21.90	\$21.90	N/A	N/A
Nelson	\$21.14	\$21.14	N/A	N/A

A comparison of average wages in Canmore to those in similar communities (i.e., those with tourism-intensive economies) is presented below. This review, based on vacant job postings across online job aggregators, indicates that the average hourly salary in Canmore is near the middle of the group (Table 16).

Table 16 - Wage Comparisons with Tourism-Intensive Locations (Online job posting aggregators, Ballard calculations)

Average Hourly Salary	
Fernie	\$23.57
Waterton	\$20.14
Whistler	\$22.34
Canmore	\$20.89
Banff	\$20.34
Jasper	\$18.26

It is not uncommon for individuals to work two or three jobs to continue living locally. Based on the survey responses of labour market participants, the average number of hours worked in Canmore is 35.6 per week and the median number of hours worked is 40 per week. While this result is slightly biased towards the upper end of the range (Figure 32), it is not out of line with what is expected in a typical labour market. These results suggest that workers who hold multiple part-time jobs are able to accumulate enough hours to equal full-time employment. However, businesses owners point out the negative side-effects of their workers working multiple jobs, notably the impacts of fatigue on their performance during busy periods.

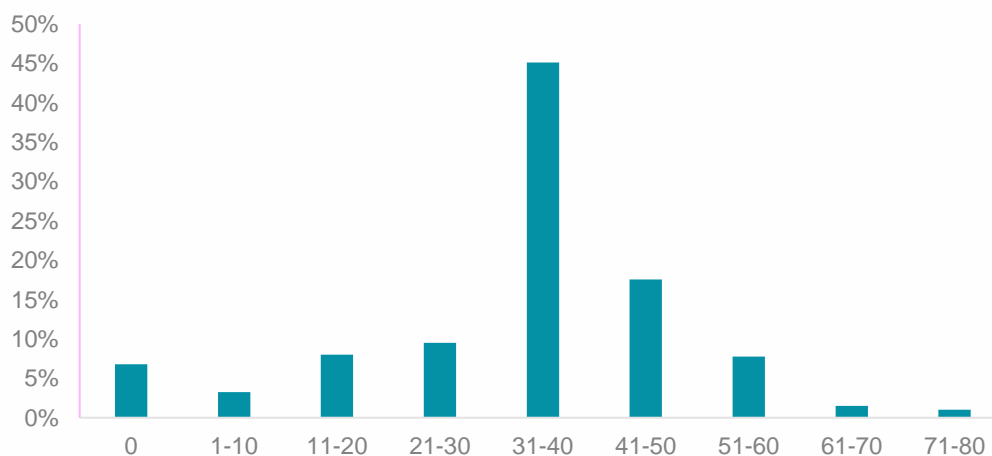


Figure 32 - Distribution of working hours (Source: Labour market participants survey)

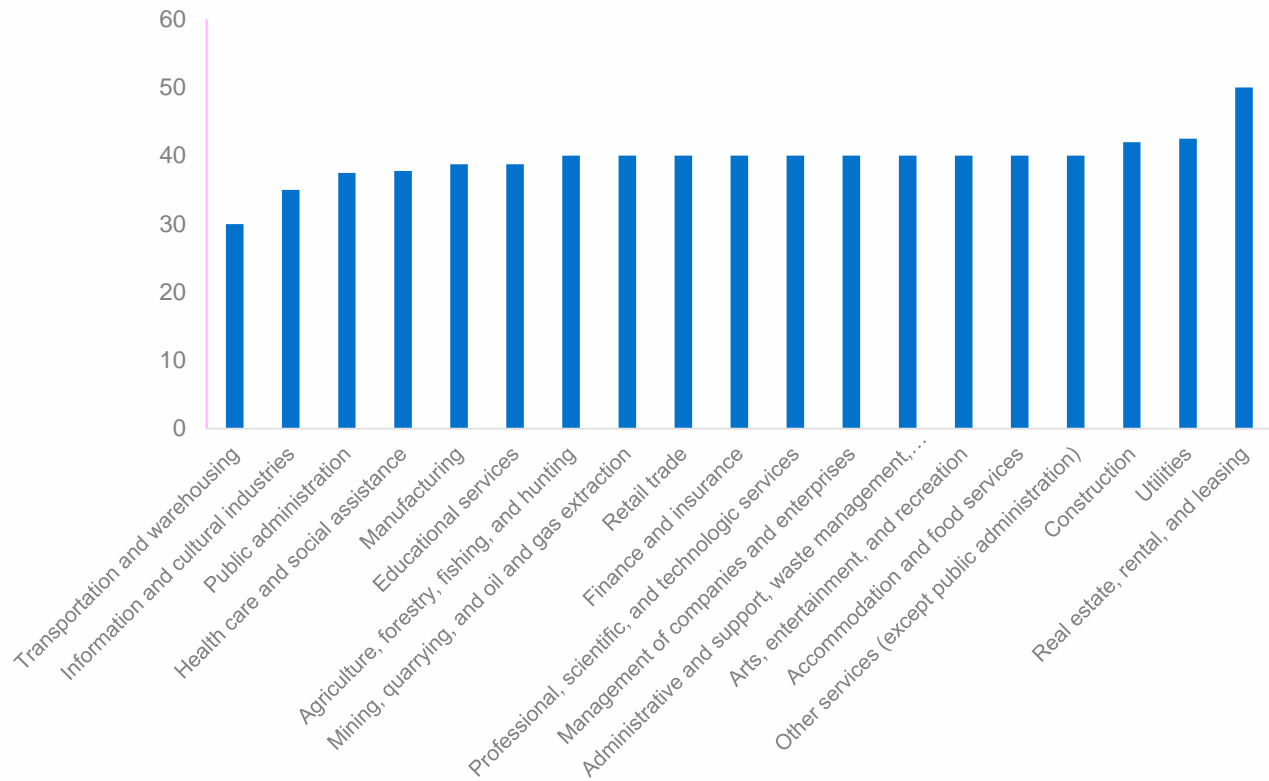


Figure 33 - Median hours worked by sector (Source: Labour market participants survey)

The seasonal nature of tourism also has corresponding effects on the labour market, with many employed in the sector encountering high labour demand during the high seasons in summer and winter, but lower demand during “shoulder seasons”. Those working in seasonal businesses experience fluctuation in their hours from 20 per week in the low season to 60 per week in the high season. Combined with relatively low wages compared to sectors not oriented towards tourism, this variation makes it more challenging to achieve a stable year-round standard of living, especially for those with families who face higher accommodation costs.

