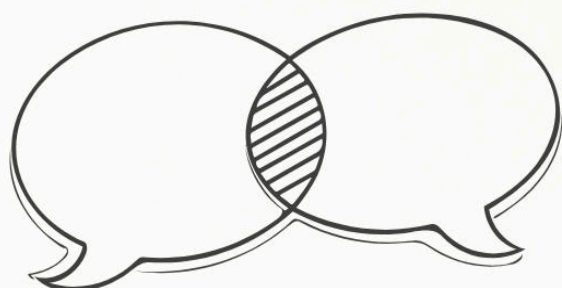




COMMUNITY TALKS

TABER REPORT

Combined Session Report
January 20th & March 9th
2024



**IRON +
EARTH**



Community Talks - Taber, Alberta

Full Report on Sessions 1 (January 20th 2024) & 2 (March 9th 2024)

Summary

This report summarizes knowledge gathered at Iron & Earth's Community Talks events in Taber, Alberta, between January and March of 2024. The first event was hosted in partnership with RenuWell and Eagle Spirit Nest Community Association (ESNCA), while the second was a collaboration between I&E and RenuWell. Since then, these partnerships have ceased. This report consists of findings based on these initial engagement efforts.

In the first conversation, facilitators asked a series of broad questions to gauge community perspectives around the environment and local industries. From this discussion we learned that while community members have identified changes in their local environment, including extreme temperature fluctuations, drought, and wildfire smoke, they do not all see these changes as entirely negative. Participants identified agriculture and energy as two key industries in Taber, sharing that both industries are experiencing changes. They also shared a distaste for the term sustainability when applied to environmental issues in their community, and preferred to discuss sustainability in terms of the rising cost of living and inadequate housing supply in Taber.

In the second conversation, we narrowed in on two key areas of interest: agriculture and fluctuations of the local economy. We asked participants to share their visions of the future of farming, indicate new industries they would be open to in their community, and identify which sectors require support. This discussion united around a few key themes. Taber's agriculture industry is experiencing changes due to rising costs, corporatization, and weather changes, but it's not yet clear what the future of farming will look like. Participants offered a robust knowledge of and interest in local renewable energy projects, particularly small-scale solar energy initiatives. Their support of renewable



energy projects is contingent on proper handling of land use issues and preservation of irrigated lands for agricultural development.

Given the complexity of community issues, non-representative community turnout, and a technical malfunction during the second event, further engagement is needed to understand the concerns and desires of residents of Taber, Alberta. I&E will work to identify new local partners in Taber to deliver this engagement.

1. Introduction

About Iron & Earth

Iron & Earth (I&E) is a non-profit organization with roots in the fossil fuel industry that is working toward a future where the workforce is dynamically engaged in a thriving green economy. We envision broad participation in a Just Transition, leading to strengthened economic and climate resilience, expanded accessibility to sustainable energy solutions and meaningful careers. This vision extends beyond workforce mobilization to foster a community-driven transformation, where people actively contribute to a sustainable and equitable future, for their communities and the planet. Its mission is to enable sustainable, community-driven climate solutions and reduce barriers for those seeking a future in the green economy with programs that support greater job security, social protection, and more training opportunities as we move toward a low-carbon economy.

I&E believes community engagement is an effective way to influence sustainable participation in a Just Transition, and that community-driven solutions have a greater chance of becoming successful and sustainable in the long-term. I&E takes the time to build relationships and adapt to individual community needs whenever possible.

Community Talks is Iron and Earth's engagement initiative designed to spark conversations about how environmental, social, and economic changes impact people across Canada. It is committed to meeting communities where they are at, by supporting self-determined, community-driven solutions, and offering non-prescriptive support with programs that are designed by the community and for the community.



About Our Local Partners

The first event in Taber was hosted in partnership with RenuWell Energy Solutions Inc. and Eagle Spirit Nest Community Association (ESNCA), and the second event was a collaboration between I&E and RenuWell. These partnerships have ceased since this initial round of engagement.

RenuWell accelerates the closure of oil & gas lease areas and makes them available for the agile and scalable deployment of small-scale solar facilities. They utilize existing leases, roads, and powerlines for solar projects, to address the problem of orphaned and abandoned oil wells for the benefit of energy companies, government, landowners, and the local community alike.¹

ESCNA is a community organization in Taber that aims to improve and enhance the lives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members by providing educational workshops [and] youth programming with cultural respect...to support a place of diversity, learning and healing from one another.²

¹ <https://www.renuwellenergy.com/the-renuwell-solution>

² https://www.pentictonherald.ca/spare_news/article_e807dd9f-7f10-5bd5-aa80-57cbc464bb3a.html



Why this community was selected to have a conversation

Since its inception, energy has been a core element of Taber’s local economy. Beginning as a coal mining hub and later evolving to take advantage of local petroleum reserves, Taber’s roots in the energy industry have offered residents employment opportunities since the late 1800s. While Taber’s energy economy has fluctuated over time, the escalation of both local and larger scale energy demands due to a growing population, as well as increasing cost barriers, has driven the rise of various renewable energy developments in the area.³

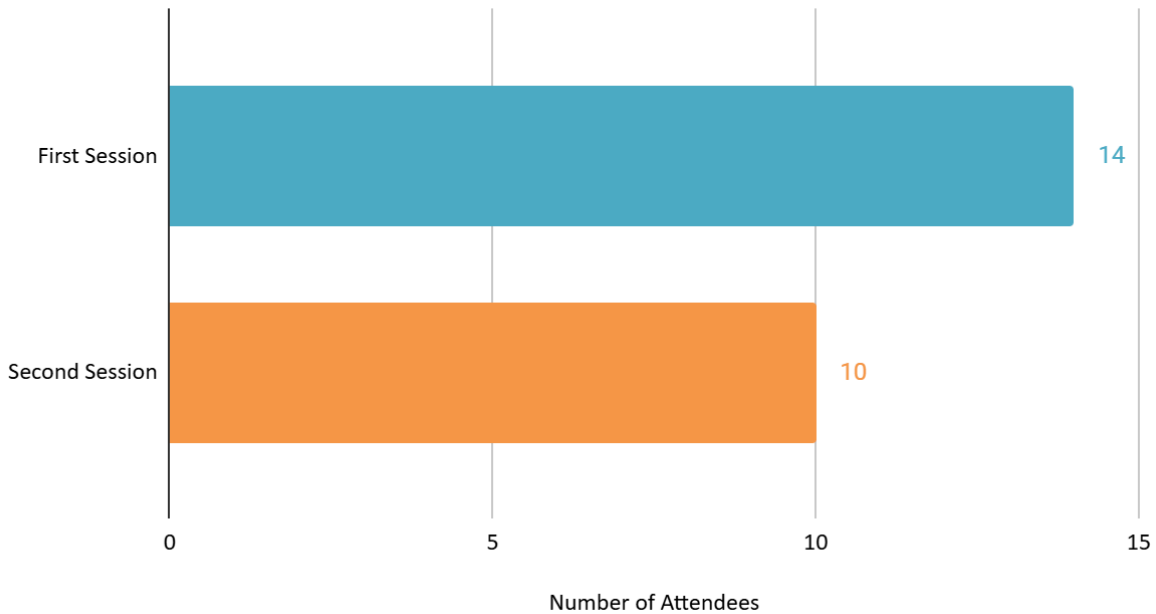
Taber’s economic base is composed of oil and gas resources, agricultural production and food processing facilities. The area’s agricultural production consists mostly of dryland crop production and cattle ranching, as well as production of high-value vegetables (potatoes, corn, beets), and food processing plants. Farming and its related industries contribute greatly to energy consumption, the health of the local economy, and labour opportunities in the area. As the impacts of climate change have begun to shift farming conditions in the area through temperature fluctuations, flooding, and drought, strengthening the agricultural sector is of the utmost importance. The possibility of continuing to diversify Taber’s energy mix through expanded renewable energy development offers the potential to strengthen Taber’s agricultural sector and grow the local economy.

