Kootenay Boundary Productivity Project

Final Report

July 2012

Report Prepared by:

Paul Wiest, General Manager
and
Lisa Cannady, Project Assistant
Community Futures Central Kootenay
Suite 201, 514 Vernon Street, Nelson BC
250.352.1933
pwiest@futures.bc.ca
lcannady@futures.bc.ca

Project Overview

The Kootenay Boundary Productivity Project was designed to address a business's productivity and innovation challenges. This was achieved by providing business support agencies with tools to create awareness about business productivity and facilitating the creation of productivity strategies for local business.

This report provides an overview of the project activities and findings. The project involved researching business productivity strategies from other jurisdictions; creation of a concept productivity assessment tool and delivery of productivity enhancement strategies for local business. Community Futures Central Kootenay acted as the lead agency in partnership with other Kootenay Boundary business support agencies such as; community futures, chambers of commerce, community colleges, science associations and regional trusts.

The overall project goals were as follows:

- build awareness within the local business community regarding the need to address productivity issues
- develop methodologies for SMEs in creating a productivity strategy that focuses on:
    - improving the quality of workers' skills
    - facilitating the flow of skilled workers into and within the labour force
    - increasing the productivity of people in the workplace
    - enhancing innovation for SMEs
    - assessing the productivity of SME's physical capital
- facilitate the development of productivity plans for Kootenay Boundary based businesses
- create the framework for a pilot initiative that would assist employers in addressing their productivity issues as identified within their productivity plans

A project advisory team was established to review project objectives, work plan and provide input to key activities within the project which included:

- Background research
- Review of productivity assessment tools
- Business engagement and feedback
- Creation of a productivity diagnostic
- Delivery of productivity workshops
- Follow-up support to participating businesses

The advisory team comprised of representatives Community Futures of East Kootenay, Boundary, Greater Trail, Central Kootenay and Revelstoke as well as Selkirk College. The team met a total of 4 times over the duration of the project. A project site was created to efficiently share information between advisory members, funders, and other interested parties.

Interviews were conducted with key organizations that work to address productivity challenges and with agencies that help identify the current productivity issues that affect Canadian businesses. The purpose was to obtain a better understanding of what is currently underway and identify any potential opportunities to leverage existing tools and resources that may assist this project. Interviews were conducted with the following agencies:

- Small-business BC
- BC Chamber of Commerce
- Productivity Alberta
- Western Diversification
- Ministry of Jobs Tourism and Innovation
- Small Business Roundtable
- Business Development Bank of Canada
- Selkirk College Regional Innovation Chair
- National Research Council of Canada

A detailed literature review focusing on the measurement of productivity and on practical diagnostic tools was completed. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) were also asked to provide input into the development of a business productivity strategy.

Productivity Alberta was contracted to develop a small business productivity assessment tool that focused on leadership/management, innovation, operations/service, and knowledge work. A draft of the tool was completed and then tested with a group of local businesses.

Upon finalization of the assessment tool, productivity workshops were delivered to 28 businesses and 10 business support organizations. This involved participants completing the assessment tool and then attending a productivity workshop. For a selected few, site visits to their business were also conducted.

Based on administering the questionnaire and conducting productivity workshops to businesses within the Kootenay Boundary, a series of recommended next steps have been developed. Project findings will be shared at the 2012 Community Futures Provincial Conference, which will be hosted in Nelson BC on September 30, 2012.

Background Research

A researcher was retained to conduct a detailed literature review focusing on the measurement of productivity, and on practical diagnostic tools that have been developed for businesses to measure their productivity and develop corrective measures that increase productivity. A key directive for this researcher was to focus on productivity in the context of small to medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs. See *Appendix A* to review this report.

The researcher reviewed and identified the different components of productivity. For instance, to separate technical efficiency gains from changes in productivity from job experience; or separate the impacts from developing human capital from the impacts of innovative technology. Understanding the drivers of each component of productivity helped focus the analysis of the practical diagnostic tools.

A review of practical diagnostic tools that applied to SMEs was conducted. The review included some analysis based on the conceptual framework of productivity developed in the literature review. In other words, what exactly do these practical tools measure and what is the cost benefit to business the owner? Can we develop a better understanding of what is being measured by these diagnostic tools? This informs us on how to better practically apply the tools.

Within Canada, BC is near the bottom of the pack with respect to productivity growth. The Kootenay region, due to its geographic isolation and small population/market size, relies disproportionately on small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Roughly 90% of all businesses in the RDCK and RDKB have less than 20 employees. The Kootenay economy is dependent on retail, manufacturing, tourism, healthcare, construction, and resource extraction. However, employment in manufacturing and resource extraction has been declining while the service sector is gaining. These structural features pose specific challenges to winning productivity gains.

A) Key Drivers for Productivity

Research agrees that the main drivers of productivity gains are: the quantity and quality of human resources, the quantity and quality of capital, and innovation and technological advance. This means that significant improvements to the region's productivity will require attention to skills development. Human capital can be developed through both formal institutional education and through less formal skills development (including employer sponsored training programs). Increasing business owners' willingness to invest in physical capital is necessary to increase the quantity and improve the quality of the region's capital stock. Furthermore, a culture of innovation and technology improvement will be the result of purposeful and committed actions by proprietors/managers including the full engagement of their staff. These,

both individually and collectively, represent a significant cultural shift for the economic stakeholders of the Kootenays.