11.2 Salary Expectations and Closing the Gap

In survey responses, labour market participants ranked “salary and benefits” as the top determining factor in their decision to accept a job. However, there is a noticeable gap between average starting salaries (Figure 34) and the expectations of labour market participants (Figure 35). This gap may be impacting employee retention—anecdotally, some businesses have suggested that employees change jobs for minor wage increases such as an additional \$0.50 in hourly pay.⁹⁴ Additionally, workers who enjoy the work-life balance of Canmore can choose to relocate to several other communities in the region where wages and affordability may better align with their expectations (see comparisons above).

⁹⁴ It is important to note that while wage may be one factor contributing to job changing, multiple factors may influence such decisions, and the departing employee may not in all cases disclose those reasons to employers.

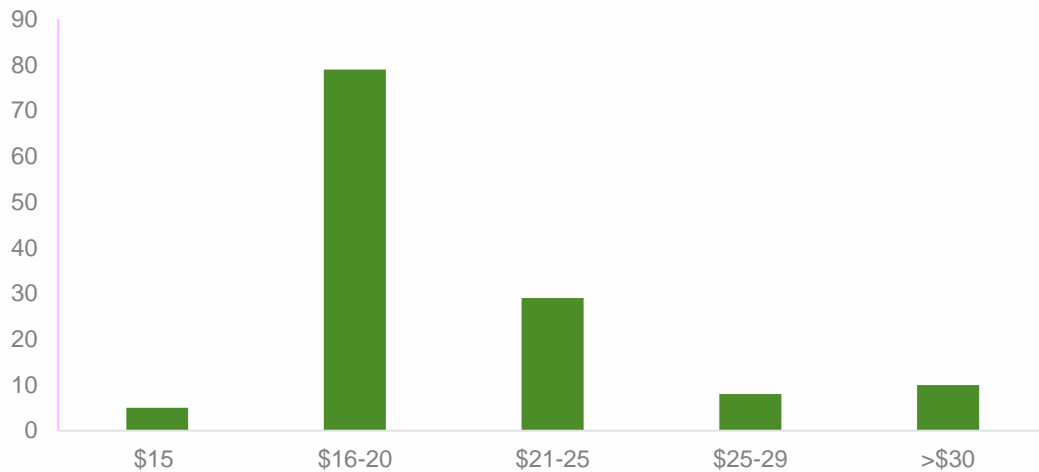


Figure 34 - Average salary offered by Canmore's employers (Source: Employers survey)

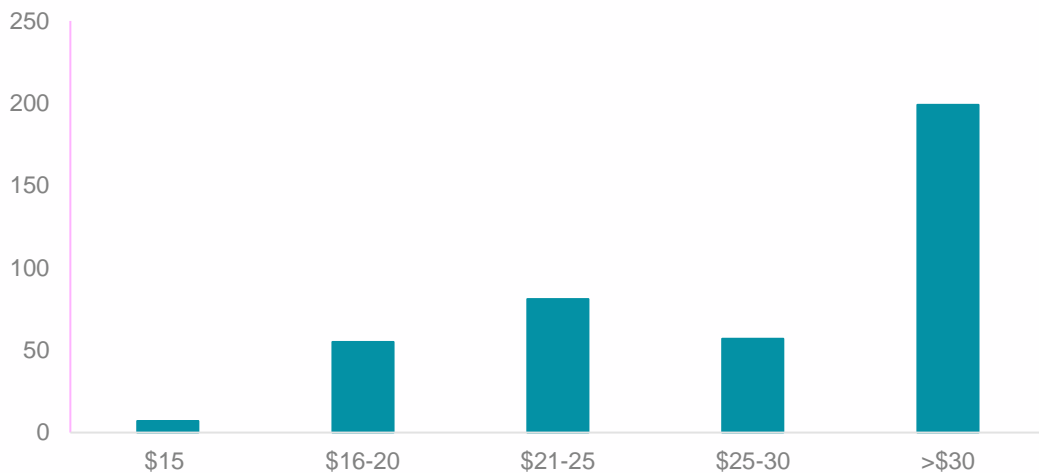


Figure 35 - Salary expectations of labour market participants (Source: Labour market participants survey)

Many businesses noted the significant constraints within which they operate, including tight operating margins, inability to charge tips and gratuities, and the impact of collective bargaining on pay increases. These constraints affect wage offerings, which in turn make it harder to hire and retain experienced staff, including those in managerial roles. Businesses in the accommodation and food service sector are particularly challenged, as compensation for managers becomes salaried with promotion, often corresponding with reduced access to tips and gratuities.

Some of the constraints facing public sector organizations (e.g., health care, public administrations) are also facing large franchise owners (e.g., McDonalds, Tim Hortons, Safeway, Save-on Foods), as they cannot compensate staff at higher levels than at other locations.

To bridge the gap in salary expectations, many employers supplement wages by offering:

- Seasonal, retention, and end-of-probation bonuses.
- Commission and performance-based incentives.
- Discounts.
- Paid vacation.

Additionally, many employers offer benefits such as healthcare and dental, RRSP plans, and regular pay increases, while take-home pay increases significantly for those earning tips and gratuities.

These contributions all reduce cost burdens for workers and the living wage. With these additional forms of compensation, the gap between salaries and the living wage becomes less pronounced than it appears, especially for those working in businesses that provide accommodation supports. However, employers expressed some concern that discussions of Canmore's living wage have led to prospective employees focusing their expectations on the salary stated in job advertisements rather than the complete package of benefits and other vital supports that they provide to staff members.

Engagement data shows that benefits are positively correlated with employers' confidence in filling vacancies (Figure 36).

