



ALBERTA FireSmart™

Strategic Plan

2022-2024



Executive Summary

Albertans are no strangers to perseverance through adversity. But our province has rarely faced a threat as profound and devastating as increased wildfire activity. Extreme, once-in-a-lifetime wildfire events are becoming the norm, threatening not only our communities but what we know about living in our province. Such a challenge requires a response from Albertans that is not just comprehensive, but collective: unique circumstances require a united front.

Our province is a unique place, home to a varied natural landscape and unique ecosystems. While this diversity creates economic and natural advantages for our residents, it also creates unique challenges for every region, every community, and every home. These challenges, along with the critical impacts of climate change, create the need for not just a made-in-Alberta plan, but an all-of-Alberta plan.

Founded in 2020, FireSmart™ Alberta grew out of the top recommendation of the Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development Spring 2019 Wildfire Review Final Report. We are a registered not-for-profit with the goal of fostering an all-of-society approach to wildfire resilience in Alberta. FireSmart Alberta works collaboratively and in alignment with FireSmart Canada as a provincial chapter.

This document outlines FireSmart Alberta's six primary goals to accomplish this plan. Each goal is supported by measurable objectives, audience identification, strategies, initiatives, and accountabilities.

We believe these goals represent the right priorities and strategies to not only significantly elevate the profile and application of the FireSmart program in Alberta, but to turn wildfire resiliency into a truly community-based activity.

We all have a role to play in reducing the risk of wildfire loss and damage. With our partners, FireSmart Alberta believes we can build a province that is stronger and more resilient by coming together.

Sincerely,

Michael Flynn,
Executive Director

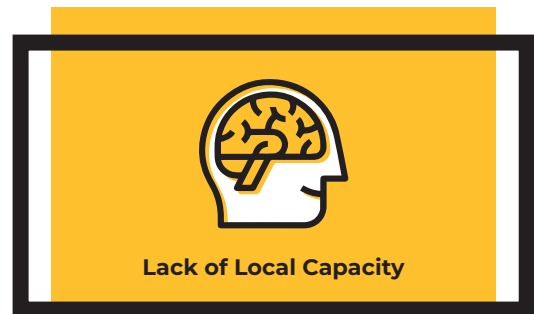
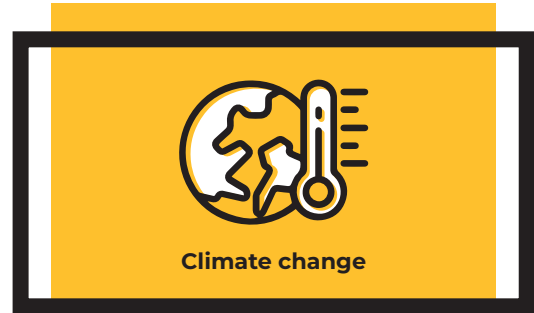
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Why FireSmart?

Wildfires are a threat that should concern every Albertan.

We must collectively manage risks posed by wildfires.

Wildfires are exacerbated by...



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What is FireSmart?

FireSmart is about living with and managing the risk of wildfire.

FireSmart is a **framework designed to reduce the threat of large uncontrollable wildfires** near communities and infrastructure.

Preparing for the threat of wildfire is a shared responsibility. Community members, community leaders, industry, and all levels of government have a responsibility to lessen the effects of wildfire. FireSmart uses preventative measures to reduce wildfire threat to Albertans and their communities while balancing the benefits of wildfire on the landscape.



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FireSmart...

Can reduce the impact of large uncontrollable wildfires in Alberta.



Recognizes the benefit of introducing the controlled application of wildfire.

Is built on partnerships because wildfires burn regardless of administrative boundaries.



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Why a Made-in-Alberta Strategic Plan?

Alberta is a unique jurisdiction home to diverse natural landscapes and ecosystems. With this diversity comes a distinct set of challenges for managing and mitigating wildfires. These challenges, along with the critical impacts of climate change, create the need for a made-in-Alberta solution to prevent and prepare for catastrophic loss due to wildfires. The threat of wildfires is a province-wide problem, extending beyond our Forest Protection Area (FPA) to farming and agricultural communities. A province-wide problem requires an all-of-Alberta approach, one that provides resources, programs and tools to everyone.