The business research community has built a number of executable philosophies and improvement tools focused on these drivers of productivity. The systems of improvement that have been most widely heralded are truly philosophies to be embraced by an entire organization, not just a management tool. Derived from the extraordinary international successes of Japan's Toyota Corporation, *Kobayashi's 20 Keys for Workplace Improvement* and the Lean Manufacturing philosophies have successfully transformed many businesses world-wide. Research on external factors affecting productivity, as discussed in *Porter's Diamond Model*, is particularly relevant to the Kootenay region. All of the models and tools discussed in this report should be complemented by focused benchmarking practices.

Both the 20 Keys and Lean Manufacturing philosophies focus on creating value for the customer, engaging staff in the improvement process, building cutting edge capital stock, and optimizing management technology. The process of engaging employees in the pursuit of value creation necessarily includes investing in the human capital, or improving the quality, of workers and teaching an innovative approach to every position. Seeking cutting edge capital requires investment in the quantity of capital stock and taking an innovative approach to capital acquisitions and management. Finally, optimal management skills are innovative and should include a focus on engaging all of the resources available to a firm. All of these components are directly related to productivity drivers.

Porter's Diamond model describes the relationship between the regional economic environment and the competitiveness of a firm. Factors such as availability and quality of labour and capital, related and supporting industries, level of competition in the regional economy, and the types of customers create opportunities and incentives for firms to be innovative and improve productivity. Porter's model recognizes that there are external limits to the improvements a firm can make on its own. This recognition indicates that concerted efforts by both industry and regional government can improve the competitive environment and facilitate productivity improvement efforts by private firms.

B) Productivity Assessment Tools

This phase of the project research included review of productivity improvement tools from around the globe. Universally, the improvement tools reviewed focused on increasing organizational awareness of productivity drivers and developing consciousness regarding actions and attitudes that can improve an organization's productivity though those drivers. Although there are several approaches and methodologies to productivity improvement, there are a limited number of productivity assessment tools. Following were identified as the most appropriate assessment tools for SMEs:

- Workplace Productivity Snapshot (New Zealand)

- Small Business Checkup

- Malaysian Productivity Corporation

- Productivity Alberta Productivity Assessment Tool

Workplace Productivity Snapshot:

The New Zealand Department of Labour has sponsored considerable work in the field of productivity improvement. This work comprises the development of a long-term strategy that facilitates innovation through their Skills-Productivity Nexus (New Zealand Department of Labour). Their work examines ways to foster technological improvement, motivations for increased skill development, and the innovation of new products, services and production systems.

The Workplace Productivity Snapshot is the tool that was developed by the New Zealand Department of Labour and its partners. This tool focuses on seven categories affecting productivity: Leadership and Management Capability, Productive Workplace Culture, Innovation and Technology, Human Capital, Production Systems, Networking and Collaboration, and Measurement.

Small Business Check-up:

The Small Business Checkup is sponsored by the Leadership and Management Development Council of British Columbia (LMDCBC), the Canada / British Columbia Business Services Society, and Western Economic Diversification Canada. The checkup is a questionnaire focused on thirteen categories: Specific Business Environment, Competitive Environment, Business Objectives, Management Activities, Internal Policies, Operating Practices, Business Practices, Strengths and Weaknesses, Management Skills, HR Practices, Leadership Skills, Technical Skills, and some Financial Measures.

These categories are not exclusively focused on productivity. Rather they are designed to be a more general tool to indicate areas of general business practice improvement. However, an examination of the questions reveals that many of the productivity drivers are addressed through the questionnaire. All thirteen of the categories, taken together, provide a picture of the organization's approach to human capital management and development, management skills and attitude toward technological advance.

It is worth noting that this questionnaire targets small businesses. Small businesses tend to be on the lowest end of the sophistication scale, where keeping accurate books cannot be taken as a given. This questionnaire is well suited to unsophisticated users interested in improving their general practices. This tool is *not* designed for moderately sophisticated firms that are ready to commence the process of scalar growth, development and expansion.

Malaysian Productivity Corporation:

The Malaysian Productivity Corporation (MPC) is different in their approach to assisting businesses improve productivity. The MPC productivity calculator is a (very) rough calculator of productivity. MPC uses the online productivity analysis as an introduction or a conversation starter, with the ultimate goal of engaging businesses in a more formal discussion of business best practices and productivity improvement.

The public website offered by MPC provides potential clients with a succinct introduction to formalized business practice improvement. MPC promotes the use of standardized benchmarking and productivity analysis. However, there is very little useful interactive material to be had through the website. At the time of writing, the author had not received any reply to written requests for MPC publications. If and when those publications are received, this report will be updated accordingly.

Productivity Alberta Productivity Assessment Tool

The Productivity Alberta (PA) proprietary tool was the best of those tools reviewed. The PA tool is partially based on the Kobayashi *20 Keys* philosophy of productivity improvement. It provides a sophisticated and robust process that guides organizations through a self-assessment of activities and attitudes that contribute to productivity and creating value for customers.

The PA tool elicits a representation of a firm's approach to: Leadership & Management, Innovation, and Operations. While the questionnaire and tool are designed for medium sized industrial producers, most of the tool applies to smaller users and to a service industry setting. Drawing heavily on the philosophical approaches of Lean Manufacturing and the 20 Keys ensures a tool that, in many instances, transcends sectors and firm size.

Recommendation

Based on its exceptional level of superiority, the main recommendation from the background research report was to use Productivity Alberta's Productivity Improvement Tool as the model for a British Columbia and Kootenay focused product. This product should be tailored to the SME heavy local economy. This entails including components that draw attention to management skills, human resource constraints, investment constraints and regional structural considerations that are particular to rural economic environments and SME environments.