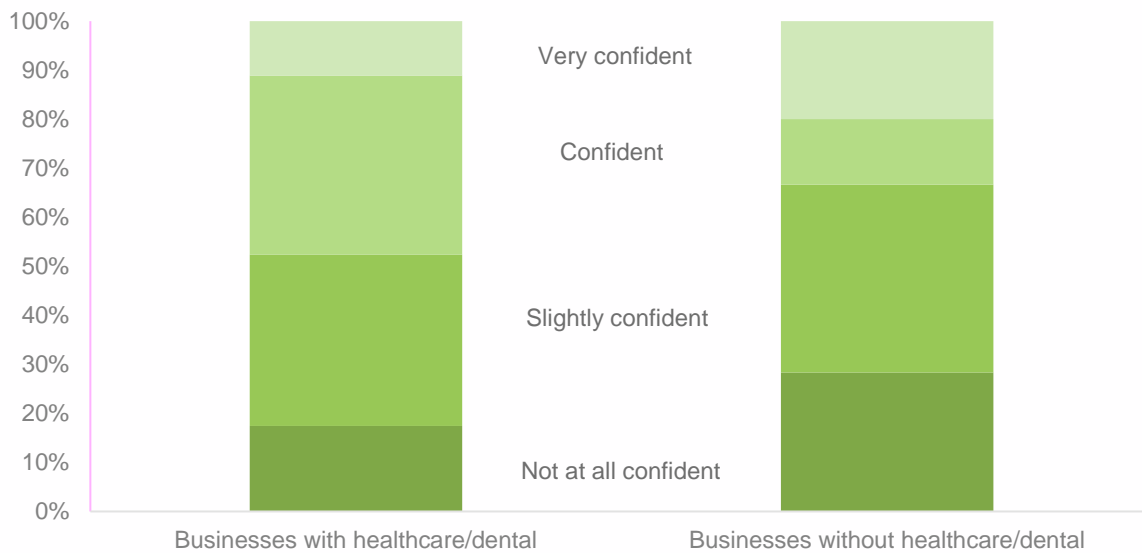


Figure 36 - Confidence in hiring based on healthcare and dental benefits (Source: Ballard calculations)

Despite their confidence in the value of benefits packages, employers noted multiple limitations on their effectiveness for staff recruitment and retention:

- Businesses in the same sector typically offer similar or identical benefits packages, lessening their impact on those deciding between multiple job opportunities.
- Benefits are often limited to full-time staff or management, in a labour market with a high proportion of part-time and seasonal staff.
- Different demographics have different preferences for benefits. For example, older workers and those with families typically place a higher priority on healthcare and dental benefits, whereas younger workers place more importance on recreational passes and store discounts.

11.3 Recommendations

The cost of living is a barrier that directly affects recruitment and retention in Canmore. Addressing affordability will impact these efforts and ultimately help both employers and workers contribute to the Town's economic output and health. There are already several local initiatives, some of which are led by the Town, aiming to tackle this problem, and the Affordable Services Program helps connect in-need individuals with necessary supports.

There are several organizations in Canmore leading initiatives that are directly addressing cost of living. These include:

- The Canmore Affordability Program: Designed to offer discounts and supports to in-need individuals and families in Canmore.
- Roam Transit: Offering free service within Canmore and affordable transit to Banff.
- The Bow Valley Food Alliance: A regional organization dedicated to addressing food security.
- St. Michael's Food and Friends: Community dinners serving 300-400 meals a week.

These efforts are essential to addressing the high cost of living in Canmore and have direct positive impact on Canmore's labour market. Supporting and expanding these endeavours is highly recommended.

Recommendation 54: Continue to increase communication and awareness of existing programs addressing cost of living.

- Develop a list of discounts locals can access, place emphasis on discounts on essential goods and services (groceries, childcare etc.).
- Develop a list of supports offered in Canmore, including the food bank, dinner services, hampers etc.
- Continue developing communication channels to advertise these lists:
 - Have them available directly on the main page of the Town of Canmore's website
 - Include them in the monthly newsletters from the Town, particularly in the Bow Valley Family Resource Network newsletter.
 - Advertise the resources on social media.
- Develop materials to advertise the discounts and supports to be posted in areas where people would be accessing services (e.g., in the food bank, etc.).
 - Additionally, send these materials to employers to share with their employees.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	Essential service providers, ⁹⁵ Local Businesses
Potential Impact	Small
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 55: Continue to expand existing programs to aid individuals who are not currently eligible for supports.

- Expand the Canmore Affordability Program to offer more discounts on food and essential goods.
- Expand the eligibility criteria for accessing essential services to include more of the labour force, particularly people working in lower-paying sectors.
- Partner with local grocery and food providers to develop a program offering discounts to employees of lower-paying sectors.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	Essential service providers, Local grocers
Potential Impact	Large
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Medium

⁹⁵ Essential service providers refers to organizations such as Roam Transit, the Bow Valley Food Alliance, the Bow Valley Food Bank, and other operators in this sphere.

Recommendation 56: Encourage employers to offer supports to help decrease cost of living for employees

- For employers in the food industry, encourage a practice of ordering food in bulk for the purpose to preparing meal kits for staff.
- Encourage all employers to explore discounted benefits plans available to them.
 - As an example, employers can explore becoming members of the Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce to have access to discounted benefits plans.
- Additionally, make Chamber membership more accessible, particularly for businesses in lower-paying sectors.
- Encourage employers to match their benefits to the needs of their staff (based on demographics, employee feedback, etc.).

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Local Businesses, Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 57: Develop a program to check on workers' living conditions and welfare.

- Work with Canmore Family & Community Support Services (FCSS) and other essential providers in the community to develop a data collection structure to understand who is accessing the programs.
- Collect information from providers on an annual basis.
 - Ensure consent is given and that confidentiality is upheld during collection of information.
- Conduct outreach to workers, particularly in lower-paying sectors, to understand their living conditions and needs.
- Using findings, adjust and develop new programs to better support workers.

Lead	Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Town of Canmore, Essential service providers
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 58: Lobby provincial and federal governments for public sector workers (e.g., healthcare, childcare) to receive additional compensation (i.e., similar to Northern Living allowance).

- Engage with legal and governmental relations experts to develop a lobbying strategy.
- Arrange meetings with relevant government officials to discuss and lobby for the additional compensation allowance.
 - Advocate for a similar program in Canmore as in Northern Canada where key positions receive a retention bonus.
 - Combine this request with ongoing tourism funding efforts.
- Commission a taskforce to represent the needs of public sector workers in Canmore.
- Assign responsibility to the taskforce to collect data and information pertaining to the needs of public sector workers in Canmore.
- Assign responsibility to the taskforce to communicate the findings to provincial and federal governments, and to lobby for additional compensation as needed.