³<https://www.mdtaber.ab.ca/p/renewell-project#:~:text=A%20resounding%2093%25%20of%20respondents.and%2050%25%20indicating%20moderate%20interest.>



About the conversation participants

Figure 1.1 - Attendees Attendance Numbers

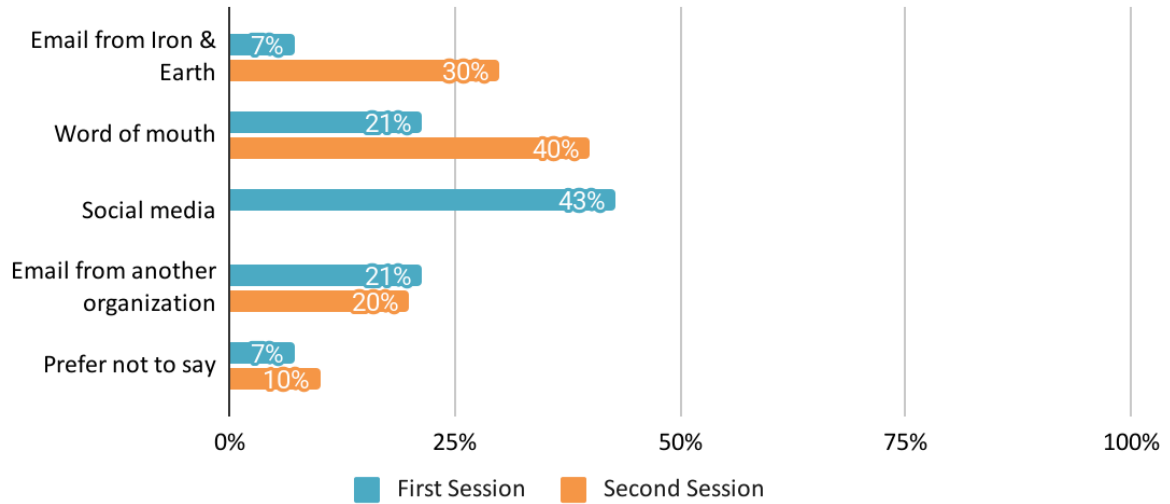


In the first session, 27 people registered and 14 (52%) attended the session. In the second session, 14 people registered and 10 (71%) attended the session. The rest of the participants' analysis is based on the registration forms of people who were in attendance of one or both sessions. Attendees who did not fill out the registration form are marked as “prefer not to say”. Demographic charts include 2021 census data from Statistics Canada website⁴ to provide a comparison on the attendees’ representation of the general demographics of the Municipality District of Taber.

⁴Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed January 30, 2025).

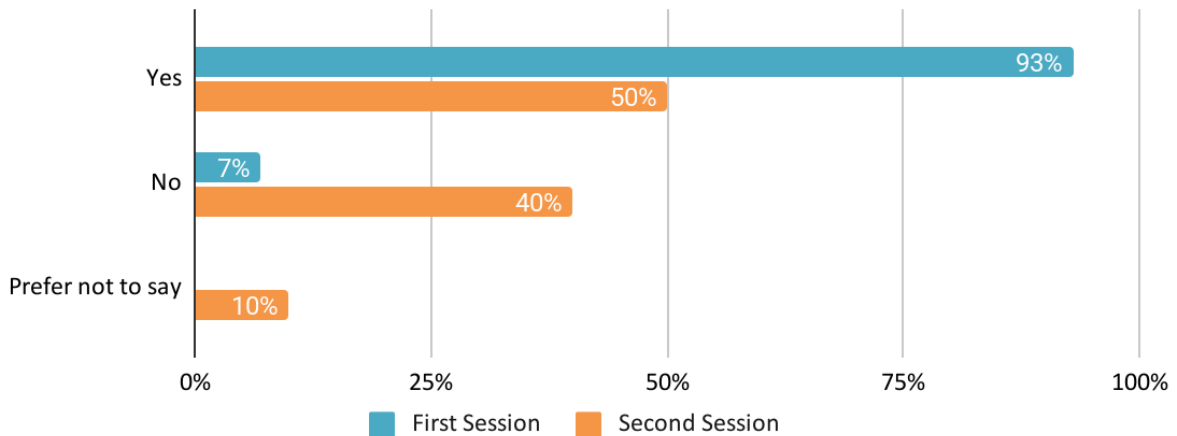


Figure 1.2 - Outreach Methods Results



Based on the outreach methods result, the second session saw higher percentages of those who were aware of the event due to direct outreach through e-mail from I&E, or a person informing them of the event.

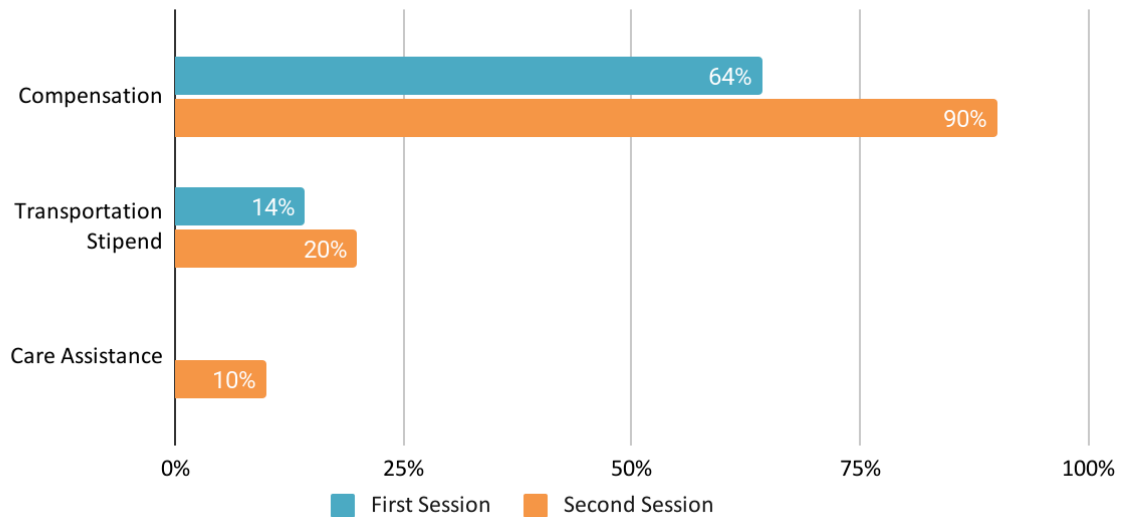
Figure 1.3 - First Time Attendance at Community Pathways Event



The data collected on first time attendance indicates that there was a significant number of participants who returned to the Community Talks after attending the first session.

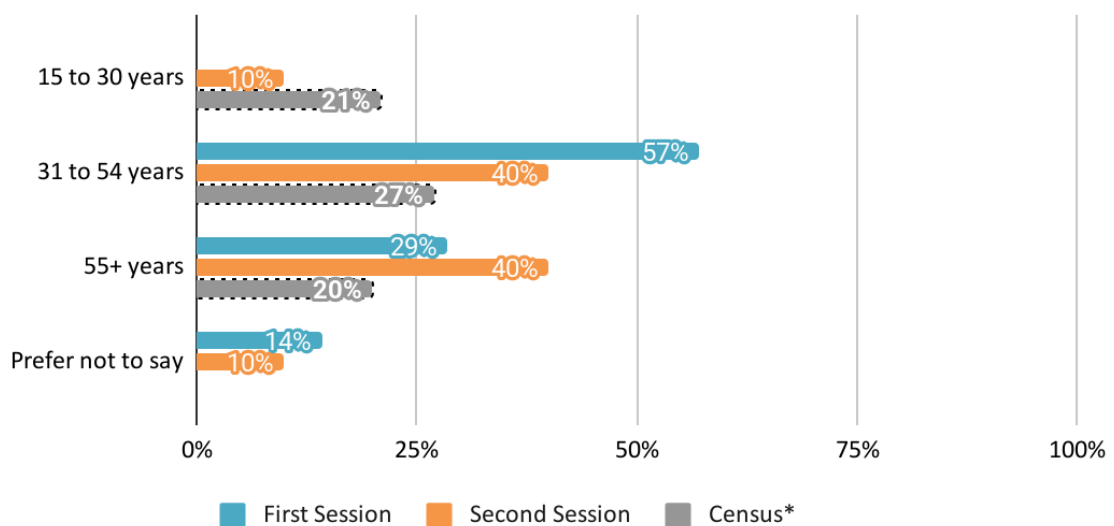


Figure 1.4 - Accommodations Summary



At 90% receiving monetary time compensation and 20% receiving transportation stipend, more participants in the second session opted for accommodations, compared to 64% and 14% in the first session. On the other hand, none of the participants in the first session opted for care assistance, which 10% of the second session participants received.