Business Engagement Process & Methodology

The solicitation of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) feedback in the development of a business productivity strategy was conducted. This involved five focus group sessions that were held in the Kootenay Boundary area: Revelstoke, Cranbrook, Nelson, Grand Forks and Trail. These sessions included representation from SMEs, community futures offices, chambers of commerce, Aboriginal and economic development agencies. The purpose of the focus group sessions were to gauge businesses knowledge and understanding of business productivity, and furthermore determine their interest in creating a productivity strategy for their business.

In advance of the meeting participants were provided with an agenda. A total of 39 individuals participated in the meetings. These sessions involved a short presentation that provided an overview of the Kootenay Boundary Productivity Project, and laid out some challenges for business productivity from a Canadian context. The presentation also provided participants with background information on key productivity drivers, and introduced a number of web based productivity enhancement tools.

Following this presentation focus group participants were asked to answer these questions:

a. What do you consider to be the key issues that are impacting business productivity in Canada?
b. Do you feel there are opportunities to enhance productivity in your business, if so what are they?
c. What would motivate business owners to assess and act on productivity opportunities/ gaps?
d. What would hold back business owners from addressing productivity improvement?
e. What type of assessment would help to identify productivity opportunities/gaps?
f. How can business support organizations assist in implementing strategies to enhance productivity?

Notes from all five sessions were completed and distributed to participants. The information from these notes helped guide the development of the productivity diagnostic tool that was administered to participating SMEs. The following is a summary of the discussion notes from these sessions.

Issues impacting business productivity:

The discussion regarding this question focused on three themes: general issues, human resources, and technology/innovation. Covered under the general issues were a

number of infrastructure challenges such as transportation and highways, access to reliable power, and costs for logistics such as shipping. One particular issue that was cited in the West Kootenay region was access to reliable air transportation in and out of the region - often flight cancellations or delays resulted in lost productivity.

Business owners also expressed the challenge of having the time to focus on issues of productivity. They often cited that they didn't have the time or the knowledge to help address productivity challenges. In their opinion too much time was spent working in the activities of the business rather than strategically on the operation of the business. Business owners also felt they didn't have the knowledge or understanding of how they could assess their productivity. They were very interested in the idea of assessment and in creating benchmarks that could measure outcomes from implementing productivity strategies. An outside assessment from an expert in the field was also seen as a service that would be useful in assessing productivity challenges within the business.

Human Resource issues were a relatively hot topic for employers. How to engage employees, motivate them and create a stronger sense of ownership within the business were areas of challenge that employers would like to address. There was also concern expressed regarding the ageing workforce and the potential loss of knowledge from the experienced workers that would be exiting due to retirement. The time and effort required to recruit and hire a skilled employee is particularly challenging for SMEs as this role is typically filled by the owner.

Keeping abreast of new technology advances was common challenge cited by business owners. Greatest importance was how these advances can be practically applied to business, and will they generate positive results. The lack of local technical support for new software was noted as an issue. Owners also expressed the challenge of finding the financial resources needed to purchase new technologies. In correlation to this challenge is the ability to assess whether the purchase of new technologies would translate into savings for the business.

Opportunities for productivity enhancement:

The SMEs that participated in the focus group discussion felt that if they could focus on their human resources this could produce the greatest short-term benefit for productivity gains. Implementing proven practices that would improve overall workplace culture could greatly enhance productivity. Specifically, effective ways to recruit, train and engage their workforce was seen as high priority. In terms of engagement, a particular

area of interest to business owners was how to effectively facilitate dialogue with employees on workplace practices - getting their perspective on how operations can run more efficiently.

Customer feedback was also seen as an important aspect that can result in greater productivity. Mechanisms to create customer loyalty programs and methods of collecting customer feedback in terms of products and services were viewed as opportunities to create greater efficiency.

Succession planning and the subsequent transfer of knowledge were viewed as very important to the ongoing operations. Creating effective ways to mentor and train new employees is critical when facing the loss of a senior employee. Business owners also indicated the need to develop an effective succession plan for themselves.

Challenges to implementing productivity measures:

The challenges associated with implementation can be condensed to time, cost and motivation. From the business owner's perspective, the time associated with implementing a productivity strategy can be viewed as challenging. Combined with this is the fear of change and the negative implications on staff morale; there is a sense that this fear could actually lead to reduced productivity.

Cost was often expressed as an impediment by the focus group participants. Several examples were cited where a business had invested in productivity measures, for example technology upgrades that did not produce any substantive cost savings or in fact reduced productivity. There needs to be a clear understanding of the costs and benefits in the decision-making process for implementing productivity measures.

In terms of motivation, a key component is the rewards associated with implementation of productivity measures. A number of business owners said that what would really motivate them is if they could see a clear reward in terms of profitability or cost savings. A major influence in adapting productivity measures as stated by focus group participants was word-of-mouth validation from business peer group members.

Assessment tool:

The focus group participants indicated that the greatest value for the assessment tool is not necessarily the final output, but rather the process of completing the assessment

tool, and the fact that it would provoke thought and discussion on how to enhance business productivity.   The assessment tool should provide a basis for creating an overall productivity strategy. In terms of the assessment tool design, most participants felt that it needs to be user-friendly and not take more than an hour to complete. Participants agreed that upon completing an assessment there needs to be a debriefing to help interpret the results that are generated.

How service providers can play a role in implementation:

Business service providers in the region can play a very important role in helping to interpret the assessment tool results and provide follow-up in terms of creating a productivity strategy for the business. Business owners are unclear about the various resources that may be available to them to help implement productivity measures and finance the costs associated with those measures. Business service providers could be an important link between the business owner and potential resources that exist for the business. Most businesses saw value in group sessions where they could interact with peers. However, in addition to these group sessions it was strongly recommended that a one-on-one productivity business counsellor be available as a follow-up service.