Lead	Town of Canmore (Town Council)
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance, Local Businesses
Potential Impact	Large
Estimated Financial Cost	High
Timeline	Long

12 Considering Housing Needs for the Current and Future Workforce

Housing issues directly impact the labour market in Canmore and the overall cost of living in the community. Limited land availability, the need for multiple types of housing, and regulations on developments all contribute to the high costs of housing. These costs present a significant barrier for workers, and heavily impact local businesses as well.

Multiple initiatives to address Canmore's housing challenges are already underway. Specific actions addressing cost, development regulations, and types of housing incentivized are part of the Town's strategy in improving the local housing system. This section will specifically report on the challenges housing presents to the local labour market and offer recommendations to address those labour market issues.

12.1 Engagement Insights

Housing challenges have a significant impact on the functioning of the labour market in Canmore. The community has trouble in retaining newcomers with vital skills who cannot find suitable housing, and those reliant on staff accommodation are unable to switch jobs easily. Long-term residents also worry about their ability to afford rising housing costs.

Engagement shows that housing issues affect both recruitment and retention:

- **Recruitment:** A common theme heard during engagement with employers was that new hires from outside the community turn down job offers once they realize the difficulties of finding appropriate housing in the community. As a result, the conversion rate from interview to starting in a position is relatively low, resulting in lost productivity and making employers reluctant to consider hiring from outside the community. Employer interviews also revealed that job interviews in some sectors often focus on the interviewee's housing situation, and in some instances, the advice given to newcomers is to find housing before finding employment.⁹⁶ The inability to place newcomers in housing, and therefore the labour pool, is significant. They are essential to filling existing vacancies, as the existing local labour supply struggles to satisfy the community's labour demand.
- **Retention:** As a result of high property prices, many residents who are looking to settle down and grow their families are unable to do so because of the housing costs in Canmore. Out of 399 labour market participant survey respondents, 59.6% state that the lack of affordable housing was a major barrier to staying in the community over the long term. Furthermore, of this subset of respondents, more than 70% (42% of all labour market participants) stated that resolving this issue would have a large positive effect on their decision to remain in the community (Figure 37). About 30% of respondents also stated that lack of accommodations was a barrier when looking to apply for a new job. The inability to retain labour exasperates the challenges faced by Canmore's labour market, which is already facing a shortage of skilled labour.

⁹⁶ This potential barrier is significant to newcomers as they are typically unable to secure housing without proof of income.

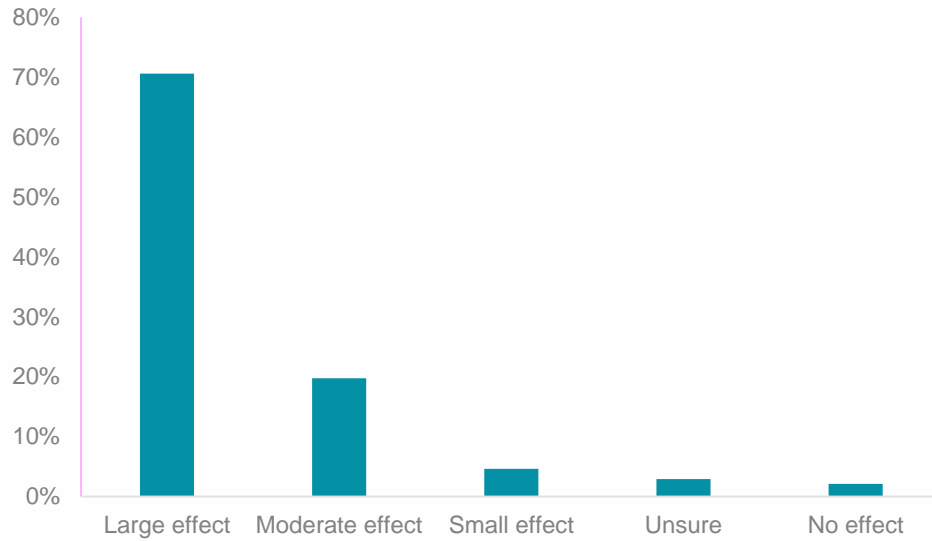


Figure 37 - Effects of removing cost of housing as a barrier (Source: Labour market participants survey)

Amongst respondents to the labour market participant survey, 49.1% own their own home, while a further 21.8% have long-term rental agreements in place. Only 1.7% of respondents live in staff accommodation.