In 2021, FireSmart Alberta began work on a new, made-in-Alberta plan. The goal was to come together to protect our people, their homes, and their communities. The result of that work is the following plan: a solid framework that will establish a new FireSmart Alberta approach to living with the risk of wildfire.

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Building the Plan

FireSmart Alberta Board of Directors

Discipline	Board Member(s)
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MJ Kristoff, Lesser Slave Forest Education Society (retired) • Laura Stewart, Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development
Emergency Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winston Delorme, Alberta Emergency Management Agency • Geoffrey Braid, Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development
Vegetation Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wendell Pozniak, Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development
Cross-Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul St. John, Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development • Terry Stauffer, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Emergency Services • Troy Palmer, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Emergency Services
Indigenous Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joseph Jobin, Alberta Indigenous Relations • Vince Biamonte, Alberta Indigenous Relations
Interagency Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mike Milner, Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development • Brian Wynn, Whitecourt Fire Department
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Orr, Alberta Municipal Affairs • Tom Littlechild, Alberta Municipal Affairs • Ray Watkins, Watkins Land Development
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joe Petrie, Alberta Municipal Affairs • Lynne Njeri Mbajjorgu, Alberta Municipal Affairs • Nabil Malik, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

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Managing the provincial FireSmart program is a complicated process as implementation for many FireSmart disciplines falls outside the mandate of Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development, which houses the provincial FireSmart Unit. While Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development provide leadership in the FireSmart arena, they do not have final authority in all the disciplines.

As we worked to establish FireSmart Alberta as the provincial chapter of the national FireSmart Canada program, we prioritized building a team that represented all seven disciplines. It is vital that we support and collaborate with communities both in and outside the Forest Protection Area. To do so, we needed to understand the diverse challenges faced throughout our province in order to create an all-of-Alberta approach. As such, the FireSmart Alberta Chapter's Board of Directors includes one representative from within the provincial government and one representative from outside of government for each of the seven FireSmart disciplines.

Over the summer of 2021, the Board participated in an interactive virtual process that uncovered and clarified our purpose, vision, mission, and values to help us set our strategic direction. Board members took feedback from stakeholders across the province via interviews and a digital survey to determine key initiatives that will be actioned over the next three years. This plan is the culmination of this work.

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Our Vision

Alberta communities are empowered with the knowledge and tools they need to live resiliently with wildfire.

Wildfires are part of our history, and we know that they will continue to threaten Alberta communities. FireSmart Alberta will provide the tools and resources needed to help communities live resiliently with wildfire, leading to a stronger and more prosperous province.



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Our Mission

We drive the balanced application of all seven FireSmart disciplines in Alberta.

The FireSmart program is implemented through seven disciplines to help communities address the threat of wildfire:



Education



Emergency Planning



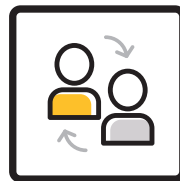
Vegetation Management



Legislation



Interagency Cooperation



Cross-Training



Development

Applying FireSmart principles and best practices across all seven FireSmart disciplines is imperative to managing wildfire risk and impact.

FireSmart Alberta will develop a clear and concise road map towards broadening municipal and Indigenous community engagement to measurably increase the application of all FireSmart disciplines in the province.

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Our Purpose

FireSmart is a shared responsibility. We foster collaboration between our community partners across Alberta.

The best way forward is together. FireSmart exists to bring together Albertans, community leaders, Indigenous communities, governments, private industry, and others to create communities that are resilient to wildfire. It takes time and effort, but together we can create a tangible difference in the lives of all Albertans by taking concrete steps to achieving wildfire resilience.

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Our Values



We anticipate change. We adapt to ever-evolving environments.



We are committed to continuous improvement. We learn from history and apply those learnings as systems evolve.



