



# Moving Forward

## Building Opportunities for Our Future

**Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County**  
INTERMUNICIPAL COLLABORATION FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

# FORWARD

The Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County share a common history. Both have distinct and similar municipal characteristics, and both are rural municipalities based upon building and maintaining core services including roads, bridges and airports which are designed to service an agricultural and resource-based economy. Together these same individual characteristics link them into a healthy and viable regional municipality.

Most people understand increasing the level of collaboration as an ability to provide more efficient and better service levels to municipal ratepayers in the region. However, while some services can possibly be provided solely in a single municipality the increased opportunity in working together is also recognized in increased economies of scale, sustainability of some services, quality of services and efficiency in delivery. In other words, dovetailing the individual characteristics of the municipalities creates expanded resources and advances quality of life opportunities to the people in the region. The image of “two municipalities – one purpose” describes the philosophy of the two Councils.

The two municipalities are committed to identify current and future issues where joint benefits may be realized through more formalized and rigorous processes and cooperation. Examples are evident in servicing areas such as planning, economic development and creating a complete region that is attractive for people to live, work and play.

As the Provincial Government seeks to encourage regional thinking, the Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County are well placed to lead proactively through the creation of this Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Agreement.



*Wheatland County and the Village of Rockyford share a common history and foundation based upon irrigated agriculture and the oil and gas industry*



## Goals of the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Agreement

The Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework has four main purposes:

1. To meet the requirements of provincial legislation.
2. To promote the principles of collaboration between neighboring municipalities with a common border.
3. To ensure municipalities consult and communicate on intermunicipal matters.
4. To clearly lay out a process that the partners to this agreement can review service levels and decide if the service would benefit from being regionally operated & funded.
5. To consider appropriate fair funding mechanisms and deal with differences which may occur from time to time.

## The ICF Agreement between the Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County will:

**Recognize and share the vision and priorities of the two municipalities toward providing effective and efficient service levels to their ratepayers:** Where feasible and practical – each municipality will work together to assess how commonly utilized services will be provided and funded for the benefit of ratepayers.

**Strengthening the region while maintaining local autonomy:** Each Council maintains the right to make individual decisions for their ratepayers, but each agree that they will always consider the bigger regional municipality in the decision-making process.

**Promote networks and linkages:** Developing positive joint approaches where practical to create efficiencies by sharing opportunities, connections, goals, knowledge and experience to promote the greater good between both municipalities.

**Embrace differences in respective municipalities:** The distinct characteristics of the individual municipalities is advantageous in providing choice and diversity.

**Cooperation not Competition:** Although each municipality is responsible to its citizens there is recognition that the citizens and businesses of the region share similar needs and interests and as such each Council will emphasize cooperation and therefore not direct competition with respect to setting municipal policy.

**Foster an environment of openness and trust:** Cooperation and collaboration requires communication that in turn encourages understanding and better results in reaching common goals.

## Commitment to Consultation and Cooperation – Consultation Protocol:

The fundamental basis of this agreement is communication and consultation and as such the two municipalities agree to consult on projects which have a regional impact. By recognizing the requirement to consult, each municipality will include the other in their project circulations and both agree to meet and work through matters as they arise. Where notification has been provided that a meeting is required it shall be first handled by the respective CAO's or their designate and if that does not resolve the concerns at hand it shall be dealt with Council, recognizing time may be of essence. The purpose of this consultation protocol is to ensure that the municipalities leverage opportunities and develop common solutions to any challenges that affect the region.

It is understood that this agreement will encourage communication at all levels of the organization to ensure opportunities are recognized, information is passed through the respective organization and decision makers are informed not just about their own municipality but about regional issues and concerns. Cooperation, collaboration and commitment to consult are not meant to constrain or restrict the authority or the ability of individual Councils or to homogenize the unique culture and identity of each municipality. It is likely that there will be instances of differences in values, goals, beliefs, perspectives and decisions which are not common to both communities. In these instances, where differences remain, the commitment to communicate will enable the communities to develop proactive and positive solutions to issues that may arise.

# Roles in Managing the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Agreement:

## The Role of both Councils:

Each Council retains the ability and responsibility to make decisions on behalf of their residents. As the public is at the center of any governance initiative their voice needs to be taken into account to ensure the impacts of services and actions taken in the region have the desired results and support the sustainability of the region. By signing onto the agreement each Council affirms the commitment to increased cooperation at both the council and administration levels.

This agreement signals a shift towards maximizing regional benefit through collaborative decision making. Each Council member will demonstrate leadership to act strategically as they formulate plans for each of their organizations which will bring value to the citizens of both communities.

## The Role of the CAOs and Administration:

The CAOs have been identified as the principals responsible for maintaining the agreement, its delivery and dealing with intermunicipal issues that surface from time to time during the term of this agreement. Administration brings continuity to the relationship between the municipalities and they each have the ability to initiate communication on an as needed basis to ensure that each municipality adheres to the principles of the agreement. The CAO's will foster increased communication and will act as conduits for facilitating the sharing of information, identifying opportunities and prioritizing municipal actions for the consideration of each Council. Disputes or disagreements between CAOs will be dealt with by a dispute resolution committee set up with members from each council.

## The Role of Staff:

Staff at all levels will be responsible to ensure the principles of the agreement are carried out operationally. This means that staff will work cooperatively with their municipal counterparts to address issues that arise within the scope of their authority and mandate. Staff will also bring to the attention of their respective CAO any issues that arise which require their attention with respect to meeting the commitment and intent of this agreement. Disputes among staff or municipal contractors between the municipalities will be dealt with by the CAOs.