Figure 1.5 - Age Groups

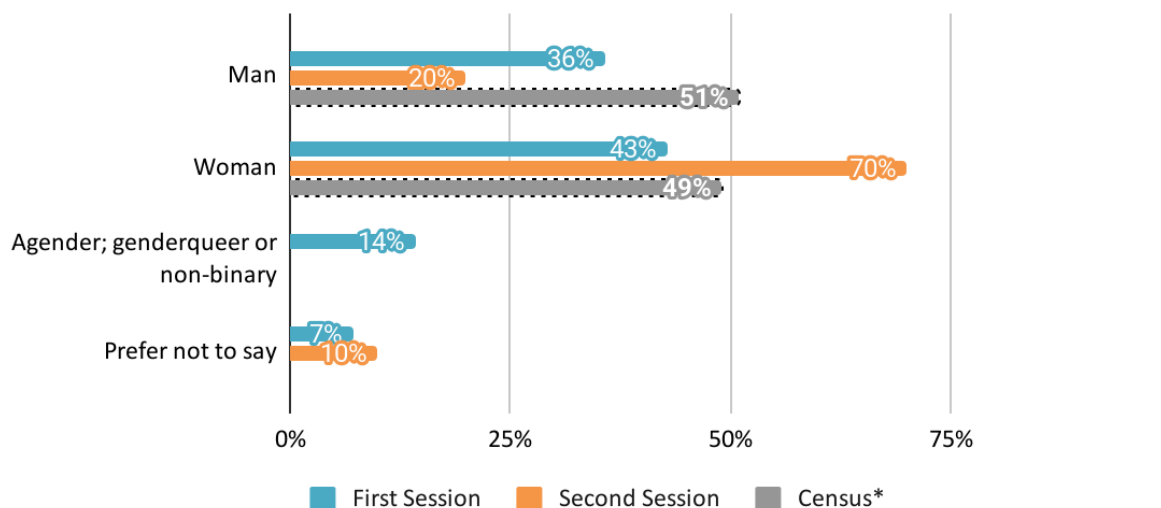


*For Census data, the categories are 15-29 years, 31-54 years, and 55+ years.



The comparison with census data shows that overall demographics of the attendees lean towards the 31-54 years old in the first session, and lacking those of 15-30 years old in both sessions.

Figure 1.6 - Gender Groups

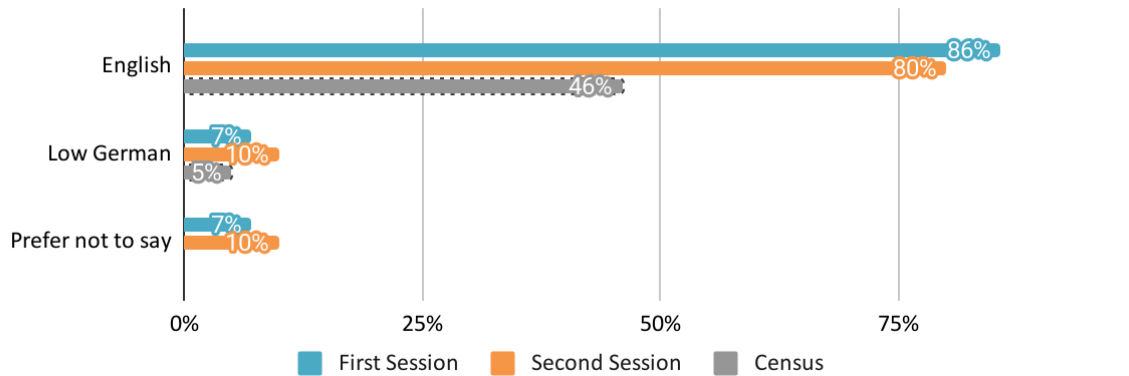


**For Census data, due to the small numbers of non-binary demographics, the categories are divided into "Men +" and "Women +" to indicate the inclusion of non-binary people in these categories.*

The comparison with census data shows that the second session saw a higher representation of women and a lower representation of men.

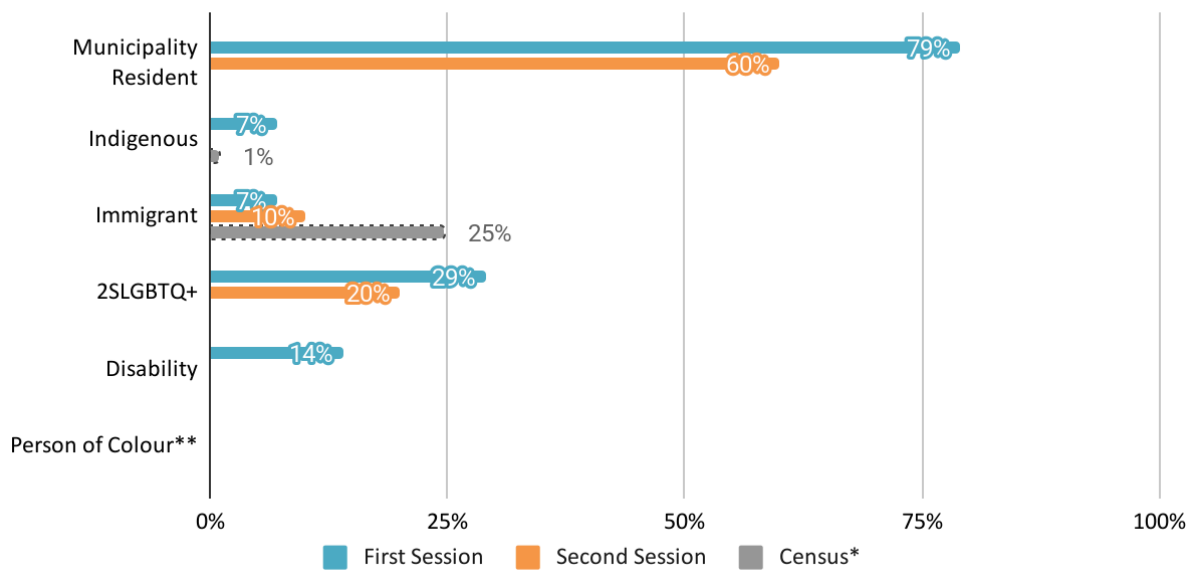


Figure 1.7 - Spoken Language At Home



The comparison with census data shows that both sessions saw an overrepresentation of those who speak English at home, and fair representation of speakers of low German..

Figure 1.8 - Identification Categories



*Census data did not include categories on 2SLGBTQ, disability, and person of colour identifications.

**No attendees identified as a Person of Colour in either session.

Comparison with the census data indicates that the session attendees demographics do not appropriately represent those who are immigrants.



Figure 1.9a - Income Levels - Attendees

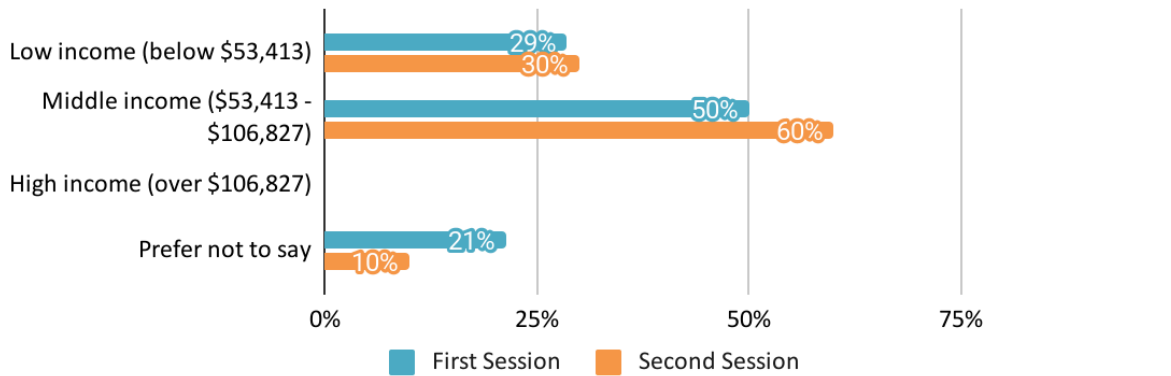
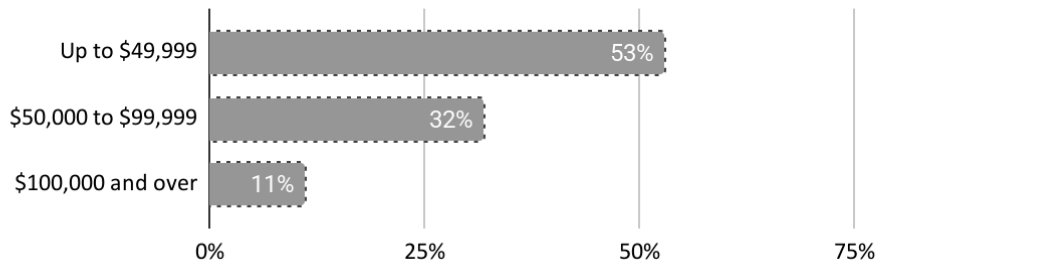