For further information on the focus group sessions see Appendix B.

Development of Productivity Diagnostic Tool

The Project Advisory Team was presented with findings from the background research and business engagement sessions. The Advisory Team agreed with the key recommendation that Community Futures Central Kootenay contract with Productivity Alberta to create a productivity diagnostic tool that will be available to small business enterprises (less than 50 employees) and local business support organizations. In providing this service PA also agreed to assist Community Futures in order to build local capacity in the region for delivery of future workshops.

Rather than build a tool from the "ground up" it was agreed that Productivity Assessment Tool (PAT) already developed would be used as a foundation for this project. Productivity Alberta further developed the PAT to meet the specific needs of small business enterprises in the Kootenay/Boundary. The key specifications that were identified for the assessment tool were as follows:

- The target group for the diagnostic tool is small businesses with less than 50 employees.
- An on-line tool available to participating SMEs within the Kootenay/Boundary in a large variety of business sectors.
- A print version of the tool will also be made available to businesses.
- The diagnostic tool designed to generate a summary report that can be broken down by region and business sector. The report can be used to identify specific strategies for participating businesses. It can also be used to identify any regional or sector-specific issues or challenges.
- The tool will be used to provide the following:
  - Profile data on the business;
  - Where the organization is currently adding value and where there are opportunities to make improvements;
  - Human resource issues the business is facing;
  - Skill development programs/services that are available to them;
  - Programs and services that can help to address productivity issues; and
 - Productivity road map

Community Futures and Productivity Alberta jointly worked to create the Productivity Assessment Tool. This involved on-going dialogue between the two organizations and the following activities:

- Development of project timeline
- Modification of PAT that met the specific needs of SMEs
- Creation of a host web portal for the assessment tool
- Provide access to PAT for Kootenay Boundary Business

The first draft of the Productivity Assessment Tool (PAT) was completed and forwarded to Community Futures for testing in March.   Community Futures conducted a focus group session with local business owners in the Castlegar area to review and test the first draft. The focus group noted some of the wording of the tool was quite complex, and some of the questions needed fine tuning to be relevant to the small businesses that were being targeted. The feedback was recorded, then sent on to Productivity Alberta for further review incorporation within the final version of the PAT. Based on the feedback from the focus group and from Community Futures, the Productivity Assessment Tool was finalized and ready for use by SMEs. After further testing by Community Futures and Productivity Alberta staff, a final version of PAT was completed. In early June a web portal that hosted the Productivity Assessment Tool was launched.

The domain name www.productivitybc.ca was established. The site was populated with productivity resources, frequently asked questions and access to the productivity assessment tool (see Figure 1). In order to access the assessment tool businesses were required to register on the site.

Figure 1.
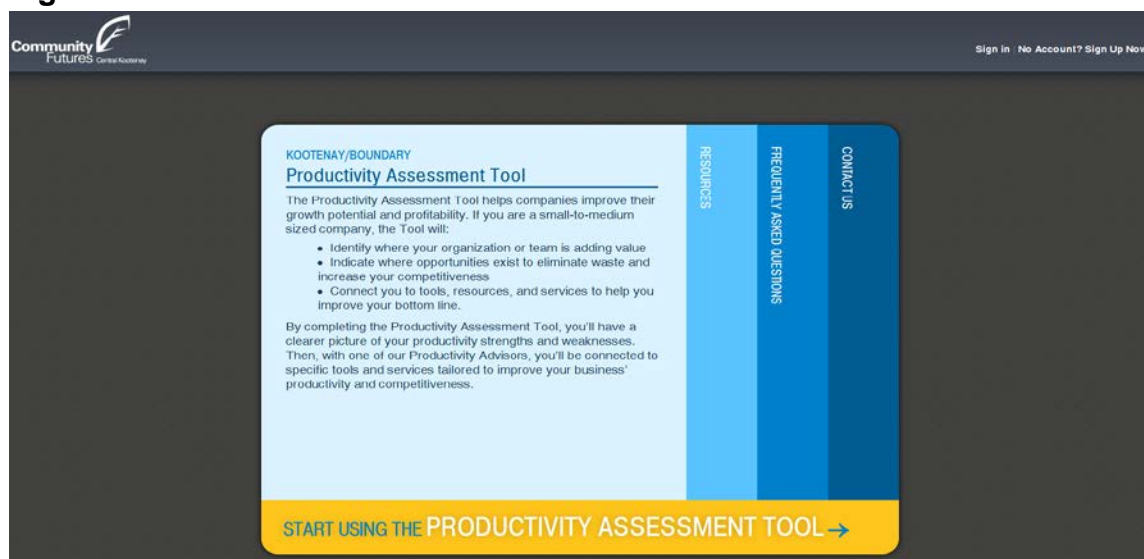
Once businesses are registered they can proceed to the Productivity Assessment Tool (see Figure 2). Businesses are given the option of taking one of two versions; Small Business Version (for fewer than 30 employees) or Small to Medium Business Version (more than 30 employees). Within the Small to Medium Business Version business are given the further option of a short or longer version.