We motivate action. We understand that education is the key to growth.



We learn from others. We leverage the best available research and practices from around the world.



We do what we say we are going to do. You can depend on us.



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Our Goals

1

FireSmart Alberta will be recognized as the source for FireSmart across all seven disciplines in Alberta.

3

FireSmart Alberta will strive to learn, acknowledge, and embody traditional Indigenous knowledge.

5

FireSmart Alberta will collaborate with provincial and local governments to effect FireSmart changes in the province that support the development of resilient communities.

2

FireSmart Alberta will become the education leader, focused on developing results-based tools for all seven FireSmart disciplines.

4

FireSmart Alberta will increase the application of all seven FireSmart disciplines in Alberta and demonstrate continuous improvement.

6

FireSmart Alberta will be financially self-sufficient through a combination of grant funding and strategic partnerships.

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Goal #1: Alberta's Source

FireSmart Alberta will be recognized as the source for FireSmart across all seven disciplines in Alberta.

Living in a FireSmart way requires collaboration — and coordination. FireSmart Alberta will be a prominent and active advocate for wildfire resilience, and the most effective source for our partners to learn how to implement FireSmart strategies within their communities.

Strategies

- Increased annual planning through a new marketing strategy.
- Attracting more resident engagement through a greater focus on digital/social media communications.
- Building affinity with municipal officials through increased partner communications.
- Greater engagement with Indigenous leaders (see Goal #3).

Initiatives

- Hold social media contests encouraging Albertans to sign up for the FireSmart Alberta newsletter.
- Develop FireSmart Alberta social media strategy.
- Work in partnership with our communications firm to design, write content for, and launch a robust website.

Goal #1: Alberta's Source

Initiatives

- Conduct inventory of all FireSmart engagement items available in the province.
- Post diverse weekly social media content on all platforms.
- Create quarterly FireSmart Alberta progress reports for strategic plan.
- Create opportunities for collaboration between Indigenous communities and municipal partners.

Accountable for growth

- By March 31, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will release its first monthly FireSmart Alberta newsletter.
- By May 1, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will launch a well-designed and functional website.
- By May 1, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will complete a three-year provincial FireSmart Alberta marketing, communications, and advertising strategy.
- By September 1, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will strive to increase our social media platform followers by 50%.
- By December 31, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will host our first FireSmart discipline webinar.
- By June 30, 2023, FireSmart Alberta will release a marketing and communications plan template for communities across Alberta.



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Goal #2: Education Leader

FireSmart Alberta will become the education leader, focused on developing results-based tools for all seven FireSmart disciplines.

Building a FireSmart province requires the buy-in of governments, communities, everyday Albertans, and our youth. We want FireSmart Alberta to provide the most comprehensive education portal for wildfire resilience in Canada, all to increase awareness and implementation of FireSmart initiatives, as well as prepare the next generation to live resiliently with wildfires.

Strategies

- Partner with municipalities and Indigenous governments to increase FireSmart Canada Recognized Neighborhoods.
- Create opportunities for ongoing communication between Alberta communities.
- Develop community partnership programs to create more resilient communities.
- Partner with educational organizations in Alberta to enhance awareness of FireSmart school education program.



Goal #2: Education Leader

Initiatives

- Develop standard brand guidelines for FireSmart brand use in Alberta in alignment with FireSmart Canada brand use policy.
- Create opportunities for ongoing and regular communication between Alberta communities.
- Develop an approved FireSmart Alberta education consultant list through a formal application process.
- Leverage relationship with the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association to keep its members informed of FireSmart Alberta initiatives.
- Develop Advanced FireSmart Home Assessment marketing, communications, and advertising strategy with support resources (including templates, videos, toolkits, resources, outreach materials, advertising materials, etc.).
- Host annual Advanced FireSmart Home Assessment user meetings to understand what is working well, find areas that require improvement, and identify common challenges.
- Develop FireSmart Neighbourhood Recognition Program marketing, communications, and advertising strategy with support resources.
- Plan a unique and engaging FireSmart Community Series conference agenda with balanced content from across all seven FireSmart disciplines.
- Establish a FireSmart Community Series conference planning committee with representatives from Indigenous and municipal communities.
- Identify and secure corporate partners to sponsor the FireSmart Community Series conference.
- Update the FireSmart school education program to align with recent research and national FireSmart Canada branding guidelines.
- Develop FireSmart youth activity materials.
- Deliver FireSmart school education train-the-trainer program to help communities prepare FireSmart school talks.
- Develop FireSmart education materials for farm, acreage, and grassland communities in Alberta.

