

WORK CENTRAL AB

Industry Reports

What's Driving Central Alberta's Economy

A Career Resource from Work Central AB

Central Alberta Industry Reports

Central Alberta's economy is genuinely diversified, spanning health care, agriculture, manufacturing, trades, and energy services. This guide summarizes the region's key industries and what's driving growth in each.

1. Health Care and Social Assistance

Health care and social assistance is the Red Deer Economic Region's single largest employment sector. Growth is being driven in part by the ongoing \$1.8 billion Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre redevelopment, which will add 200 new inpatient beds and significant new specialized capacity (see our Healthcare Services guide). Provincewide, health care and social assistance employment grew 15.7% year-over-year as of early 2026.

2. Agriculture and Agri-Business

- Central Alberta's farmland supports a strong agricultural base, reinforced by Olds College's agri-tech specialization.
- Agriculture ties closely to food and beverage processing, agricultural equipment, and related agri-business roles across the region.
- Seasonal hiring patterns tied to planting and harvest remain a consistent feature of the sector (see our Seasonal Employment guide).

3. Construction and Manufacturing

Construction is one of Red Deer's top three industries by labour force, reflecting both residential growth in fast-growing communities like Blackfalds and major infrastructure projects including the hospital redevelopment and regional bridge and road work. Manufacturing benefits from the region's central location between Calgary and Edmonton for distribution.

4. Retail Trade

Retail trade is another of Red Deer's largest employment sectors, reflecting the city's role as a regional commercial hub serving not just Red Deer but many smaller surrounding communities that rely on the city for shopping and services.

5. Energy Services and Technology

Emerging and Supporting Sectors

Energy services support Alberta's broader energy sector, with Central Alberta providing equipment, technical services, and skilled trades labour.

Technology and knowledge-based industries are a smaller but growing sector, supported by CARIN (Central Alberta Regional Innovation Network) and post-secondary applied research programs.

See our Innovation & Startups guide for more on this emerging sector.

6. Post-Secondary and Innovation Support

- Red Deer Polytechnic and Olds College both play significant roles in feeding regional talent pipelines across these industries.
- Applied research partnerships between these institutions and local employers support innovation across agriculture, health care, and trades.
- See our Colleges & Universities and Innovation & Startups guides for more on this connection.

7. Frequently Asked Questions

Common Questions

Which industry offers the most stable long-term demand? Health care shows particularly strong, sustained growth given both demographic trends and major infrastructure investment.

Is Central Alberta's economy diversified, or dependent on one sector? It's genuinely diversified across health care, agriculture, retail, construction, and manufacturing - a real strength compared to more single-industry regional economies.

Where can I find more granular industry data? See our Labour Market Reports guide and the official sources listed there for detailed, current figures.

8. Looking Ahead

Alberta's real GDP growth is forecast to average 2.7% across 2026 and 2027, supporting continued regional economic activity. Major infrastructure investment, particularly the Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre redevelopment, is expected to sustain construction and health care demand for several more years as the project progresses through its phased completion.

Industry Reports Checklist

- ✓ Identified which regional industries align with your skills or business
- ✓ Reviewed current major infrastructure projects driving regional demand

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- ✓ Checked our Labour Market Reports and Salary Guides for data specific to your field
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Explore More at Work Central AB

See our Labour Market Reports and High-Demand Occupations guides for more detailed, current data. Visit workcentralab.ca/resources.