

SADC

Société
d'aide au développement
des collectivités

VALLÉE-DE-LA-GATINEAU



Annual report

2014-2015

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Directors

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Crédit photos: M. Martin Pilon

Permanent Team



Pierre Monette, General Manager

Julie Bénard, Follow-up Officer

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MISSION

The SADC's mission is to encourage the community to actively take charge of its future, which is achieved through the development of the community's vision within the context of sustainable development.

Through activities that support cooperation and partnership, the SADC encourages the community to adapt and plan its various human resources requirements to contribute to the community's growth and evolution in tune with the realities of today and tomorrow.

The SADC also supports business and job creation through technical and financial services from a perspective of profitability and viability.

VALUES

Help the community and individuals in an atmosphere of understanding and open-mindedness within the parameters of our spheres of activity.

Emphasize excellence.

Be frank and direct.

Avoid misleading people into thinking that funding opportunities exist when none do.

Remain neutral and impartial without political influence.

Respect partners and/or organizations that adhere to their own mandate and vision.

Create a climate conducive to exchanges, cooperation and partnership.

Ensure the confidentiality of cases at all times.



VISION

As an agency, our vision involves influencing and making the necessary changes to address the issues in our areas, which bring about adjustment to these changes and enhance, at the same time, the well-being and growth of people who make up our community.

As the organization which people turn to for expertise and knowhow in business in our RCM, we strive to be at the forefront of innovation and change.

Word from the president

One of the realities, or should I say one of the challenges, facing us relates to technology (ITC) and the need to adapt to it in all spheres of our society. Today's challenges will be the realities of tomorrow.

The challenges confronting us in the region are no different from the challenges in urban centres. What differentiates us are the ways in which we meet them. We have noted that our RCM was lagging slightly behind the rest of the province (CEFRIO study, spring 2012 SADCGV) regarding territorial Internet and cell phone coverage and also in the area of ITC integration by businesses in the RCM. This led us to develop a series of actions aimed at supporting technological development. Nonetheless, there are 2 elements that distinguish us as a community in terms of ITC deployment.



Firstly, even though acquiring technological equipment (smartphones, tablets, computers, websites, etc) is easy enough for business leaders, Internet and cellular connection and coverage are a problem on our territory. To be sure, the more populated areas (Maniwaki, Gracefield and others) have access to services comparable to urban centres. However, such is not the case in other areas, and part of the population does not have Internet or cell phone access. Under these circumstances, it may be difficult to encourage new residents and new businesses to move in, which can even be an impediment to the economic development of our territories and businesses. Further to the Baskatong pilot project last summer, it is now up to the various public and private partners to do what is needed to fill gaps in the coverage. This means that all players have to agree that swift action in the short term is needed to remove impediments. The longer we wait to catch up to the rest of Quebec (study by Statistique Québec, spring 2013), the harder it will be to bridge the gap, a situation that could put us at an economic disadvantage.

The second aspect of ITC deployment is more directly related to the dynamic of local businesses. Nearly 80% of RCM businesses have 5 employees or less and are concentrated in the services and retail sectors. They are autonomous, independent, do not belong to associations, groups and/or banners. For the most part, promoters are specialized artisans offering services and are very diversified and geographically dispersed throughout the RCM. Analysis of this observation shows that it is more difficult for these businesses to adopt technologies that are not directly related to their specializations. For many, implementing these changes and adaptations relating to the use of ICT requires time, effort and investments that are difficult to justify.

As a support organization, we must be aware of the situation and adapt our services accordingly. However, if everyone is willing to pitch in, I am sure that we will be able to meet these challenges. If we give ourselves the time and the means, our community will catch up with the rest of Quebec.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "André Salifson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



Word from the director

Profile of businesses and owners

Since the SADC first came into existence, we have financed hundreds of businesses throughout the territory. Over the years, we have thus collected masses of information regarding the profile and evolving needs of businesses. Based on this observation, we wanted to probe further, starting with market research, in order to have a better idea of the businesses and their owners.

Based on summary information, we already know that nearly 80% of businesses in our RCM have 5 employees or less and do not belong to a network or a group. Most are neither franchisees nor associated with banners. The majority are in retail and services sectors, often associated with artisans and with primary markets centered on their operations.

This portrait, which will be more detailed at the end of our research, has already enabled us to see how the dynamics of development, innovation and adaptation have become more complex, depending on the nature of the business. They are classified as micro businesses, which have meager monetary and human resources, are very diversified both product- and service-wise and very scattered over the territory. For development organizations such as ours, the task becomes very complex when we want to raise awareness, mobilize and organize activities involving them. Nevertheless, by getting to know our businesses better, we will be better able to hone our approaches, products and services, and be in a better position to adapt them to the local reality.