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Goal #2: Education Leader



Accountable for growth

- By December 1, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will update the current FireSmart school education program and make it available to every Alberta community.
- By June 1, 2023, FireSmart Alberta will release a FireSmart education tool kit for Alberta communities.
- By September 1, 2023, FireSmart Alberta will release roadmaps for each of the seven FireSmart disciplines to support strategic FireSmart implementation across the province.
- By October 30, 2023, FireSmart Alberta will host its first annual FireSmart Alberta Community Series conference.
- By October 1, 2024, FireSmart Alberta will strive to increase the number of FireSmart Canada Recognized Neighbourhoods in Alberta by 50%.
- By October 1, 2024, FireSmart Alberta will strive to increase the number of municipal and Indigenous community partners using the Advanced FireSmart Home Assessment tool by 50%.

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Goal #3: Traditional Knowledge

FireSmart Alberta will strive to learn, acknowledge, and embody traditional Indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous communities in Alberta's wildland-urban interface (WUI) have made significant strides combatting wildfire's effects by incorporating traditional practices and knowledge. These communities are often on the front lines of wildfires and feel the effects more critically than most. As a result of this experience, we have much to learn from Indigenous leaders, and we can do so by working in a more consistent and collaborative manner. Under FireSmart Alberta, we will forge a new, shared path to build our resilience by incorporating traditional knowledge and helping all Alberta communities develop innovative methods to reduce the risks of wildfire.

Strategies

- Incorporate traditional knowledge into FireSmart resilience activities.
- Create opportunities for Indigenous community partners to share traditional knowledge with Albertans.
- Showcase FireSmart activities with Indigenous partners.
- Develop and communicate partnerships with Indigenous communities.

Initiatives

- Build and maintain relationships with Indigenous communities, groups, industries, and organizations in the province.
- Participate in FireSmart events with Indigenous community partners.

Goal #3: Traditional Knowledge

Initiatives

- Reach out to Indigenous community partners and request written contributions to the FireSmart Alberta newsletter.
- Highlight a “traditional minute” with one Indigenous community leader each month to profile FireSmart projects in Alberta.
- Strike FireSmart education committee meetings to share ideas between Indigenous communities in Alberta.
- Coordinate cross-training opportunities between municipalities and Indigenous communities.
- Develop a FireSmart education tool kit for Indigenous community partners in Alberta.
- Work with other industries (oil and gas, rail, etc.) that are active in Indigenous communities.
- Identify opportunities to support social, and economic development efforts of Indigenous communities in Alberta through FireSmart Alberta initiatives.

Accountable for growth

- FireSmart Alberta will visit a minimum of six Indigenous communities per year to learn about Indigenous-led fire stewardship.
- By October 1, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will establish a provincial traditional knowledge standing committee with Indigenous community experts from across Alberta to review and provide guidance on program development.
- By September 1, 2023, FireSmart Alberta will release a video series that shares resilient FireSmart projects taking place in Indigenous communities across Alberta.
- By May 1, 2024, FireSmart Alberta will host its first Indigenous fire stewardship workshop to start a conversation with Alberta communities.

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Goal #4: A FireSmart Society

FireSmart Alberta will increase the application of all seven FireSmart disciplines in Alberta and demonstrate continuous improvement.

The measure of our success will be in how many Albertans and their communities implement our programs in tangible ways. We will build awareness for the seven disciplines and work with all stakeholders to help make FireSmart easy, accessible, and effective in communities across Alberta.