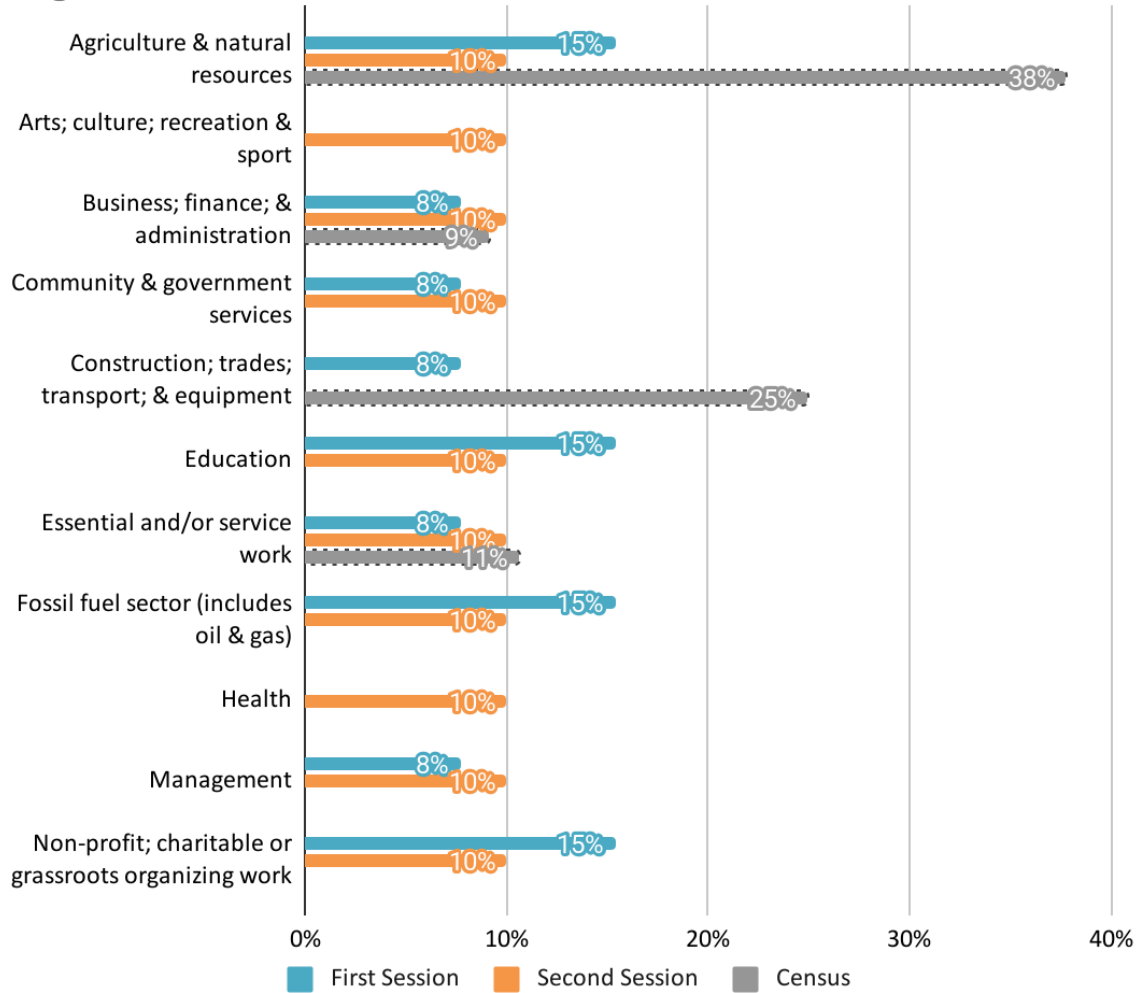
Figure 1.9b - Income Levels - Census Data



The two charts titled Figure 1.9 compare the income levels of attendees to the income levels in census data due to the different categories. This comparison demonstrates that middle income earners were overrepresented in our events.



Figure 1.10 - Job Sectors



Comparison with the census data job sectors indicate that the attendees in both sessions represent a diverse demographic of the municipality outside of the job sectors with the highest number of workers. Future sessions in Taber should focus on targeting more participants who work in the “Agriculture & natural resources” and “Construction; trades; transport; & equipment” sectors.



The Community Conversation

The Community Talks model is built on the principle of community-led discussions: our questions are tailored to the local context, informed by themes of importance to each community. The events are intended to be non-persuasive and supportive. To accomplish this goal, our events are staffed by local facilitators and Community Engagement Officers who are trained to avoid using potentially polarizing language and keep discussion focused on local issues, rather than on specific politicians or political parties. The questions used in the first session are open-ended and broad, getting more specific and tailored to community needs over the course of each event based on emergent themes. See Appendix A for the script used in the first session and Appendix B for the script used in the second session.

The first Taber Community Talks Session took place Saturday, January 20th, 2024 at the Taber Community Centre. The event was executed by three facilitators and one Community Engagement Officer. In response to spacing concerns from the first event, the second Taber Community Talks event took place Saturday, March 9th, 2024 at the Heritage Inn convention room, supported by two facilitators and one Community Engagement Officer. All extra food was donated to Safe Haven, a local women's shelter.

On-site staff used a combination of audio recording equipment and written notes to capture the conversation and ensure accuracy of findings. All participants were also offered the option of manual note-taking as an option to jot down their thoughts. During the second event, one of the recording devices malfunctioned, resulting in only one verbatim transcription from the two tables. The second group's ideas were represented through notes taken by a local facilitator. To respect each participant's consent and data preservation preferences, all participants' names were anonymized and assigned numbers.

With the ending of local partnerships and funding sources, our team made the decision to pause this round of engagement and process our existing data before delivering more events in the Taber area. This report captures all insights gathered from the first round of engagement, combining findings from the first and second Community Conversations to provide a comprehensive overview of I&E's findings in Taber to date.



2. What We Heard

Introduction

The first event was aimed at gathering information about the key issues concerning Taber residents. To achieve this goal, we asked the following questions:

- 1) *What environmental changes have you seen in your community in the last two years?*
- 2) *Have you noticed changes in local industries and/or jobs in the area? If so, have these impacted you?*
- 3) *What does sustainability mean in your community?*

Participants shared the following insights in response to these questions:

- **Environmental Changes:** Participants identified several changes to their local environment, including extreme temperature fluctuations, flooding, drought, worsened air quality due to wildfires, and shifts in the migration patterns of local birds. However, many participants noted that they didn't mind some of these changes, sharing that they enjoyed warmer weather and saw opportunities for new crops with a longer growing season.
- **Local Industries:** Participants identified two key industries in their community: agriculture, and to a lesser extent, energy. While people spoke with pride about their ability to thrive through uncertainty, they noted that these industries are experiencing changes.
- **Sustainability:** Several Taber residents we spoke with expressed a dislike for the term sustainability in relationship to the environment. Instead, they applied the idea of sustainability to the cost of living and housing supply in Taber, sharing a desire for greater investment in the community.

Based on these findings, we used the second session to gather more information about how Taber residents envision the future of the agricultural sector in their community and how the local economy may be strengthened. We asked the following questions:

- 1) *At the last community conversation, participants spoke at length about Taber's agricultural community. How do you see the future of farming in Taber 20 years from now?*
- 2) *What new industry opportunities would you like to have in your community?*
- 3) *What sectors of Taber's local economy require support?*



Three key themes emerged from this second conversation:

- **Farming as a core industry is changing** due to rising costs, corporatization, and weather changes, but it's not yet clear what the future will hold.
- Participants shared a knowledge of and interest in **small-scale solar energy projects** in their local area. They spoke about a desire for a balanced and consistent approach to transitioning to renewable energy.
- However, **land use** is a crucial issue to Taber residents. Their support for renewable energy projects is contingent upon preserving high-value, irrigated farmlands for agricultural development.

Session 1

Environmental Changes

Participants spoke at length about various changes they've noted in their local environment. "When you're in the farming industry, you definitely notice the weather, because the weather affects your whole... livelihood," shared one farmer. Most often, Taber participants discussed temperature changes and shifts in precipitation levels. "There's definitely a change in weather. As far as there's more drought, less rain, more heat...and late arrival of snow," shared one individual. Another person noted an increasing phenomenon of extreme flooding: "In 2005, we had the hundred year flood of the century and then in 2010, we had it again. Five years between those floods and each one was supposed to be the worst in this century." Others commented upon an increased frequency in wildfires in the surrounding area, as captured in the following reflection:

I've grown up in Alberta and I can remember fires. They would stop cars and haul people into firefighting, but the fire season was more contained. I'm seeing it longer now and I'm seeing the effects...our memory is always faulty, but I don't remember as a child breathing in smoke from the fires the way we have [in] the last few years.

Several people shared distress at these events. When one person shared that southern Alberta has always had erratic weather, another person interrupted stating: "But I've never seen...the extremes. Even with the Chinooks – they didn't bring the extremes that we've had this year...Last summer was a washout for me. I have pretty bad asthma, so I couldn't sit outside. It was too hot." Another person shared observations about changes in local animal behaviour: "We're part of nature and what affects them affects us... I've seen changes in bird life down here – the migration routes are changing a bit."



However, while some people expressed fear at these changes, many participants felt that changes in the local environment, particularly warmer temperatures, could bring some positive benefits to their community. The following quotes capture that sentiment:

[There] certainly has been some more extreme temperatures. [But] more people die from cold than they do from hot, right? It's a whole lot easier to keep yourself alive when it's warm outside than when it's...cold outside.