Further to our survey of vacationers (2nd phase, spring 2014), some elements showed that satisfaction had decreased due to the lack of availability and the little differentiation of our businesses in comparison with urban businesses. Based on these observations, we partnered up with the local employment centre in cooperation with the Maniwaki and Gatineau Valley Chamber of Commerce (CCMVG) to take two specific actions involving the businesses. First, we established mystery client visits, whereby businesses wishing to improve their offer of service could take steps to improve their product/service offerings with the assistance of a consultant who could help them to do so.. Secondly, we established a similar service to deal with innovation. A bank of hours is available to businesses for consultations with specialists. These two activities help businesses to adapt to change in their markets and to differentiate themselves from the urban sector and remain competitive in their markets.

Results

Investment Fund

\$588 802

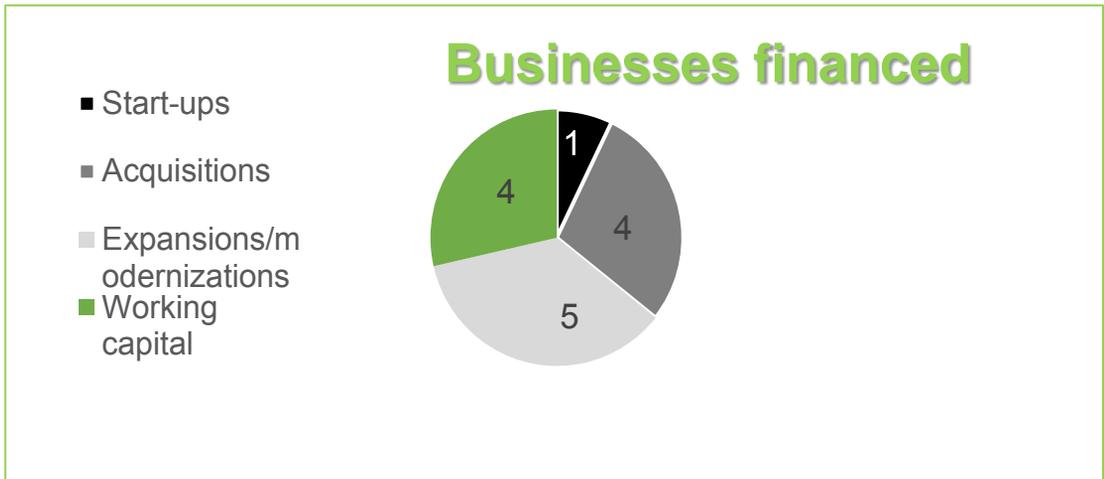
Invested in businesses

Total investment generated

\$1.2M

77

Jobs created or retained



651

Direct interventions with promoters

30

New promoters met with to work on their financial structure

Since 1981

\$17.8M

Invested in businesses

Total investment generated

\$59.1M

Results Youth Strategy

\$39,703

Invested in businesses

Total investment generated

\$127,000

2 Businesses financed
for acquisitions

12 Jobs created
or retained

299

Direct interventions with
promoters

23 Youths met with for
information, counselling or
financing

Digital



ITC growth

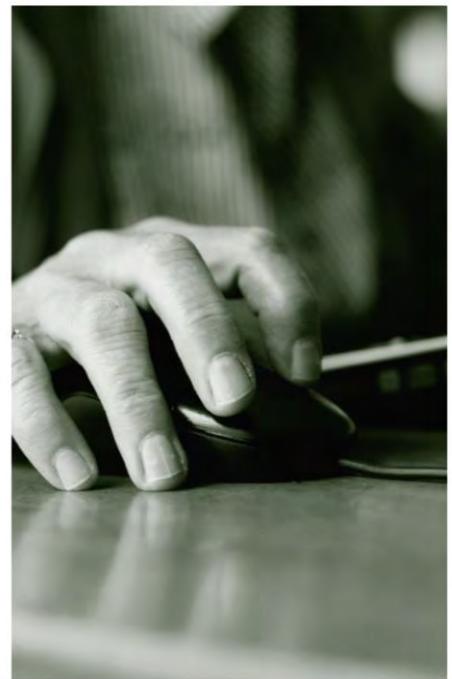
SADC has continued promoting its “ITC Growth” financial product with a view to encouraging small local businesses to implement ITC (Information Technology and Communications). ITC Growth comes in the form of a loan that will help small businesses wanting to upgrade their ITC technologies. The loan can be used to acquire digital equipment and software; implement an on-line business service, and so on.