Strategies

- Implementation of the seven disciplines across a range of sectors in Alberta.
- FireSmart discipline working groups.
- Better how-to instruction on each discipline.
- Ongoing training programs for municipal officials and Indigenous leaders.



Goal #4: A FireSmart Society

Initiatives: Information gathering and analysis

- Develop municipal and Indigenous community survey to determine the baseline application rate of all seven disciplines.
- Participate in ongoing Alberta Municipalities Association and Rural Municipalities of Alberta webinars and working groups.
- Work with Indigenous community partners to understand their expectations and needs for chief and band council training program.
- Conduct inventory of completed hazard/risk assessments, preparedness guides, and mitigation strategies in Alberta.
- Conduct social science research project to understand the barriers communities are facing with implementing their wildfire mitigation strategies.
- Complete cost-benefit analysis for fuel treatments.

Initiatives: Training

- Ongoing training for Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) FireSmart Field Liaisons.
- Create a cross-training calendar on FireSmart Alberta website and be the registration hub and organizer of all cross-training opportunities.
- Develop FireSmart emergency planning/vegetation management contractor mentorship program.

Initiatives: Success stories

- Share ongoing FRIAA FireSmart success stories.
- Create case studies on completed FRIAA projects.
- Conduct and share case studies with communities across Alberta to empower action within their local area.
- Share ongoing vegetation management research findings and profile short stories on FireSmart Alberta social media platforms.

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Goal #4: A FireSmart Society

Initiatives: Guidelines

- Develop FRIAA application guide and project idea booklet to foster ideas across all disciplines.
- Develop provincial interagency cooperation guideline.
- Create an annual community cross-training guide with details on various courses, prerequisites, schedule, location, and registration.
- Create guide for planning and starting a vegetation management project with specific process recommendations. Establish benchmarks, suggested project timelines, and a budget example.
- Produce vegetation management treatment maintenance guideline to encourage maintenance of fuel treatments.
- Engage with Environment and Parks and Ducks Unlimited to better understand requirements and create a road map for communities completing vegetation management projects.

Initiatives: Templates

- Develop an updated wildfire mitigation strategy template for Alberta.
- Develop FireSmart committee terms of reference template.
- Develop FireSmart committee agenda template.
- Develop FireSmart committee action log template.
- Develop mutual aid agreement and maintenance process document.



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Goal #4: A FireSmart Society



Accountable for growth

- By March 31, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will strike seven FireSmart discipline working groups to implement key initiatives identified in the FireSmart Alberta 2022-2024 strategic plan.
- By June 1, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will work with a consultant to complete a professional third-party gap analysis and needs assessment to determine Alberta's baseline across all seven disciplines and identify opportunities for future programs.
- By December 31, 2023, FireSmart Alberta will launch an elected official FireSmart awareness program to support and sustain municipal commitment.
- By December 31, 2023, FireSmart Alberta will complete a roadmap and implementation strategy for each of the seven FireSmart disciplines to foster increased application in the province.
- By March 31, 2024, FireSmart Alberta will complete a provincial wildfire mitigation strategy inventory and progress report for every community in Alberta's Forest Protection Area.
- By June 30, 2024, FireSmart Alberta will launch a chief and band council FireSmart awareness program to support Indigenous communities with a sustained commitment to wildfire resilience.
- By December 31, 2024, FireSmart Alberta will support the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) FireSmart grant program to see a 25% increase in applications for the education, cross-training, interagency cooperation, development, and legislation disciplines.

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Goal #5: Resilient Communities

FireSmart Alberta will collaborate with provincial and local governments to effect FireSmart changes in Alberta that support the development of resilient communities.

Development standards play a significant role in reducing a wildfire's potential impact on a community. A building is more likely to be destroyed in a wildfire when it is located in a high-density area where fire is able to easily transfer from building to building. The potential for damage intensifies when flammable building materials are used. FireSmart community planning requires community support and government policy as much as it requires individual action.