**Figure 2.**
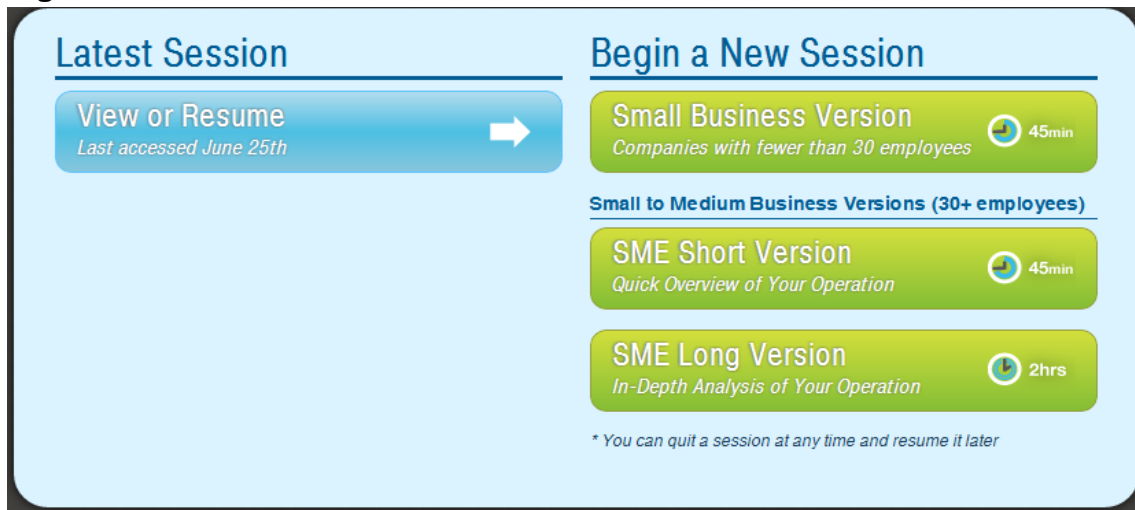
The assessment is broken down into four sections: Leadership and Management; Innovation; Operations and Service; and Knowledge Work (See Figure 3). The Leadership and Management and Innovation sections of the questions apply to all businesses. If a business is not in manufacturing they can bypass the Operation and Service and move on to the Knowledge Work section.

Figure 3.

Contained in each section are a series of questions pertaining to that topic. Participants are given a scale from 1 to 10 for each question that allows them to self-assess their business performance. For example in Figure 4 the question asks the business to assess itself in terms of providing cross training for employees. A low score particular to this question helps identify an area where the business can improve productivity by providing cross training to their employees.

Figure 4.
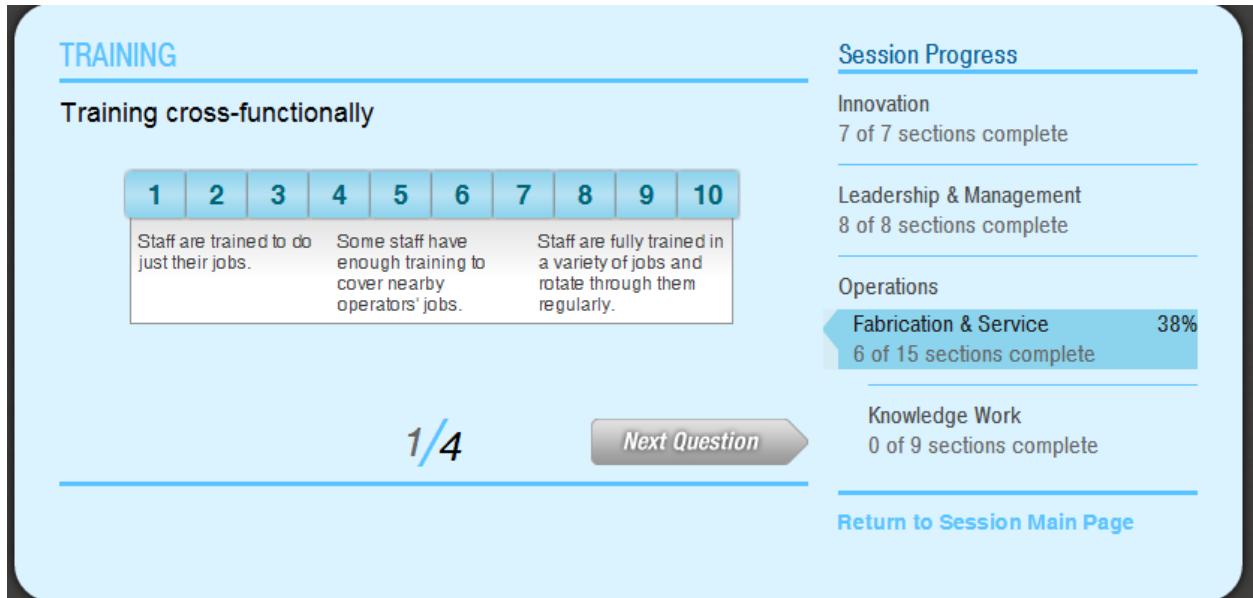
Once the questionnaire is completed the business is provided with overall results in the areas of innovation, leadership/management, fabrication/service (if applicable) and knowledge work. Furthermore the business is provided with a breakdown within each of the aforementioned categories as illustrated in Figures 5 – 9.