We had a beautiful early summer [and] spring... the corn started growing in June, they said, so we were able to harvest by the end of July this year, which was amazing. Honestly, I have no problem...I love the warm weather. I'm not a cold person.

The weather change — whatever that means — it showed in the early crops last year. We were eating peas in February and things popped up like crazy, and that's good in many respects because you're able to double harvest. But it was [also] bad in some respects.

Local industries

Participants spoke at length about the agricultural industry in Taber, expressing frustration at the hoops that small farming operations have to jump through to maintain their operations: “Last year, I [heard] one of the small farmers say that he has to sell a quarter [of] some of his land. He's going to be taking a break.” Some people shared that, as farmers, they struggled to keep up with changing regulations from governing bodies: “My daughter's husband's family farms... Five years back, they had to actually hire a woman to keep track of all the new regulations. Because they changed them all the time.” Overall, people conveyed that more and more, agriculture in Taber looks like large-scale corporate farming, as captured in this quote:

A family farm is such a rare thing...it's an oddity with this economy of scale thing that we've got going on. You've got to be bigger and bigger and bigger, and [if] you're not growing, you're done... all the different layers of bureaucracy that they've built into that makes it almost impossible for a small operation to get into a big operation.

Several participants employed in the agricultural sector shared a sense of pride that, as farmers, they were well-equipped to deal with uncertainty. As put by one community member: “I think as a farmer, you notice the fluctuations and you just go with it. So in my mind, what's happening is completely normal.” Another person reiterated this idea: “It's



the farmer attitude...In farming, every year is different...The moisture level is different in the spring from year to year. The growing season is different. When you start harvest [is] different every year.”

To a lesser extent, participants also highlighted the local energy industry as critical to Taber, but in a moment of decline: “In this area, in the last 10 years, the oil field has changed. It would have been a predominantly oilfield industry and there was lots of money, now it's changing.” Some people connected this change to government policies, as expressed by one person who stated: “[The] oil field was shut down because the government hates us.” Some Taber residents discussed how fluctuations in the oil industry have a ripple effect on the local businesses that depend upon patronage from oilfield workers: “[Motels] depended upon you know, the rig folks, the guys would come in [from] camps and the bars. So that economy has shifted quite a bit. They've resurrected themselves differently.”

A few participants with experience working in the oilfield shared about difficulties navigating the boom and bust of the industry’s hiring process. For example, one individual shared how external employers negatively view an employment history that includes oilfield work:

If you [worked] in the oilfield, they wouldn't hire you...because once it booms again, you're gone. I had to take that off my resume to get a job, and I wanted out of it. They are like, "We don't want to hire him, because once it gets busy you're wasting your time.

Sustainability

When asked what sustainability means in Taber, several people expressed distaste for the term. “[It] kind of gets under my skin,” said one person. “It’s a virtue signal now,” shared another. One person elaborated on this feeling of distrust of sustainability in relation to environmental initiatives: “I think it means actual sustainability, not just the government throwing money at ‘let's do something that sounds environmental’...Sustainability actually [creates] things that are made to last. It's an attitude...I think what we say is sustainability, isn't always sustainable.” Another individual connected their dislike of the term sustainability to a series of emergency grid alerts issued by the Government of Alberta in January 2024. The alerts demanded energy use limitation due to extreme cold, in order to limit risk of power outages:⁵

⁵ Government of Alberta. January 13, 2024. “This is an Alberta Emergency Alert issued by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency.”



The truth is last weekend, sustainable energy could have killed all of us, if it weren't for coal...the coal fired power here in Alberta, our plant was running at full capacity. [A] Couple of our gas plants were down. They managed to get one back up, but in Saskatchewan, they have a coal plant that was supposed to be shut in 2021. They haven't shut it, they kept it open for emergency purposes.

Instead of thinking about sustainability in terms of the environment, Taber community members spoke about a desire for sustainability regarding income security, housing, and consumption in general. One participant put it plainly: “We're spending more than we should and that's not sustainable.” Others narrowed in on housing as their core concern: “I think if we look at Taber for sustainability, right now we don't have enough housing. So, of course, it's not affordable, because we don't have extra,” shared one person. Another individual reiterated affordable housing as a core aspect of their understanding of sustainability in Taber: “When I think about sustainability – I don't have kids yet, but what is it going to look like for my kids when they're coming up? Are they gonna have a good opportunity to be homeowners, to have a prosperous life, all of that?” The following quote elaborates on these ideas further:

If you look at all the new builds in Taber, we have some folks who are building sustainable, affordable homes. But really only if you have two incomes in it. If it is on a single [income], it's almost impossible... people who are working minimum wage aren't making rent and can't afford food so they are relying on charity. But the charity dollars are less and less, because everyone else is tapped to the end. So then it becomes a vicious circle, which then in turn affects everyone's mental health... Some of us can hop off that and live in our own little corner, but if you are so overwhelmed with trying to meet your basic needs, it's almost impossible.

Session 2

Farming is Changing

In the second Community Conversation, participants reiterated the importance of farming in Taber. “Being a farmer, I'm quite content. We get the big slice of the pie,” one person proudly shared. They often pointed to corn as a core crop for the community: “We have Taber corn. We sell it on the roadside [and] we used to have the corn factory here.” Another person emphasized that “there's a lot of corn that's chopped up for feed too.”

https://www.alberta.ca/aea/cap/2024/01/13/2024-01-13T18_44_42-07_00=AlbertaEmergencyManagementAgency=1489313F-98D9-4737-8FA1-E84EB73520EC.htm



However, farming was portrayed as a profession in a moment of change. One person with experience in agriculture shared that, “it’s not the magical thing that people think. It’s not [a] wonderful life, there’s a lot of work, a lot of money spent too, and a lot of worry.” People frequently mentioned production plants opening and closing, and certain crops being cultivated in the community before abruptly being halted. “There used to be a carrot plant and I thought, ‘Oh, that’s a great crop,’ and then it was gone. I don’t know what happened to it,” shared one person. Another person agreed: “We used to have sunflower seeds, because there was a plant, that Spitz plant...that’s gone.” Other existing plants seemed to be under threat, as one person pointed out: “They’ve been talking about closing Rogers Sugar for the last 25 years...[but] the town of Taber is very committed to keeping that plant.” One Taber community member spoke frankly about these fluctuations: “One thing goes and another comes.”

Much like in the first conversation, the “family farming” era of Taber was again discussed as being a thing of the past. “[The] typical family farm when I was growing up...had a little bit of everything...they could eke out a living on a quarter section of land. But those days are long gone,” said one person. Participants highlighted a few reasons for this change. First, due to costs associated with farming: as put by one individual, “it’s not going to be the small farms anymore, because [for] one, who can afford to buy the land? Who can afford to buy the equipment?” Second, due to the prevalence of large corporate farms dominating the local economy: “Farming is associated with production, it’s not associated necessarily with the community, [and] the market in the community. It’s associated with the big company.”

Additionally, local farming conditions were discussed as changing due to shifting weather conditions. “I believe there’ll be a lot more pulse crops grown this year because they use less water and we’re rationing water,” shared one person. Another person agreed: “It was a record yield for beets...if you have the water with the irrigation and blazing hot sun every day, beets are just gonna grow, grow, grow.”

Other than beets and pulse crops (i.e. edible seeds from legume plants), in terms of the future, one person spoke about Taber as “the center for specialty crops in this province.” Another person stated they’d like to see more hemp production in Taber’s farmlands. There was also a brief discussion of expanding farming education in the community to invest in a local technical facility to train youth in farming skills.

Interest in Solar Energy

Throughout the discussion, participants candidly shared their knowledge of local renewable energy projects in the community. “Where I work, we’re doing a lot of green



initiatives that a lot of people don't know about. We produce hydro energy and have for 20 odd years," shared one person. Participants most frequently discussed solar projects they had observed in the surrounding area, including Lethbridge, Coaldale, and Vauxhall. One participant had gotten Facebook ads for solar panel installation companies, but wasn't sure how to assess the quality of the installers. A local farmer in the group shared their positive experience with integrating solar energy into their land: "We just set up a ton of solar on our farm for our irrigation pumping service...we took it in a spot of unproductive land just off to the side. [The land] wasn't being used anyway."

People shared enthusiasm at the idea of small-scale solar installations being integrated into the area, as captured by the following quote: "I would hope that in the future, they look a little more at smaller opportunities, like Renuwell. When you're driving to Lethbridge...there's a little array there. I think there's ways to mix it in like they do in Europe a lot." One person remarked that they wanted to see more buildings in town retrofitted to include rooftop solar projects. "I don't understand in a town like Taber – they've got that big Civic Center there with perfect roof lines." Another person agreed: "Every roof should be full."