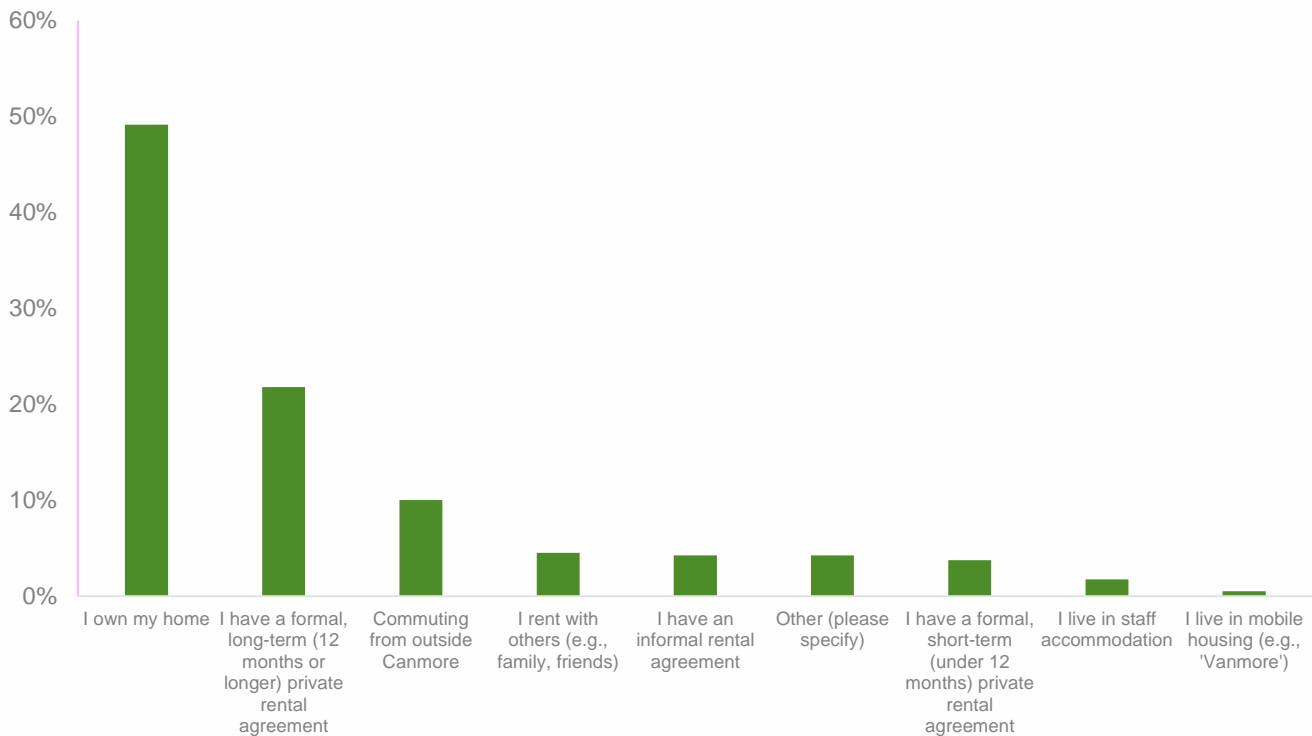


Figure 38 - Labour market participants living situation (Source: Labour market participants survey)

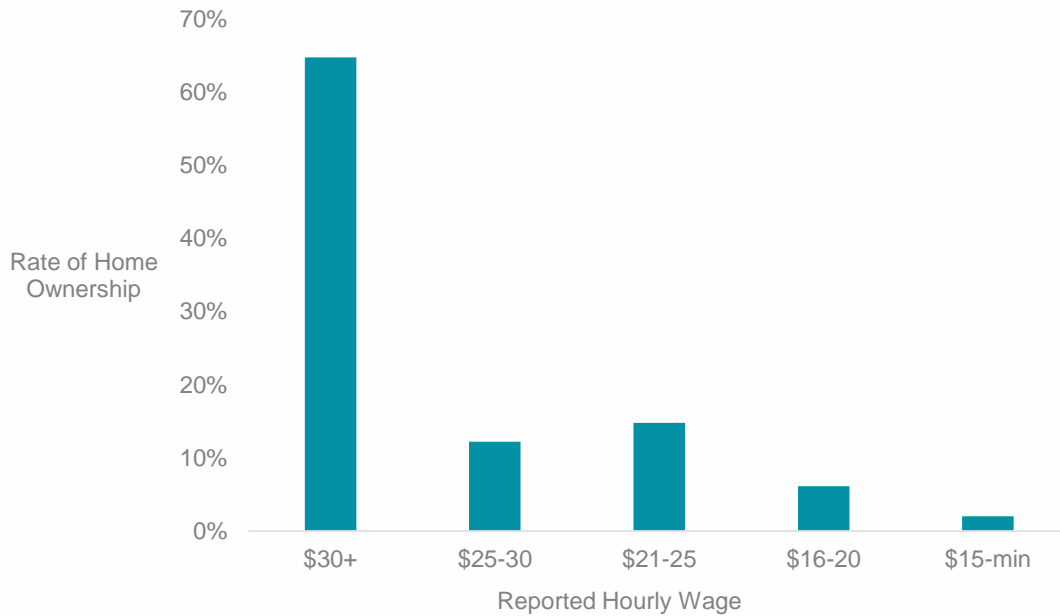


Figure 39: Salaries by home ownership (Source: Ballard calculations)

As anticipated, the rate of home ownership drops significantly as wages decrease. 64.8% of homeowners earn more than \$30 per hour, equivalent to \$60,000 or more per year.⁹⁷

Almost universally, engagement with homeowners and those saving for a down payment pointed to the positive effects of the Canmore Community Housing programs (e.g., Vital Home Ownership Program) and the significant contribution it has made to making home ownership accessible. Overall, many labour market participants have positive impressions of Canmore Community Housing. However, raising the income bands to qualify to \$250,000 underlines the severe affordability constraints in place. Additionally, waitlists are lengthy, which was reported as a significant barrier.

⁹⁷ This calculation is made based on a 40-hour working week, 5 days per week, and 50 weeks per year.



12.2 Analysis of Housing Market Data

Data analysis reinforces the reports heard from engagement. Figure 40 below shows that the rental vacancy rate of Canmore is extremely low, with a vacancy of only 0.2% as of October 2022. As most labour market participants coming from outside Canmore will primarily seek rental accommodations, the near-zero vacancy rate presents a significant barrier to their ability to participate in Canmore's labour market.

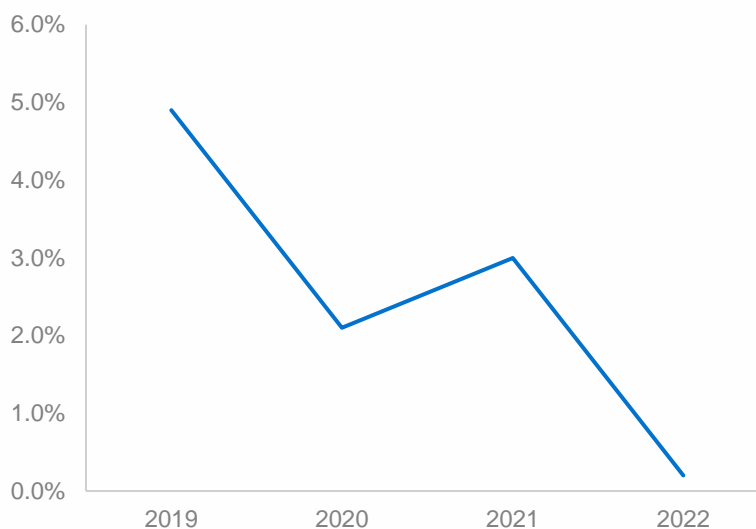


Figure 40: Rental vacancy rates in Canmore (Source: CMHC)

Canmore Community Housing (CCH) data also shows that existing vacancies in Canmore are either in shared one-bedrooms or in units that are priced between \$2,300 and \$5,875. Comparing these rates to national affordability metrics, a labour market participant would have to be earning an hourly wage of over \$44 to reasonably afford housing rented at \$2,300. Workers from many sectors, especially ones in lower-wage sectors such as in accommodation and food services, would not be able to afford these rates themselves. Sharing a unit with roommates is a solution that could potentially mitigate this issue if it aligns with personal preferences and the availability of people looking for roommates.