Strategies

- Comprehensive representation from external experts to incorporate professional guidance.
- Participation with relevant external bodies to influence policy direction.
- End-to-end home and community pilot projects to prove our policy concepts.
- FireSmart Alberta land use planning education through new programs.
- Encouraging home and property improvements through financial incentives for homeowners.

Goal #5: Resilient Communities

Initiatives

- Complete “Wildfire Co-planning Communities” research project in collaboration with the University of Alberta and Canada Wildfire to provide municipalities with an exposure assessment tool that will provide them a construction class map based on the National Research Council (NRC) WUI Guide.
- Write and incorporate a wildfire topic paper into the provincial Guidebook for preparing a municipal development plan.
- Create a land use bylaw guide/template to help municipalities use the NRC WUI guide at a local level.
- Draft a FireSmart process document that will guide municipalities through systematically incorporating FireSmart best practices in local policies, bylaws, and statutory plans (Municipal Development Plan, Land Use Bylaws, policies for municipal engineering standards, etc.) to accurately reflect the legislative framework in Alberta.
- Further research on legislative and land use planning barriers.
- Hold ongoing workshops and virtual seminars.
- Ensure provincial FireSmart communications strategy incorporates land use planning.
- Determine best method to engage the insurance industry in the short and long term.
- Identify aligned organizations who can help advocate for legislative change (ex. Calgary Metropolitan Region Board, Alberta Safety Codes Council).
- Develop coordinated government relations advocacy strategy.



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Goal #5: Resilient Communities



Accountable for growth

- By March 31, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will invite a representative from the home development industry to sit on the FireSmart Alberta Board of Directors for the development discipline.
- By March 31, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will invite a municipal land use planner to sit on the FireSmart Alberta Board of Directors for the legislation discipline.
- By March 31, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will participate on the provincial WUI guide technical committee to map out a provincial policy shift to support FireSmart development in Alberta.
- By December 31, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will identify at least one partner to pilot a FireSmart home/community development project in Alberta from inception.
- By December 31, 2023, FireSmart Alberta will launch an ongoing learning program for professional planners in Alberta in collaboration with the Alberta Professional Planning Institute Continuous Professional Learning program.
- By December 31, 2024, FireSmart Alberta will work with its partners to establish funding for a FireSmart incentive program for homeowners.

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Goal #6: Self-Sufficiency

FireSmart Alberta will be financially self-sufficient through grant funding and strategic partnerships.

Creating a FireSmart province is a long-term project. Working with partners, we aim to build a financially strong organization that can help spread the FireSmart message across Alberta for years to come.

Strategies

- Strategic partnerships with organizations with shared values/mission.
- Networking and fundraising.
- Attraction of partnerships.
- Apply to the Forest Resource Improvement Program (FRIP) for funding to support key initiatives.

Initiatives

- Identify revenue-generating FireSmart networking events without curtailing participation.
- Budget tracking and forecasting to determine where financial resources should be deployed in the short and long term.
- Develop an annual grant application calendar and plan.
- Research future funding opportunities.