Overall, people were open to the idea of expanding their energy sources to include renewable energy through a pragmatic, balanced approach. "You gotta get the power from something, right? No power source is gonna be 100% perfect," shared one participant. Another Taber community member agreed: "We have to be able to find a balance whereby we can embrace new ideas while we're still able to function." However, they requested consistency and transparency from leaders in making this transition. One participant shared their experience navigating the shifting landscape of financial incentives for renewable installations:

We put up solar years ago just for the farmyard under the pretence that there was a grant from the government that was gonna help. And then the change of government came before it was finished and then they took it away.



Land Use

Throughout the conversation, participants frequently discussed their concerns about preserving irrigated farmlands. For context, within the Municipal District of Taber, there are 363,595 acres of irrigated land, 321,359 acres of pasture land, and 286,130 acres of non-irrigated cultivated land.⁶ Most recently, in 2020, the Taber Irrigation District was granted \$205,000 from the federal and provincial governments to support water security and availability.⁷ Participants frequently referenced the massive investments that have been made in irrigation in their community, and discussed feeling discomfort about solar farms in neighbouring communities that had been built on irrigated land. “There is a solar farm just outside of Coaldale that was on irrigated land, and that one kind of did baffle me. I was told that it was just because it was so close to infrastructure.” The following extended quote summarizes the considerations many community members have when thinking about integrating solar projects into their community lands:

We have been very vehement in the irrigation districts that they don't put these projects on good irrigated land, because we've spent a fortune putting infrastructure into this land to supply water to farmers...We think there are lots of opportunities on land that is not as good for agriculture to put many of these facilities [on]. So a lot of people would say, ‘well, you just don't want solar at all,’ [but that's] not true. We support solar projects in the right place. I think that one of the challenges for solar projects that have happened already is that they're very opportunistic and trying to find sites that are close to existing transmission lines. Because for them, they don't have to invest as much. And so down here, where we have lots of power going all over the place for things, they see this as very opportunistic. We're saying, ‘fine be opportunistic, but not on good irrigated land where we've invested millions of dollars to put infrastructure in,’ because we rely on it for our livelihood.

In general, people were uncomfortable with the idea of large-scale solar farms. As one person shared, “I've watched the solar projects go up and the biggest concern I've had with them is the amount of land [that] they take up.” Another person reiterated this idea: “[I like when] they take smaller opportunities and it's used more localized...rather than taking up big acres of land.”

⁶ <https://www.mdtaber.ab.ca/p/agriculture-agrifood>

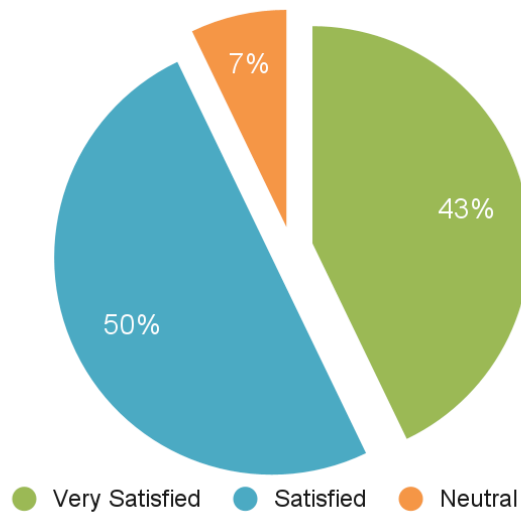
⁷ <https://www.canada.ca/en/agriculture-agri-food/news/2020/08/investment-in-the-taber-irrigation-district-benefits-local-farmers.html>



3. What We Learned

Feedback – Session 1

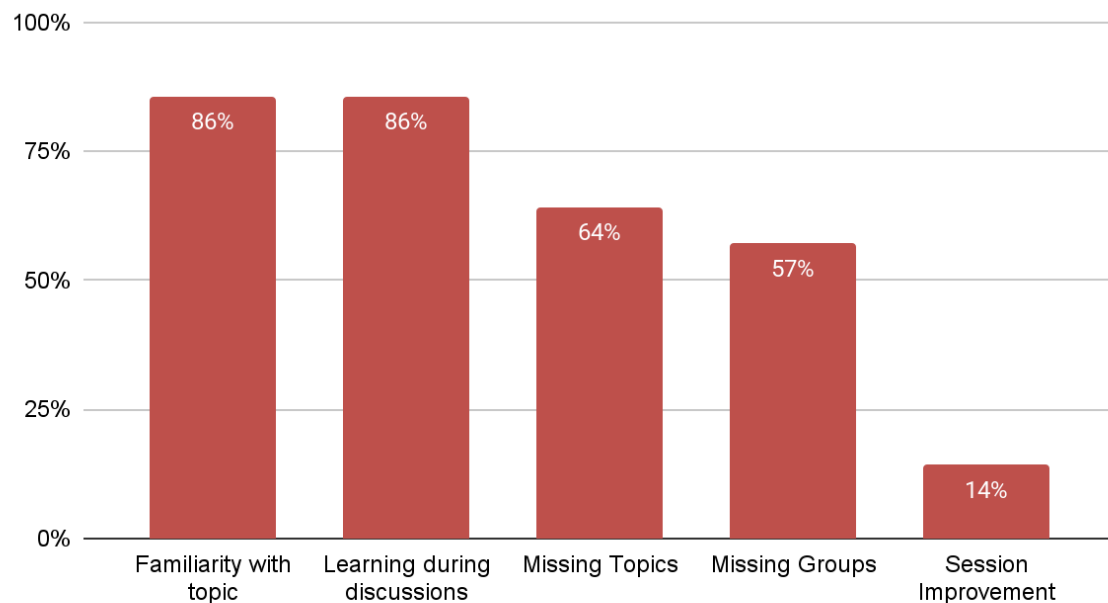
Figure 3.1 – Satisfaction Levels



We shared feedback forms for participants to fill out to assess their experience with the event. All 14 participants filled out the feedback form, with the level of satisfaction averaging 4.4 out of 5 satisfaction levels. 43% of participants rated their satisfaction level as 5 (“Very Satisfied”), while 50% rated their satisfaction as a 4 (“Satisfied”), and 7% rated their satisfaction level as 3 (“Neutral”).



Figure 3.2 - Discussion Topics Feedback



As seen in Figure 3.2 - Discussion Topics Feedback, 86% of participants were familiar with the topics prior to the discussion. 86% participants also learned something new about the conversation topics during the discussion.

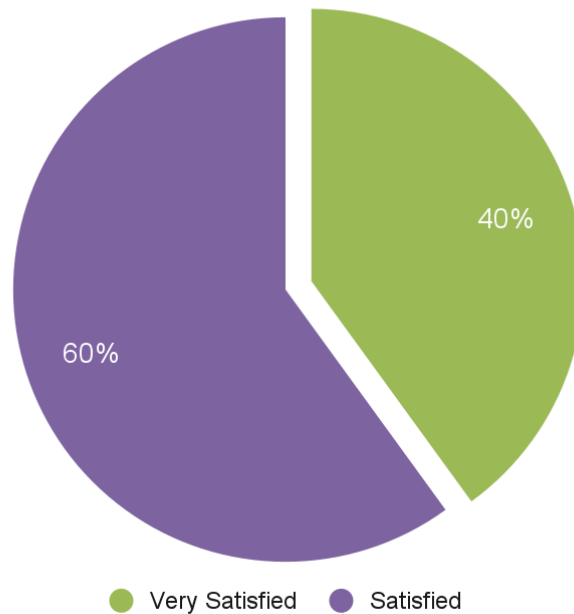
64% of respondents identified missing topics in the conversation, such as: opportunities to strengthen the community and build relationships, the relationship between nonrenewable and renewable energy sources, solutions to the issues discussed, the economy, and more about I&E as an organization. Meanwhile, 57% of participants felt that there were some groups absent, such as: seniors, oilfield workers, corporate representatives, representatives from local nonprofits, and more members from First Nations and German-speaking Mennonite communities in Taber. Other feedback on the discussion included a desire for more space so that participants could hear each other more clearly.

93% of attendees would like to continue the conversation and would like to be contacted for future projects or activities relating to these topics.