# The Framework Protocols

## Development of an Intermunicipal Communication Protocol

Understanding that the success of this agreement is based upon respectful dialogue that both municipalities must be committed to ensuring the provision of information is handled in a transparent and honest manner. To foster the longevity and durability of this agreement both municipalities should jointly develop and abide by the principles of a communication protocol which should include the following principles:

1. The protocol should recognize that cooperative communication is the key to a successful relationship. At all times and through all levels of each organization the following principles should apply:
  - a. Seek to understand
  - b. Avoid personal attacks either privately or publicly
  - c. Asking for clarification on policies adopted by the other municipality to ensure understanding
  - d. Address issues as being of a joint nature meant to be resolved together
  - e. Seek to maximize the benefits for both parties
2. The Protocol should seek to ingrain collaboration and cooperation in each municipal organization
  - a. Both organizations agree to ensure proper training takes place on intermunicipal collaboration following a municipal election
  - b. Both organizations agree to provide additional training as required following any change in elected officials or senior administration
3. The protocol should ensure that each municipality provides to the other information pertaining to:
  - a. Major capital projects which may impact the other municipality
  - b. Lobby efforts to higher levels of government with respect to issues which may impact regional services
  - c. Adopted strategic plans
  - d. Funding, aid or support to other organizations within the other municipality when requested
  - e. Ceremonies, celebrations, events of regional impact
  - f. Promotion of collaborative successes

## Conflict Resolution

The municipalities recognized that the development of this agreement is the start – not the end of the process. Recognizing that not all issues may be agreed upon, the municipalities recognize the need to establish a conflict resolution process based upon the following principles:

1. At the earliest opportunity and at the point closest to where the problems initiated the Chief Administrative Officers will seek to address matters of conflict.
2. All matters of conflict should be sought to be resolved swiftly, inexpensively and in an uncomplicated way,
3. All matters of conflict should be resolved using a clear procedural pathway.
4. Maintain at all times, the essence of collaboration on the majority of issues even though conflict may exist on some issues.



## Process

If a municipality believes an obligation under the agreement has been breached the matter should be immediately brought to the attention of their CAO. The CAO will investigate and if it appears as if a 'breach' of the agreement has occurred the matter will be immediately brought to the attention of the other municipalities CAO. Once that has occurred an effort to resolve the matter through informal problem-solving discussions is to be initiated.

If differences occur outside of an outright 'breach' of an agreement, which may include divergent expectations in the delivery of a joint service, variance on how the Council wishes to proceed on an issue or any circumstance which may impact or disrupt service delivery or relationships, an informal discussion between CAO's will be conducted.

If this does not resolve the issue the appointed intermunicipal dispute subcommittee by both councils will decide on and negotiate an effective solution.

If the subcommittee negotiation process is unsuccessful a mediated process is initiated using the services of a jointly agreed upon mediator with costs shared equally between municipalities. The mediator will be solely responsible for the governance of the mediation process.

If the process cannot be resolved through mediation the municipalities will select an arbitrator, sharing all costs in doing so, and will have the matter resolved through the process defined by Section 708.35 of the Municipal Government Act. The arbitrator is governed by the principles of natural justice and fairness.

## ICF Agreement

Amendments to the Municipal Government have amended the purpose of municipalities. The new act requires municipalities to work collaboratively with neighboring municipalities to plan, deliver and fund intermunicipal services. The act requires municipalities with common borders to develop an Intermunicipal Collaborative Framework Agreement. The following services are shared between the Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County.

### Emergency Services

The Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County have a mutual aid agreement for fire service and have a Regional Emergency Management Plan.

The Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County both contribute to and have Board participation in the provision of ambulance service through Wheatland and Adjacent Districts Emergency Medical Services Association.

There is an agreement in place with Wheatland County for the provision of Peace Officers to enforce some of the Village of Rockyford Bylaws. There is not cost to the Village for this service, however any revenue generated from the levying of fines is retained by the County.

### Solid Waste

The Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County have an agreement for shared costs at the Waste Transfer Site located just south of the Village.

Both the Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County pay a requisition to Drumheller & District Solid Waste Management Association.

## **Transportation**

Wheatland County maintains Serviceberry Trail and Elevator Road within the Village of Rockyford's boundaries. This applies to snow removal and some grading as required. Wheatland County will assist in other areas such as sanding if needed and on a cost recovery basis.

## **Recreation**

No agreements exist or are currently required between the Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County in the area of recreation.

## **Water**

No agreements exist or are currently required between the Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County in the area of water services.

## **Wastewater**

No agreements exist or are currently required between the Village of Rockyford and Wheatland County in the area of wastewater services.

## **Attachments to this Agreement**

Attached to this agreement is the current Wheatland County and Village of Rockyford Intermunicipal Development Plan as well as any agreements aforementioned within this document.

## **Commitment to Collaboration**

Wheatland County and the Village of Rockyford acknowledge and affirm that they will seek to fulfill both the intent and the spirit of this agreement by seeking opportunities to collaborate where practical as well as to honor all applicable legislation with respect to intermunicipal collaboration within the Province of Alberta.




**IN WITNESS WHEREOF** the parties have hereunto set their hands and affixed their corporate seals as witnessed by the hand or hands of its proper signing officers duly authorized in that behalf as of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020.

**FOR THE VILLAGE OF ROCKYFORD**

**FOR WHEATLAND COUNTY**

PER:  \_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR

PER:  \_\_\_\_\_  
REEVE

PER:  \_\_\_\_\_  
ADMINISTRATOR

PER:  \_\_\_\_\_  
ADMINISTRATOR