This year, one business took advantage of the financing to upgrade its computer system.

Web growth

SADC is continuing its ITC (Information Technology and Communications) efforts. Financial assistance in the form of \$250 grant is aimed at encouraging businesses to establish an active presence on the web.

This year, six (6) businesses benefitted from this program to create a webpage or a website that will increase their visibility, thereby contributing to the development of their market and potentially increasing their sales.



WHITE SPACE PILOT PROJECT

Last year, the first steps were taken with 6Harmonics, the developer of Internet equipment and Réseau Picanoc.net, a supplier of Internet services in the Gatineau Valley. The purpose was to develop a pilot project experimenting with the use of "White space" waves to resolve problems some clients in the Gatineau Valley were having with accessing the Internet.

In July 2014, a small network was tested at the camping de la Pointe à David campground in Grand-Remous. This project, which ran until the campground was closed in October, confirmed that the technology was effective.

In December 2014, the partners -- SADC, 6Harmonics and Réseau Picanoc.net -- agreed to do trials at private residences. On March 31, 2015, two clients in the Lac Marcellin sector in Ste-Thérèse-de-la-Gatineau, who could not access the Internet before, were able to do so during the trials.



In the coming year, the trials will be followed up and, if the results are positive, contacts will be continued and private business will provide service to as many residences as possible.

In the summer of 2015, trials will continue using the Pointe à David network in order to evaluate results over a full season.

Photo credits: Journal Le Choix

Career objective

As part of the Service Canada Youth Employment Strategy, SADC has concluded an agreement for a third year. Note that Career objective is a program that helps young high school graduates to acquire advanced employment skills and to facilitate their integration into the job market. Career objective provides financing to employers and organizations so they can create work opportunities in line with the career aspirations of new graduates.

For this the third year, the envelope covers from October 6, 2014 to July 31, 2015, and on March 31, 2015, 5 participants out of a possible 10 were twinned with an enterprise operating on the territory of the Gatineau Valley RCM.



Web sessions

In order to encourage and support businesses to adopt a web strategy, six information sessions were organized, enabling 30 or so entrepreneurs to become familiar with a structured and planned process for creating a website. These sessions were offered to small groups (maximum 6 people) and were a rousing success with participants.

Having businesses adopt ITC

Several activities have been organized over the past year to raise awareness of ITC. It is now believed the time has come to move forward and provide the support needed to take action.

Together with various partners (BDC, Emploi Québec, etc.) various intervention strategies will be studied. For the time being, a small number of businesses (+/-10) will be given support as they move to improve their use of technology, such as on-line marketing. This project will be launched in early 2015-2016.

PROMOVALLÉE.COM PORTAL

The promovallée.com portal is a website made up of Gatineau Valley businesses, most of which are SMEs and micro businesses with 5 employees or less. They have no resources dedicated to technology and no website. At this time, there are about 30 of them. The goal is to attract clients to these businesses, thereby increasing the volume of business transactions. The targeted clients are mainly vacationers.

Since the portal is a pilot project, some problems have arisen. However, over the coming year, an action plan will be developed to increase traffic and encourage members to take more ownership.

Facebook Page and Contest

In October 2013, SADC created a Facebook page to promote the portal. A contest was organized to draw gift certificates to be used at participating businesses. The first draw was on September 1, 2014 for a \$200 gift certificate. The second and final draw was on December 1, 2014, where three winners walked away with gift certificates worth \$200, \$75 and \$50.



Mrs. Pauline Larivière (right), winner of a \$200 gift certificate



Amélie Thibault (left), representing Mrs. Brigitte Thibault, who won a \$200 gift certificate



Sonia Dunphy (right) won a \$50 gift certificate



CONFERENCES



Why we need to change...and fast!

This conference was organized in cooperation with the Maniwaki and Gatineau Valley (CCMVG) Chamber of Commerce and given by Léopold Turgeon. His message dealt with the urgent need for retail businesses to adapt to the changing behaviour of consumers who are shopping on the web in increasing numbers. To survive and grow, businesses will have to develop the strategies they need to stay in touch with their clients on this broad-based platform. Last November 25, nearly 80 people came out to hear Mr. Turgeon's message.

Have your business make a splash on the net: a simple and cost-effective solution

On the morning of March 10, 2015, Luc Dupont showed 30 or so participants a number of free and accessible ways they could initiate or improve their presence on the web. With a 100% general satisfaction rating, this lecture was a huge success.