Figure 5

OVERALL RESULTS

Below are the results of this assessment session. First is a radar graph of your overall performance, followed by your scores for each category and resources to help you improve your organization

Jump to:
- Innovation
- Leadership & Management
- Fabrication & Service
- Knowledge Work

DOWNLOAD YOUR RESULTS

Microsoft Excel (.xls) | Adobe Acrobat (.pdf)

Figure 6

INNOVATION

You got an average score of 5.88

Category	Your Average Score
Leadership	7.3
Strategy	4.8
Relationships	5.8
Organization	7.0
Performance Processes	5.0
Measurement	4.5
Culture	6.8

Figure 7

LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

You got an average score of 6.93

Category	Your Average Score
Human Resource Management	7.8
Performance Management	7.5
Planning and Organizing	7.0
Production or Business Management	6.5
Self Management	6.0
Leadership by Example	6.8
Guiding Vision	7.0
Inspiring Excellence	6.8

Figure 8

FABRICATION & SERVICE

You got an average score of 5.45

Category	Your Average Score
Workplace Organization	8.0
Single Piece Flow	5.8
Visual Workplace	5.0
Lean Tools	4.6
People	8.0
Innovation	7.5
Training	5.0
Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)	5.0
Maintenance	4.0
Material Control	3.8
Quality	6.2
Planning and Scheduling	3.8
Factory Layout	4.5
Management	5.6
Process Management	5.2