Further regarding affordability, data from Census 2021 shows that home ownership is becoming increasingly expensive. The median value of dwellings increased from \$696,817 in 2016 to \$850,000 in 2021. Assuming an interest rate of 7% at 25 years of amortization, new home buyers in Canmore would need to earn a wage of \$126.73 (yearly income of over \$260,000) to be able to reasonably afford home ownership.⁹⁸ Therefore, for most workers in Canmore, home ownership is not attainable due to prohibitive cost barriers. Note that more recent figures from Canmore Real Estate⁹⁹ shows that as of Q3 of 2023, the average home in Canmore sold for \$1,090,000, further highlighting the increasing cost of housing and how it is fiscally out of reach for most workers in Canmore.

Looking at the volume of housing in Canmore, the town has more dwellings per capita than Alberta, with 0.57 dwellings per person in Canmore compared to 0.42 for Alberta. However, only around 74% of dwellings are occupied by usual

⁹⁸ It is important to note that this calculation does not assume a down payment or include other costs associated with home ownership, such as utilities, which would further increase the wage needed for affordability.

⁹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/@Canmore realestate agent/videos>

residents, with the remaining one-quarter occupied by owners of vacation homes, part-time residents, and visitor rentals.^{100,101}

When adjustments are made for vacation homes and rentals, the available stock of housing for residents and labour market participants falls to lower levels, albeit not greatly out of line with provincial averages. The adjusted number of dwellings per resident is 0.43 (compared to 0.38 for Alberta), while the adjusted number of dwellings per labour market participant is 0.70 (compared to 0.71 for Alberta). As such, this data would suggest that the overall volume of housing stock in Canmore is appropriate for the population.

Table 17 - Summary statistics on dwellings per capita in Canmore (Sources: Census 2021; Ballad calculations)

	Canmore	Alberta
No. of dwellings	9,173	1,772,670
Per capita	0.57	0.42
No. of dwellings occupied by usual residents	6,804	1,633,220
Per capita	0.43	0.38
Per labour market participant	0.70	0.71

To quantify housing needs as they relate to Canmore’s labour market, employment forecasts (presented in Sections 2.3 and 2.4) and data collected on median incomes by sector help to predict housing needs in Canmore for the coming period. It is anticipated that employment will increase by around 800 jobs between 2021 and 2025, with two-thirds of these coming from Canmore’s largest sectors. To maintain the current worker to housing ratio in Canmore, total dwellings (occupied by usual residents) would have to increase by about 629 units between 2021 and 2025, comprised of:

- 416 new owner-occupied homes
- 213 new purpose-built rentals

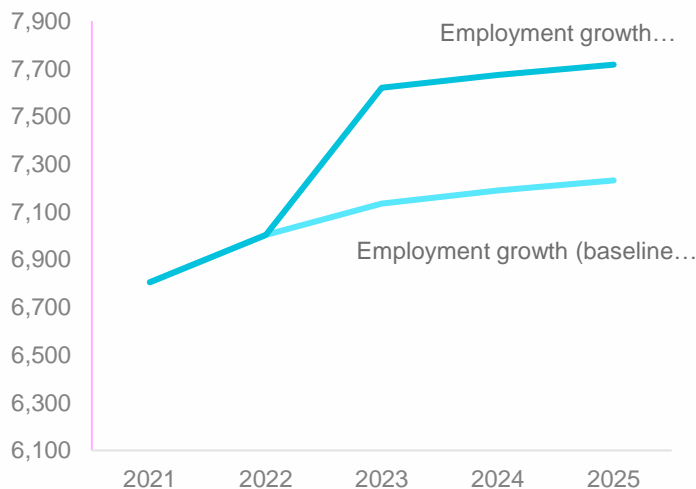


Figure 41 - Housing units forecast (Source: Ballad calculations)

¹⁰⁰ A private dwelling occupied by usual residents refers to a private dwelling in which a person or a group of persons is permanently residing. Also included are private dwellings whose usual residents are temporarily absent on May 11, 2021 (i.e., the date that Census 2021 was carried out).

¹⁰¹ By contrast, the corresponding provincial figure for dwellings occupied by usual residents for 92% of the total number of dwellings.

In order to also resolve employment vacancies, the total number of dwellings (occupied by usual residents) would have to increase by a total of 1,114 units during the same period, comprised of:

- 737 new owner-occupied homes
- 377 new purpose-built rentals

Note that in the above analysis, this increase in units would only maintain the worker to housing ratio in Canmore.¹⁰² It would not alleviate any shortages of housing that currently exist or would persist without being directly addressed. However, with 1,114 units of housing developed by 2025 it can be reasonably expected that workers will have an adequate supply of housing available in Canmore.

Additionally, it is important to note that recent changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program means that accompanying families can also immigrate on temporary visas. As such, the level and range of housing stock needed will depend on the demographic composition of new entrants to Canmore’s labour market.

Our forecasts for employment growth anticipate that a large share of new employment will come from relatively low-paying sectors such as accommodation and food services and retail trade, both of which had a median hourly salary in the \$21–25 range based on responses from labour market participants (Table 18).

Table 18: Employment and median salaries in Canmore’s growth sectors (Source: Ballad calculations)

	Employment growth (no. of positions)	Median salary (\$, before tax, hourly)	Median salary (\$, before tax monthly)	30% of salary ¹⁰³
Accommodation & food services	160	22.5	3,750	1,125
Retail & wholesale trade	80	22.5	3,750	1,125
Professional, scientific, & technical services*	150	30+	5,000	1,500
Construction*	60	30+	5,000	1,500
Arts, entertainment, & recreation*	100	30+	5,000	1,500

*The survey range of \$30+ limits this analysis’ effectiveness as many in these sectors likely earn above than this figure.