Economic development must be a state of mind

On March 25, 2015, around 50 people attended a conference by René Vézina entitled "Economic development must be a state of mind". He set out the various economic development challenges facing the regions, including the Gatineau Valley. Mr. Vézina concluded by saying that the region, just like the rest of Quebec, relies on its strengths to ensure its development

Entrepreneurial profile

On March 11, the "Entrepreneurial Profile" activity led by Isabelle Déry and organized by SADC, in cooperation with the Réseau des SADC et CAE du Québec, was presented in 2 parts. Part 1 was training for entrepreneurs to help them discover their entrepreneurial leadership style and part 2 a study to determine the profile of RCM entrepreneurs, which will be integrated into the Quebec profile. Fifteen or so people participated.



Photo credit : Journal La Gatineau

Profiling RCM businesses

SADC undertook a vast profiling of Gatineau Valley businesses. The exercise started with the drafting of a list of businesses, based on various sources of available information.

In order to wrap up the work that had been started, an agreement was made with Zins Beauchesne and Associates to complete the profiling of the businesses. This will complete the quantitative portrait of the entrepreneurs and supplement the qualitative information gathered on them.

At the same time, the " Entrepreneurial Profile " activity will yield other qualitative data on the profile of Valley entrepreneurs. The final report on this activity will also include, in addition to the profile, various recommendations on tailor-made interventions aimed at optimizing SADC involvement. This information on the regional profile will be integrated into the provincial profile, along with regional data. In the final stage of this provincial project, it will be possible to make a comparison with other regions of Quebec that have undertaken entrepreneurial profiling.

HR tools

In the course of the year, one business completed the HR Tool Kit process. Managers said they were very satisfied with the process and consider the proposed tools to be very useful for business development. The service will continue to be available over the next year, either as the complete process or in the form of access to specific tools.

MYSTERY CLIENT

The first set of mystery client visits took place at 40 or so RCM businesses in 2011. Some managed to improve the weaknesses that had been flagged during the visits. Further to discussions with various partners -- RCM, Emploi Québec, Maniwaki and Gatineau Valley Chamber of Commerce -- everyone agreed that this activity was worth repeating. As a result, another set of mystery client visits will be paid to 25 participating businesses.

Vacationers

In 2005, SADC hired Zins Beauchesne and Associates to conduct the first study to qualify and quantify the vacationer phenomenon in the Gatineau Valley. The 2014 edition, which came out in July, revealed that the vacationer industry has been growing in the RCM, both in terms of the number of secondary residences (6 427) and in economic benefits (\$52M). However, the exercise also revealed some areas that warrant further development as regards client satisfaction, Internet and cell phone coverage and service and product offerings by businesses, among other things.

The final study report included recommendations for action that, in turn, were the genesis of several actions implemented by SADC. More effort will be made to get the information in this study out to businesses through various means of communication.

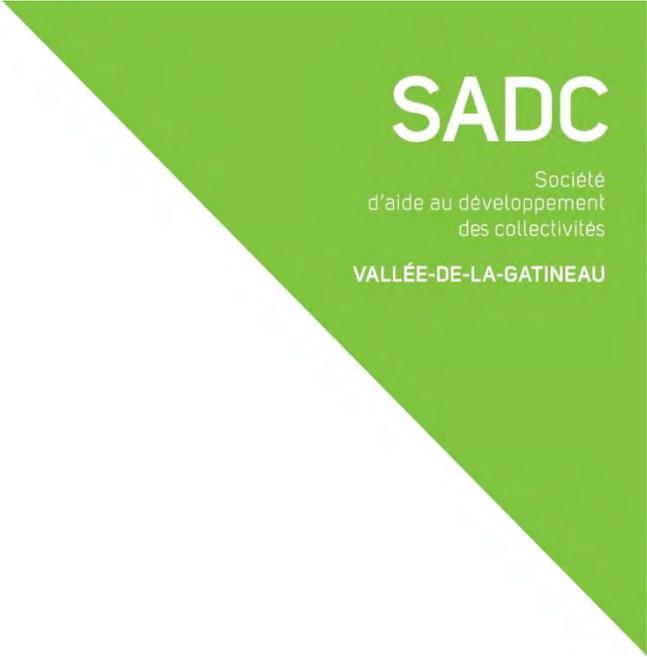


Crédit photo M. Jacques Lamarche

SADC website

www.sadc-vg.ca

The www.sadc-vg.ca website needed to be upgraded. The changes made modernized the visual aspect of the site and updated the content. The site will need to be overhauled to make it compatible with mobile tools. A series of testimonials from 5 businesses that have used SADC services will be drafted and published on the website.



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