Figure 9

KNOWLEDGE WORK

You got an average score of 6.53

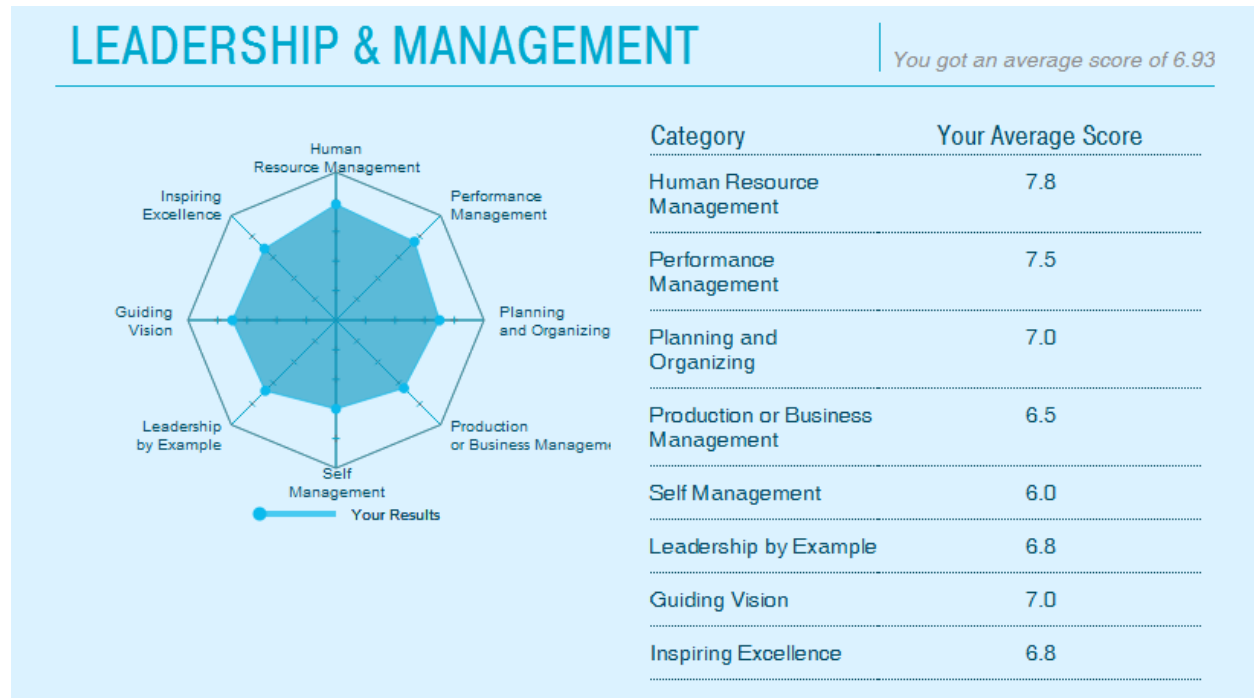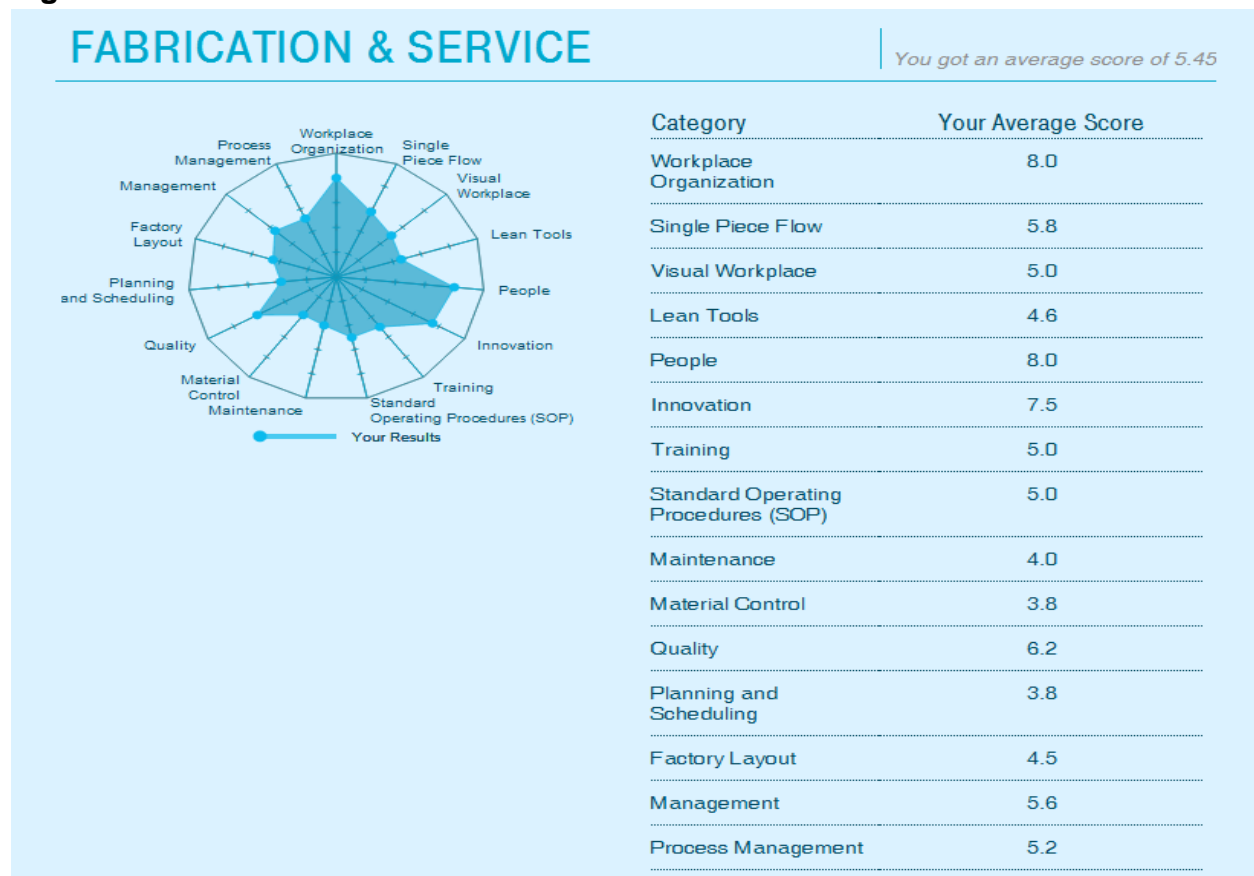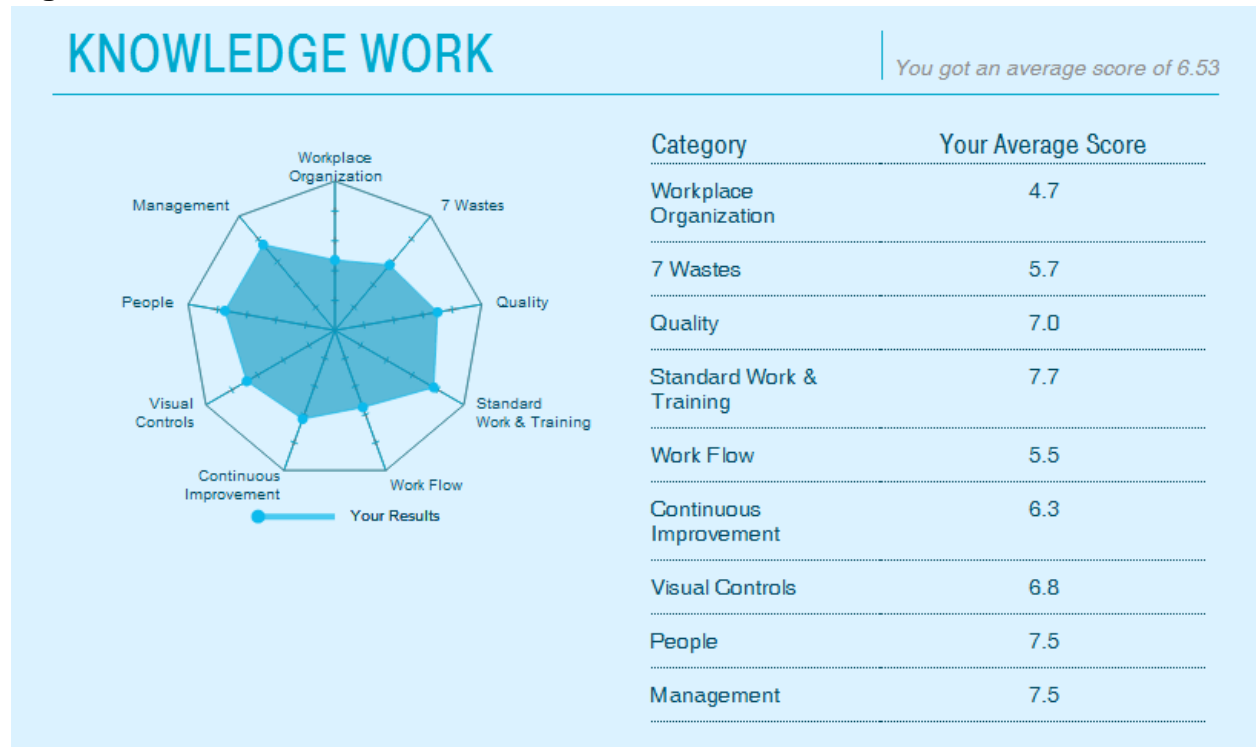| Category	Your Average Score
Workplace Organization	4.7
7 Wastes	5.7
Quality	7.0
Standard Work & Training	7.7
Work Flow	5.5
Continuous Improvement	6.3
Visual Controls	6.8
People	7.5
Management	7.5

Pilot of Productivity Assessment Tools

Upon finalization of the assessment tool, productivity workshops were delivered to 28 businesses and 10 business support organizations.   This involved participants completing the assessment tool and then attending the productivity workshop. The target audience was businesses that employ a minimum of 3 employees and are involved in a number of sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, construction, food processing, industrial products and service. The productivity workshops were offered at the following locations:

- Cranbrook
- Nelson
- Revelstoke
- Trail

The workshop named Productivity 101 was designed as the first step in a business's productivity journey. This workshop is intended to inspire participants to take a more strategic approach to their business that would achieve personal and business goals. It was structured as a learning and discussion forum between participants and the facilitator. A participant manual was created that follows the structure of the session and was intended as a resource for follow-up conversations with the company's managers and employees.