Comparison of these wages to average and median rental costs (Table 19) highlights the challenges facing the lower-income segments of the labour market, and the need for supports for these labour market participants. Using the 30% of shelter-to-cost ratio as a guideline, we estimate that 34.8% jobs in the community face housing risks based on the median starting salary in these sectors (Table 20).

Table 19 - Rental costs in Canmore (Source: Ballad calculations)

	Low season (\$)	High season (\$)
Average rental cost	1,470	1,517
Median rental cost	1,358	1,380

¹⁰² The ratio of owner-occupied homes to purpose-built rentals also only maintains the existing ratio of owners to renters.

¹⁰³ The 30% calculation of shelter-cost-to-income ratio is generally considered appropriate for owners and renters, as per Census 2021.

Table 20 - Employment and median salaries across Canmore's labour market (Source: Ballad Calculations)

Low-wage Sectors	Employment (% of total)	Median salary (\$, before tax, hourly)	Median salary (\$, before tax, monthly)	30% of salary ¹⁰⁴
Accommodation & food services	16.1%	22.5	3,750	1,125
Retail & wholesale trade	12.0%	22.5	3,750	1,125
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	0.4%	22.5	3,750	1,125
Real estate, rental, and leasing	1.9%	22.5	3,750	1,125
Other services (except public administration)	4.4%	22.5	3,750	1,125
Total	34.8%			

Given the above analysis, housing stock development in Canmore must include housing that is appropriately priced to accommodate for the growth in sectors with lower median salaries. Typically, rental accommodations are best suited to cater to this type of housing need.

12.3 Supports Offered by Employers

Analysis also considered whether businesses that provide accommodation support to their staff (e.g., below-market and subsidized rents, shared staff accommodation, etc.) are more confident that their vacancies will be filled. Around 35.4% of employers surveyed offer some form of housing support.

The types of accommodation offered and the contribution of this support to employees' net take-home pay are highly varied. Supports included subsidized rents (\$500–\$1,000 per month), contributions based on the number of days worked, and fully funded shared staff accommodation. Due to the shortage of housing in the community, employers are also rationing their accommodation for priority members of staff (e.g., housekeepers, chefs, line cooks, etc.). For example, restaurants will often reserve housing for back-of-house and kitchen staff.

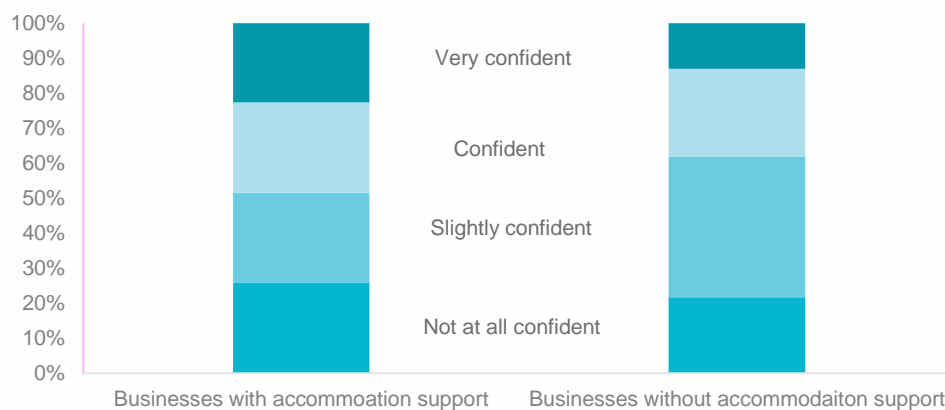


Figure 42 - Confidence based on accommodation supports (Source: Employer survey)

¹⁰⁴ The 30% calculation of shelter-cost-to-income ratio is generally considered appropriate for owners and renters, as per Census 2021.

Overall, providing accommodation supports is positively associated with an increased confidence for filling vacancies, with 44% of businesses offering support expressing that they are confident or very confident that their vacancies will be filled (Figure 42).

Employers reported the following reasons for not providing accommodations supports:

- Many simply do not want to act as both employer and landlord.
- Securing commercial financing for the purchase of residential property was reported to be a difficult process.
- The costs of purchasing housing for staff are often prohibitive for employers.
- The process for securing development permits is seen as slow.
- Staff turnover and seasonality are often too high to make investing in housing feasible.

Engagement suggests many employers are more focused on trying to provide their workers with adequate wages and benefits, leaving housing policy for the Town and other policymakers. Securing workers from Cochrane or Calgary is often preferred over the process of property acquisition or development, with some employers now running bus services to bring in staff from other locations.

12.4 Current Initiatives

Housing is known to be an area of concern for Canmore, and there are various initiatives underway to address the challenges faced by the community. Several align with the needs of the labour market in Canmore, such as the programs offered by Canmore Community Housing, which include supports for both renting and owning a home within the area.

A recent initiative that should directly address housing needs is the submission of a Housing Accelerator Fund application to the CMHC. This fund provides municipalities with funding to tackle core issues in their local housing systems, particularly focusing on planning improvements such as zoning and permitting. The submission includes various proposals that would benefit both the local housing system and the labour market, including:

- A plan for the development of Palliser Trail, which would include 1,200 units of housing including affordable housing.
- The development of new systems for an easier permitting process.
- Investigation into a tax structure to incentivize purpose-built rental accommodations.
- Changes to land-use bylaw for promoting density and development.

Many of these initiatives are already underway, highlighting the Town's recognition of and commitment to addressing housing in the community.

12.5 Recommendations

These recommendations could serve as a blueprint for addressing housing challenges in a way that supports the local labour market. By taking a multifaceted approach that includes increasing housing supply, adjusting housing types to meet labour needs, and offering incentives for secondary suite development, Canmore can significantly alleviate housing-related issues impacting labour availability and retention.

Recommendation 59: Maintain and update the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment.

- Continue regular updates to Housing Needs and Demand Assessments to ensure progress is made on addressing housing gaps.
 - An update should at minimum be completed with every release of new Statistics Canada census data.
 - Tracking on the types of housing required should be completed to ensure appropriate growth is occurring across the housing spectrum.
- Consult guidelines on the structure and/or contents of a housing assessment from sources such as the Government of Alberta and align the local assessment accordingly.
- Ensure that the assessment evaluates the housing needs of the local labour force.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Short

Recommendation 60: Maintain the centralized inventory of staff accommodations for interested businesses and develop a sharing system whereby vacant units are first available for businesses.