Feedback – Session 2

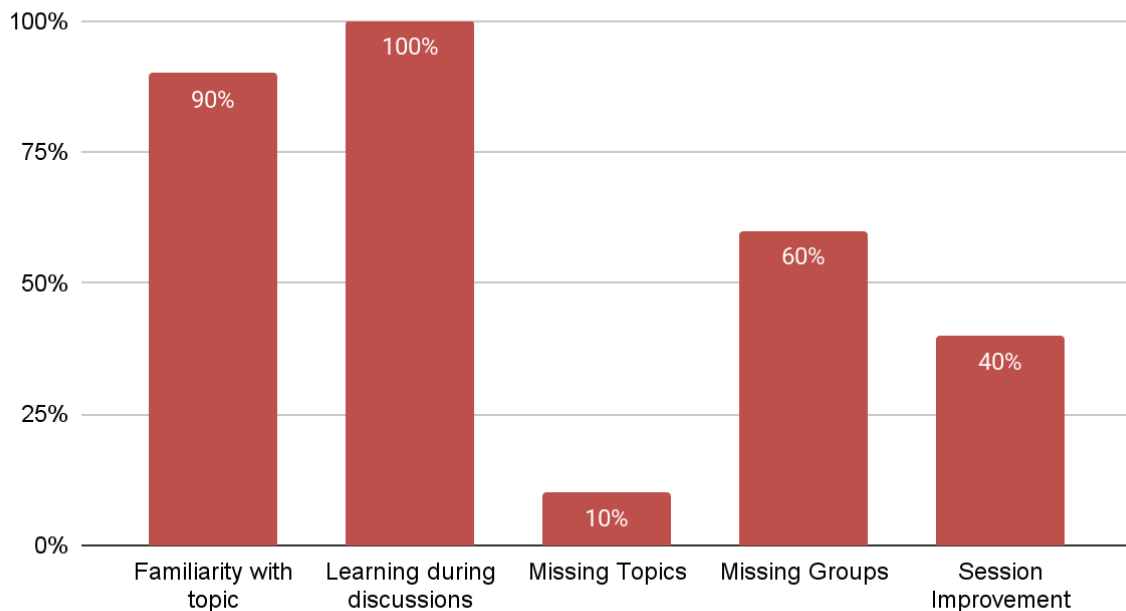
Figure 3.3 - Satisfaction Levels



Once again, we shared feedback forms for participants to fill out to assess their experience with the second Taber session. All 10 of 10 participants filled out the feedback form, with the level of satisfaction averaging 4.4 out of 5 satisfaction levels. As seen above in Figure 3.3 – Satisfaction Levels, 40% of participants rated their satisfaction level as 5 (“Very Satisfied”), while 60% rated their satisfaction as a 4 (“Satisfied”).



Figure 3.4 - Discussion Topics Feedback



As seen in Figure 3.4 - Discussion Topics Feedback, 90% of participants were familiar with the topics prior to the discussion. 100% participants learned something new about the conversation topics during the discussion.

10% of the participants suggested irrigation as an additional discussion topic, and 60% of participants felt that there were some groups absent, such as: newcomers to Canada, healthcare workers, local agricultural groups, representatives from the local government, and education workers. Other feedback on improving the discussion included a desire to extend the length of future events, from two hours to two and a half hours.

90% of attendees would like to continue the conversation and 70% would like to be contacted for future projects or activities relating to these topics.



Conclusion

Between January and March of 2024, I&E facilitated two engagement events for community members in Taber, Alberta. The first community conversation, hosted on January 20th 2024, focused on gathering information about the most important issues for Taber community members. Three common thematic priorities emerged from this conversation. Participants often discussed changes they had observed in the local environment, including extreme temperature fluctuations, flooding, and drought. Agriculture and energy were identified as the most important industries in Taber, both of which were portrayed as industries experiencing major changes. When asked to discuss what sustainability means in Taber, participants shared their dislike of the word 'sustainability' when applied to conversations about the environment. Instead, they applied the term to their desire for a more affordable cost of living and access to housing in Taber.

For the second conversation, I&E explored two key areas of interest: agriculture and fluctuations in the local economy. We asked participants to share their visions of the future of farming, indicate new industries they would be open to in their community, and identify areas where the local economy could use greater investment. Three themes emerged from that discussion: Participants discussed changes and instability they'd witnessed in the farming industry due to rising costs, the increasing presence of large corporations, and shifting weather conditions. They also shared their knowledge of local renewable energy projects and expressed interest in expanding small-scale solar projects in Taber, through a balanced, pragmatic, and consistent approach. However, this support was contingent upon careful consideration of land use issues. In particular, Taber community members were passionate about preserving irrigated lands for agricultural cultivation.

Overall, despite relatively low community turnout, the majority of participants were satisfied with their experience participating and shared that they learned something new through the discussions.



4. Next Steps

Given the complexity of community issues, non-representative community turnout, and a technical malfunction during the second event, the results of these preliminary engagement efforts indicate that more work is necessary to capture the desires and needs of the Taber community. I&E will explore new partners and funding opportunities in the Taber area to deliver future engagement and build on these findings.

I&E staff will review the information collected to identify the most pressing community issues raised by participants and amplify these findings through an advocacy campaign with local decision-makers to ensure that community priorities are advocated for on the local level. All findings will be circulated to participants who attended events in the Taber community.

If you would like to learn more about the program's progress and the work that takes place after the sessions, please contact us at communities@ironandearth.org



Appendix A: Community Conversation Script #1

CONVERSATION TIME BREAKDOWN:

1. Session Introduction: 20 minutes
2. Breakout Group Setup: 5 minutes
3. Breakout Conversations: 60 minutes
4. Break: 10 minutes
5. Reporting Back: 5 minutes
6. Session Conclusion: 20 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 120 minutes

DOORS CLOSE TIME: 1:10 pm/when max capacity is reached

START TIME: 1:00 pm

END TIME: 3:00 pm

SETUP START TIME: 12:00 pm

SETUP PERSON:

- Set up presentation slides/theater screen
- Setup microphone(s) and lighting
- Have a facilitator in front doing headcount checking registered names and hand out registration forms if they haven't filled them, for those unregistered, provide registration form and letter of consent. Once we cap our numbers lead folks to fill up our sign up sheet

SESSION INTRODUCTION: 20 Minutes

Session Overview Introduction:

Greetings everyone and welcome to the first Community Conversation hosted by Iron & Earth in Taber. This series of discussions is taking place in various localities across Alberta with a focus on livelihoods, climate change, and opportunities and developments related to achieving a green economy.



[primary facilitator introduce themselves]

- *name*
- *pronouns (if desired)*
- *association with Iron & Earth*
- *Why are you facilitating today? / provide goals for session*

We would like to acknowledge the Indigenous land where we are today within Treaty 7 Territory and Métis Region 3. The home of the Siksika (Blackfoot), Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan), Stoney Nakoda, Tsuut'ina (Sarcee), and the Métis.

Iron & Earth is hosting this event in partnership with Renuwell. Funding is generously provided by Employment and Social Development Canada.

This is Iron & Earth's first formal community session in Taber. We aim to meet communities where they are at, to understand their ideas on extreme weather events, the transition, potential solutions, and their level of preparedness on each of these issues.

After our conversation, we'll create a brief report to serve as a resource for understanding the needs and desires of Taber's residents. We'll share it with our outreach network, key stakeholders, decision-makers, and publish it on our website.

In the rest of this session, we'll talk about the Taber community and its current challenges. Your breakout group will address three questions about the community, its challenges, and your vision for the future. There is also pen and paper if you prefer to share your ideas in a written or graphic form.

Each group will have a facilitator. You'll be in those breakout groups for about 60 minutes. With each question taking up to 20 minutes.

Finally, we'll come back together for a quick wrap-up and aim to be done by 3:00pm.

If you haven't filled out our registration or consent forms please fill it and give it to one of our facilitators.

IMPORTANT: This is a space that welcomes diversity of opinions, we ask that these conversations are approached with mutual respect and care. We endeavor to have a meaningful conversation with the participants who have diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experience.

Privacy Policy:



We shared a letter of consent for you to sign. In it we explained the participation, reimbursement and confidentiality processes. From it:

We would like to highlight that we will be recording today's conversation, but the transcripts and documents collected will only be shared between Iron & Earth staff. After this process ends, the notes will stay with Iron & Earth. These notes will be used to produce our reports. However, your participation will remain anonymous.

We do want to include some quotes in the community and final reports, but they will have no name attached to them.

We also want to make sure that you know that you are free to leave at any point during this session. We truly appreciate your time and respect your privacy.

Lastly, we ask that you please do not record, or photograph the conversation.

Facilitator Introductions:

We have 2 other local facilitators with us today.

[Secondary Facilitators please introduce yourselves]

- *name*
- *pronouns (if desired)*
- *association with Iron & Earth*
- *Why are you facilitating today? / provide goals for session*



Conversation Introduction:

What is this conversation about?

- Livelihoods: Our livelihood is our means of meeting our basic needs, such as food and shelter
- Environmental Changes: Extreme weather events and increasing global temperatures are having significant impacts and posing major challenges for communities
- Energy Transition Opportunities: The shift from an energy mix based on fossil fuels to one based on renewable energy sources.

What's going on in Taber?