Participants in the workshops learn:

- the basics of productivity
- the value of productivity improvement to their own organizations
- what tools, programs, and services are available to businesses
- how to start their own journey of productivity improvement

Key concepts discussed hinge around the categories within the Productivity Assessment Tool; Innovation, Operations, and Leadership/ Management, as well as best practices for productivity improvement. Participants work through the results of the Productivity Assessment Tool and develop their own custom 120-Day Productivity Action Plan.
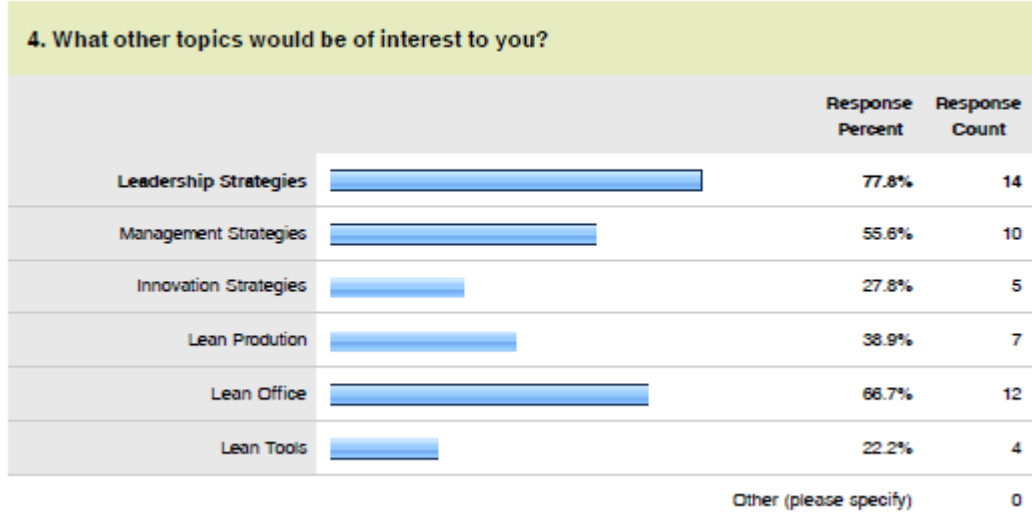
Productivity Alberta delivered the first two workshops with one of their facilitators. Two local facilitators participated in these workshops as part of a train the trainer activity. The local facilitators had follow-up meetings with Community Futures and Productivity Alberta in preparation for future workshops. One of the local facilitators was hired to deliver the remaining two workshops. Community Futures now has local capacity to deliver future workshops within the CF Network. General feedback about the

Productivity Assessment Tool was the process raised their level of awareness of productivity in several areas of their business. The assessment tool did not provide solutions to specific issues or challenges, rather it helped generate thought and focus on areas of productivity improvement.

Other feedback about the questionnaire was about language - terminology within some questions was too technical and therefore hard to understand. The Operation Section was viewed as too oriented toward the manufacturing sector, which did not apply to a number of the participating businesses. Ideally businesses would like to see an assessment specific to their business sector. The future plan is to utilize the feedback from participants to make further enhancements to the assessment tool.

As illustrated in Figure 10, there is interest for follow-up workshops on specific topics.

Figure 10

4. What other topics would be of interest to you?		Response Percent	Response Count
Leadership Strategies		77.8%	14
Management Strategies		55.6%	10
Innovation Strategies		27.8%	5
Lean Prodution		38.9%	7
Lean Office		66.7%	12
Lean Tools		22.2%	4
	Other (please specify)		0

Recommendations

- The project research agrees that the main focus for productivity gains are: efficient use of human capital; targeting operational efficiencies and creating strategies for innovation and technological improvement.

- There needs to be a three pronged approach to assisting businesses in productivity enhancement:

    o Assessment of the businesses productivity

    o Provide understanding to the business on productivity strategies

    o Assist in the application of strategies

- Establishment of benchmarking techniques that can simply and effectively measure results from productivity strategies

- Further effort is required to determine what the "motivational triggers" are for a business owner to undertake productivity improvement

- Enhanced promotion of the Productivity Assessment Tool through established business networks will increase participation by businesses

- Revise the language of some questions within the Productivity Assessment Tool where technical terminology is used and therefore make those questions easier to understand

- Further tailor the Productivity Assessment Tool to improve its relevance to small and medium sized enterprises. Specific to the operations section of the Productivity Assessment tool, create a sector specific operations questionnaire such as:

    o Hospitality and tourism

    o Retail

    o Business services

    o Construction

    o Technology

    o Non Profit

- Establish one-on-one support mechanisms that business owners can access after they have completed the Assessment Tool and attended the Productivity 101 workshop

- Offer Productivity 101 Workshops on an regularly scheduled basis

- Provide follow-up workshops in the areas of:

    o Leadership

    o Management strategies

    o Lean Tools

    o Innovation strategies

    o Human resource development

- Establish a business to business peer mentorship program that focuses on implementation strategies for business productivity

- Identify "success stories" that can promote productivity improvement to other businesses

- Improve access by rural business, explore on-line teaching methods in delivery of productivity workshops

- Create a "discussion blog" where business owners can share information about effective technology upgrades such as;

    o Point of sales systems

    o Accounting software

    o Client management programs

    o Customer feedback systems