- Establish an annual reporting system to collect information on staff accommodations available.
 - This should be a regular update to the 2019 Staff Housing Guide.¹⁰⁵
- Have businesses report expected housing need for labour to determine allocations.
 - Establish guidelines and protocols for sharing and utilizing staff accommodations.
 - When supply is limited, develop a lottery-system to allocate accommodations, with a preference to support small businesses.

Lead	Job Resource Centre, Canmore Business Alliance
Key Stakeholders	Local Businesses
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

¹⁰⁵ https://issuu.com/jobresourcecentre/docs/housing_project_2019_english_vf_7_w

Recommendation 61: Continue efforts to increase the supply of housing units either by optimizing the utilization of existing units or by constructing additional units to cater to labour market needs.

- Connect with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to discuss supports available in both funding and information for interested developers or project proponents.
- Connect with the Government of Alberta to discuss funding available to build housing supply.
 - Discuss the higher costs of development in Canmore to ensure appropriate funding considerations.
- Connect with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to discuss funding available for housing development.
- Investigate policy to incentivize renovation projects and to allocate several units in new housing developments for local labour housing needs.
- Utilize findings from the Housing Needs Assessment and the Housing Strategy, supporting various housing projects' initiation.
 - Supports can be provided by allocating land, connecting groups to funders, or connecting aligned groups.
- Identify interested developers and community groups to partner on projects that will specifically address the housing needs of the local labour force.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	Developers, Bow Valley Builders & Developers Association
Potential Impact	Large
Estimated Financial Cost	High
Timeline	Long

Recommendation 62: Continue to explore programs that support the development of secondary suites through financial support and other incentives.

- Continue investigations on the previous Accessory Dwelling Grant program to pinpoint improvements for greater uptake and impact.
- Host informational sessions to educate property owners on the benefits and process of creating secondary suites.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Medium
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 63: Explore the feasibility of housing renovation and provide incentives to support renovation projects.

- Develop an inventory of renovation opportunities projects.
- Conduct feasibility studies to identify key renovation opportunities.
- Develop a streamlined permitting and approval process for housing renovations.
- Consider the introduction of financial incentives such as grants, low-interest loans, or tax breaks to motivate property owners into renovating housing spaces.
- Provide incentives for projects that align with the housing needs of the labour market.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	N/A
Potential Impact	Large
Estimated Financial Cost	High
Timeline	Long

Recommendation 64: Continue to review and streamline the current permitting processes to identify and eliminate any redundancies or bottlenecks that could delay housing projects.

- Organize regular review meetings to assess the housing planning & development progress and promptly address any hurdles, bringing them towards administration.
- Simplify and prioritize permitting process of purpose-built rentals and affordable housing projects.

Lead	Town of Canmore
Key Stakeholders	BOWDA
Potential Impact	Moderate
Estimated Financial Cost	Low
Timeline	Medium

Recommendation 65: Explore and lead housing opportunities to address labour needs in Canmore.

- Explore opportunities to lead housing development that would directly impact staff needs through initiatives such as co-operative housing.¹⁰⁶
- Work with funders (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Government of Alberta) and other housing agencies when leading housing development to explore partnerships and potential avenues of support.

Lead	Local Businesses
Key Stakeholders	Canmore Business Alliance, Canmore Community Housing
Potential Impact	Large
Estimated Financial Cost	Large
Timeline	Long

¹⁰⁶ In regard to co-operative housing, consider reading the Paths for Housing Co-Ops Guide: <https://www.housingredefined.ca/paths-for-housing-co-ops>

13 Conclusion

Canmore's economy has rebounded well from the COVID-19 pandemic, with demand across business sectors rising rapidly due to strong consumer confidence, higher real estate prices, and surging international visitor arrivals. Correspondingly, the need for labour has increased, and most sectors are experiencing shortages, especially those operating in consumer-facing and tourism-intensive sectors (e.g., accommodation and food services; retail trade, and arts, entertainment, and recreation). On the positive side, there is emerging evidence that the worst of labour shortages have passed, especially as international workers on temporary permits return and businesses are completing hiring earlier to ensure sufficient staff for the high season.

While the worst of the labour shortages may be behind us, the scale of labour shortages across Canmore's economy remains significant. We estimate a current deficit of 600–650 positions, leading to adverse outcomes for business owners and workers. Effects include reduced service offerings and shorter opening hours for many businesses, which may impact Canmore's brand as a tourism destination and investment location. Increased physical and mental health stresses are a risk for business owners/managers and their staff. The findings suggest that few business owners have strategies in place to improve employee attraction and retention over the medium and long term, relying instead on unsustainable, short-term practices such as implementing longer working hours and overtime or borrowing staff from other locations across the Bow Valley (e.g., Banff, Cochrane). However, guidance and support from key organizers can empower businesses and improve their capacity for strategic planning.

Labour shortages in Canmore reflect increasing pressures over many years, exacerbated further by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, many challenges facing the community's key economic sectors above are persistent (e.g., housing, cost of living, migration) and unlikely to be resolved quickly. They require concerted and collaborative efforts with various stakeholders, the business community, and the Town.

Even with its challenges, Canmore remains one of Canada's most attractive locations, reflecting its enviable mountain lifestyle, idyllic landscapes, extensive amenities, proximity to Calgary, and access to an international airport. Indeed, many of our interactions with business owners, labour market participants, and policymakers referred to the community as "paradise", implicit in which is recognition that sometimes living in a community such as Canmore also comes with a higher cost of living and smaller scope for housing options. However, it should be noted that other locations across the Canadian Rockies offer similar advantages, with lesser challenges around the cost of living and housing, providing competition for Canmore to attract and retain a labour force over the long term.

Overall, Canmore has a strong foundation for continued growth. In addition to its competitive advantages, Canmore has a proactive community of business owners, advocacy groups, and other local stakeholders who engage regularly with the Town on economic development and policy initiatives. We hope that this document not only equips its readers with the information necessary to tackle Canmore's labour market challenges but that it also inspires these passionate residents to come together and create an economy that works for both employers and employees.