

Action Southwest Branding Initiative  
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For Immediate Release

### **A Regional Brand...Is One Needed?**

Members of communities throughout the southwest are being encouraged to jump into the discussion about developing a brand for the region.

Sponsored by the Action Southwest Business Networks Coalition and over 20 regional partners the current initiative is in response to an industry-led call for the development of a regional brand. The current project is not to develop a brand, but to discuss the possible uses and benefits of a brand with stakeholders and the general public and solicit input from as wide a range of people as possible.

In mid-February, public meetings were held in Assiniboia, Swift Current and Maple Creek to provide an overview of the project and to initiate discussion of the issues amongst interested members of the community. Feedback at these meetings was quite positive with many of the participants already being engaged in various promotional and development initiatives.

“These are people on the ground, already facing the challenges of sales, development and promotion...” says Darren Nimegeers, a consultant working with Action Southwest on the project. “Many have already identified a regional brand as a tool that would help with their efforts.”

The current goal, says Nimegeers, is to further engage members of the community in the process. Key to this effort is a website developed specifically for this purpose. The site provides background information on the effort as well as a questionnaire and a discussion forum. They are aggressively encouraging all members of the public to use these tools to voice their concerns.

The website is at [www.southwestbranding.com](http://www.southwestbranding.com).

“We don’t want to just preach to the choir here,” says Nimegeers, “we must engage with people who aren’t too sure about the project. We need them to ask the questions, raise the objections – so we can genuinely determine if those questions can be answered.”

The website also provides an opportunity for interested members of the public to sign up for several working sessions which are planned for March 13-15. The exact times and dates will be finalized in consultation with those who sign up. These sessions will explore in more detail the specific opportunities and challenges of developing a regional brand and seek to respond to questions raised on the website.

The initial push behind the idea of a regional brand came a couple of years ago when Action Southwest undertook a study with industry representatives throughout the area. Among the results of this study was a call from three of four key sectors (agribusiness, tourism, manufacturing) who independently identified the need for a regional brand. The energy sector did not identify this as a key need.

The value of a regional brand was seen in several areas:

- more effective communication of opportunities within the region
- more effective communication of regional benefits such as quality of life and competitiveness
- coordination of promotional efforts and messages
- ability to target global awareness of the region for purposes of tourism, investment, labour attraction and other promotions.

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