- Taber is the thriving agricultural center in Alberta, possessing a wide variety of diversified crops and livestock. In 2021, Taber's agriculture sector generated \$806 million in revenue.
- The local economy has been fuelled by a range of plentiful resources, beginning as a coal mining town before oil was discovered in the community in 1937. Since then, oil and gas have always been an important economic driver in the community. Due to its plentiful solar and wind resources, Taber is also emerging as a renewable energy hub in southern Alberta, with at least 5 solar projects and 2 wind projects currently operating in the community.
- In the past decade, Taber has experienced more frequent droughts and flooding, extreme temperature fluctuations, and air quality concerns due to neighbouring wildfires.
- Taber is continuing to grow and attract newcomers to the community, many of whom are drawn to the warm, family-oriented ethos here. However, there's also a notable labor shortage in the community, like many other rural towns in southern Alberta.

BREAKOUT CONVERSATIONS: 60 Minutes

Setting-up Breakout Groups: 5 minutes

[Facilitators remember to turn on recorder in the breakout group]

[Participants should do a round table of names at the beginning of the breakout recording. This is only for reference purposes, the name will not show in any of our results]



Sustainability Definition: "Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (UN 1987)

1. Question 1 20 Minutes

What environmental changes have you seen in your community in the last two years?

2. Question 2 20 Minutes

Have you noticed changes in local industries and/or jobs in the area? If so, have these impacted you?

3. Question 3 20 Minutes

What does sustainability mean in your community?

BREAK: 10 MINUTES

Reporting back to the room: 5 minutes

CONCLUSION: 20 MINUTES

Desired outcomes and impacts of this project

We conduct three sessions within each community, this being the first for Taber, we will be conducting a minimum of two more community sessions, and each will have their own session reports. These reports will summarize the needs and desires of Taber's residents and will be shared with our outreach network, key stakeholders and decision-makers, and published on our website for everyone's benefit.

If you're interested in learning more about the program's progress and post-session work, please reach out to communities@ironandearth.org and one of our team members will be happy to provide an update. We are planning to host more sessions in Taber in the coming months, so stay tuned!



Please share your feedback on this conversation. Let us know if there's anything important we missed, anything you learned, or anything else you want to tell us!

[Share feedback forms and give time to fill them out]

Finally, we would like to remind everyone that all reimbursements are subject to a processing time of 10 business days.

On behalf of Iron & Earth, I'd like to thank you again for joining us. Have a wonderful rest of your day!

[SESSION END]

[Collect remaining registration and consent forms and Audio Recording Devices]



Appendix B: Community Conversation Script #2

CONVERSATION TIME BREAKDOWN:

1. Session Introduction: 20 minutes
2. Breakout Group Setup: 5 minutes
3. Breakout Conversations: 60 minutes
4. Break: 10 minutes
5. Reporting Back: 5 minutes
6. Session Conclusion: 20 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 120 minutes

DOORS CLOSE TIME: 1:20 pm/when max capacity is reached

START TIME: 1:00 pm

END TIME: 3:00 pm

SETUP START TIME: 12:00 pm

SETUP PERSON:

- Set up presentation slides/theater screen
- Setup microphone(s) and lighting
- Have a facilitator in front doing headcount checking registered names and hand out registration forms if they haven't filled them, for those unregistered, provide registration form and letter of consent. Once we cap our numbers lead folks to fill up our sign up sheet

SESSION INTRODUCTION: 20 Minutes

Session Overview Introduction:

Greetings everyone and welcome to the Second Community Conversation hosted by Iron & Earth in Taber. This series of discussions is taking place in various localities across Alberta with a focus on livelihoods, climate change, and opportunities and developments related to achieving a green economy.

[CEO introduce themself]

- *name*
- *pronouns (if desired)*



- *association with Iron & Earth*
- *Why are you here today? / provide goals for session*

We would like to acknowledge the Indigenous land where we are today within Treaty 7 Territory and Métis Region 3. The home of the Siksika (Blackfoot), Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan), Stoney Nakoda, Tsuut'ina (Sarcee), and the Métis.

Iron & Earth is hosting this event in partnership with Renuwell. Funding is generously provided by Employment and Social Development Canada.

This is Iron & Earth's Second formal community session in Taber. We aim to meet communities where they are at, to understand their ideas on extreme weather events, the transition, potential solutions, and their level of preparedness on each of these issues.

After our conversation, we'll create a brief report to serve as a resource for understanding the needs and desires of Taber's residents. We'll share it with our outreach network, key stakeholders, decision-makers, and publish it on our website.

In the rest of this session, we'll talk about the Taber community and its current challenges. Your breakout group will address three questions about the community, its challenges, and your vision for the future. There is also pen and paper if you prefer to share your ideas in a written or graphic form.

Each group will have a facilitator. You'll be in those breakout groups for about 60 minutes. With each question taking up to 20 minutes.

Finally, we'll come back together for a quick wrap-up and aim to be done by 3:00pm.

If you haven't filled out our registration or consent forms please fill it and give it to one of our facilitators.

IMPORTANT: This is a space that welcomes diversity of opinions, we ask that these conversations are approached with mutual respect and care. We endeavor to have a meaningful conversation with the participants who have diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experience.

Privacy Policy:



We shared a letter of consent for you to sign. In it we explained the participation, reimbursement and confidentiality processes. From it:

We would like to highlight that we will be recording today's conversation, but the transcripts and documents collected will only be shared between Iron & Earth staff. After this process ends, the notes will stay with Iron & Earth. These notes will be used to produce our reports. However, your participation will remain anonymous.

We do want to include some quotes in the community and final reports, but they will have no name attached to them.

We also want to make sure that you know that you are free to leave at any point during this session. We truly appreciate your time and respect your privacy.

Lastly, we ask that you please do not record, or photograph the conversation.

Facilitator Introductions:

We have 3 other local facilitators with us today.

[Secondary Facilitators please introduce yourselves]

- *name*
- *pronouns (if desired)*
- *association with Iron & Earth*
- *Why are you facilitating today? / provide goals for session*

Conversation Introduction:

What is this conversation about?

- **Livelihoods:** Our livelihood is our means of meeting our basic needs, such as food and shelter
- **Environmental Changes:** Extreme weather events and increasing global temperatures are having significant impacts and posing major challenges for communities
- **Energy Transition Opportunities:** The shift from an energy mix based on fossil fuels to one based on renewable energy sources.



What's going on in Taber? *(Note for Community Engagement Officer: Recommend to give a quick disclaimer that some people may have heard about these things if they attended the previous sessions, but we want everyone to be brought up to speed.)*

- Taber is the thriving agricultural center in Alberta, possessing a wide variety of diversified crops and livestock. In 2021, Taber's agriculture sector generated \$806 million in revenue.
 - The local economy has been fuelled by a range of plentiful resources, beginning as a coal mining town before oil was discovered in the community in 1937. Since then, oil and gas have always been an important economic driver in the community. Due to its plentiful solar and wind resources, Taber is also emerging as a renewable energy hub in southern Alberta, with at least 5 solar projects and 2 wind projects currently operating in the community.
 - In the past decade, Taber has experienced more frequent droughts and flooding, extreme temperature fluctuations, and air quality concerns due to neighbouring wildfires.
 - Taber is continuing to grow and attract newcomers to the community, many of whom are drawn to the warm, family-oriented ethos here. However, there's also a notable labor shortage in the community, like many other rural towns in southern Alberta.
-

BREAKOUT CONVERSATIONS: 60 Minutes

Setting-up Breakout Groups: 5 minutes

[Facilitators remember to turn on recorder in the breakout group]

[Participants should do a round table of names at the beginning of the breakout recording. This is only for reference purposes, the name will not show in any of our results]

1. Question 1 20 Minutes

At the last community conversation, participants spoke at length about Taber's agricultural community. How do you see the future of farming in Taber 20 years from now?

Possible follow-up questions if needed:

- How do you think changes within farming in the next 20 years might impact Taber?
- What would a thriving agricultural sector look like in Taber 20 years from now?
- How connected is Taber's farming sector to your own prosperity?
- What is needed for Taber's farming community to thrive in the future?



2. Question 2 20 Minutes

What new industry opportunities would you like to have in your community?

3. Question 3 20 Minutes

What sectors of Taber's local economy require support?

BREAK: 10 MINUTES

Reporting back to the room: 5 minutes

CONCLUSION: 20 MINUTES

Desired outcomes and impacts of this project

We conduct three sessions within each community, this being the Second for Taber, we will be conducting a minimum of one more community session, and each will have their own session reports. These reports will summarize the needs and desires of Taber's residents and will be shared with our outreach network, key stakeholders and decision-makers, and published on our website for everyone's benefit.

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Please share your feedback on this conversation. Let us know if there's anything important we missed, anything you learned, or anything else you want to tell us!

[Share feedback forms and give time to fill them out]

Finally, we would like to remind everyone that all reimbursements are subject to a processing time of 10 business days.

On behalf of Iron & Earth, I'd like to thank you again for joining us. Have a wonderful rest of your day!

[SESSION END]

[Collect remaining registration and consent forms and Audio Recording Devices]