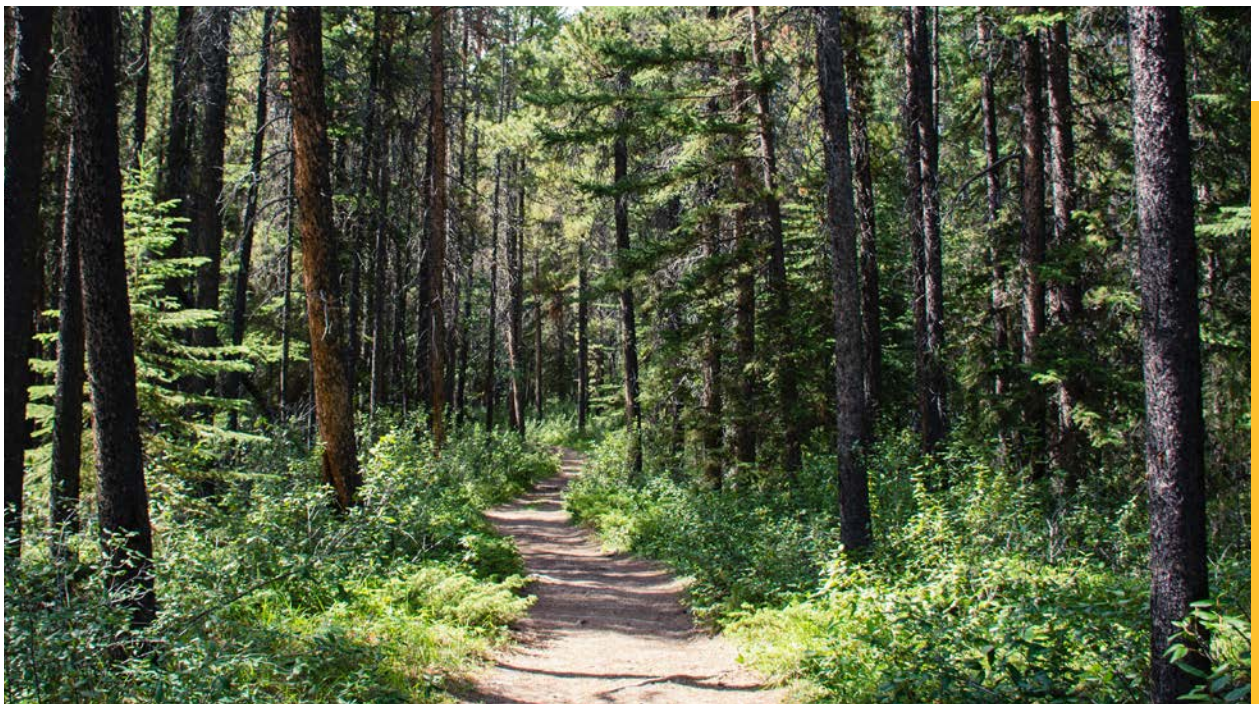
Goal #6: Self-Sufficiency

Initiatives

- Apply to the FRIP for funding to support key initiatives identified in this plan.
- Develop an annual sponsorship outreach package for mass distribution.
- Develop polished targeted sponsorship opportunity materials (digital and traditional) for pre-arranged presentations.
- Research future funding opportunities related to climate change and resiliency.
- Identify an annual marquee FireSmart Alberta event (ex. conference, summit, symposium, etc.) that will create revenue-generating opportunities.

Accountable for growth

- By December 31, 2022, FireSmart Alberta will identify companies and products to solicit sponsorship through cross-promotional activities.
- On an annual basis, FireSmart Alberta will complete at least one memo of understanding with a not-for-profit or association to support FireSmart Alberta initiatives.
- On an annual basis, FireSmart Alberta will identify current initiatives, latest research, emerging trends, and new programs and present them to key stakeholders (Alberta Municipalities Association (AM), Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA), Alberta Professional Planners Institute (APPI), etc.).
- On an annual basis, FireSmart Alberta will secure at least one corporate partner to sponsor a key initiative or project identified in the FireSmart Alberta 2022-2024 strategic plan.



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What is Next?

FireSmart is not a simple program and has many moving parts. We have heard from our partners across Alberta that it can be inherently overwhelming for fire departments, Indigenous communities, municipalities, and residents to tackle the implementation of FireSmart activities across all seven disciplines. FireSmart Alberta's vision is to empower Alberta communities with the knowledge and tools they need to live resiliently with wildfire. There is a lot of work to do, but we are committed to regularly sharing our progress with Alberta communities and providing opportunities for everyone to get involved.

This strategic plan articulates not only where FireSmart Alberta is going and the actions we need to take, but also defines success. As we implement this plan, we will focus on developing turnkey solutions to make applying FireSmart principles across all seven disciplines easier and more achievable.

We all have a role to play in reducing the risk of wildfire damage. By coming together with our partners, FireSmart Alberta believes we can build a stronger, more resilient province.





**Helping Alberta stay safe
by staying FireSmart.**

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