

# Project A – Governance Model Feasibility Study

---

## 1 Introduction

---

Several plans have been drafted in the northern SLRD, most recently the *Economic Opportunity Assessment* (EPI Ecoplan International, 2008b) and the *Economic Development Assessment, Strategy and Action Plan* (EDCD Consulting, 2012). In both of these plans and several other older documents, similar recommendations were made to the SLRD and District of Lillooet. Broadly, those recommendations include improving communication and building relationships between the SLRD, District of Lillooet, and the six St'at'imc communities and providing shared economic development services across the region.

EDCD Consulting (2012) identified the following gaps in service delivery including:

- No structured forum exists for sharing of information among service providers. There is an informal sharing of information; however, this can result in a lack of understanding of each service provider's goals, activities and future developments. This can result in duplication of services or product development.
- No formalized "regional" economic development model exists. For a region to work together on economic development there must be a structured model in place and a commitment from all players that economic development is truly regional.
- No structured forum exists for sharing information among business owners or residents. This results in a lack of understanding of what economic development does for the community or region.
- There is a lack of mentoring and support for businesses in rural areas and for First Nations.
- Community groups do not always have the volunteer capacity to effectively implement projects or initiatives. Without this capacity, it is more difficult to obtain project funding.
- Community groups/committees lack the understanding of their role in cooperation with local government.
- There is no economic development service in Area B.

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of Project A is to complete a feasibility study to assess the viability of a shared governance model for a shared community economic development service in the northern SLRD sub-region, composed of Electoral Areas A and B and the District of Lillooet. The study will provide more recommendations for implementation that will help to achieve community economic development in the sub-region.

## 2 Methodology

---

The following steps were taken to assess the feasibility and develop the governance model:

- Review of the existing economic development services in the northern SLRD
- Review of existing shared economic development services in regional districts in BC with similar population and in some cases similar issues for example, lack of transportation infrastructure and geographical isolation
- Review of regional economic development literature
- Interviews with economic development officers and staff to help determine the strengths and weaknesses of respective service delivery types and governance models, and to determine current status of working relationships in the northern SLRD
- Public workshop delivery across the northern SLRD

### 2.1 Economic Development Services - Northern SLRD

There are limited economic development services offered in the northern SLRD. There is currently no economic development officer/staff person at the SLRD nor at the District of Lillooet. Despite having no designated economic development service, the SLRD Board allocated \$75,000 to support economic development in the northern SLRD, Areas A, B and Lillooet in addition to the Northern Development Initiatives Trust grant; the Board allocation is for one year only and there has been no discussion regarding annual funding for economic development.

In Area A, the Bridge River Valley Community Association (BRVCA) is a non-profit society that is funded by tax requisition to undertake economic development services in the Upper Bridge River Valley. The Society operates a community resource centre, tourism information booth, and manages several social media applications. BRVCA seeks funding to develop and roll out priority based projects in the area. The Society is currently undertaking a community economic development planning process.

Each of the St'at'imc communities have a staff position or councillor that manages economic development for their respective band and or development corporation; some positions have economic development as part of a broader portfolio. Some of the St'at'imc communities noted recent turnover in their respective economic development positions; some positions are currently vacant. There are several economic projects underway in the region; however, those projects are stand alone and not part of sub-regional or strategic/regional level economic development planning or collaboration.

### 2.2 Shared Service Delivery in BC

The report, *Evaluating the Economic Development Role of BC Local Governments*, (Union of BC Municipalities, 2010) provides an outline of economic development practices by local governments across the province. Local governments, both regional districts and municipalities were surveyed. Communities were divided into groups based on size, the 'small communities' group, less than 5,000 population, made up 40% percent of completed surveys. The conclusions of the publication are as follows:

- One size does not fit all. There is no single best model for local economic development and there are a number of different options available to local governments.

- Each local government must take into consideration their objectives for economic development, the range of services that are already being provided by other agencies, the amount of available funding, and potential partners.
- The “in-house” model of economic development remains the most common organizational structure for BC local governments, but there is a trend toward more arms-length organizations, particularly in the 5 - 20,000 and 50,000 + population categories.
- An economic development advisory committee is a common tool for the delivery of an in-house economic development model, but careful consideration needs to be given to ensuring a broad cross-section of community representation, council and area-wide support, as well as a rigorous and transparent selection process.
- Arrangements for economic development can vary within a regional district, with the approach in each electoral area reflecting its distinct and unique geography, population, economic drivers and community partners.
- The regional nature of the BC economy suggests that economic development is often more suited to a regional approach than a single-community approach. Thinking regionally and engaging in partnerships can be particularly important for small communities.

There are several regional districts and municipalities that are of similar size to the northern SLRD sub-region and many that also have similar issues. The following communities were selected for review as part of the background for Project A based on their size and attributes:

- Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (RDKB)
- Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD)
- Regional District of Bulkley Nechako (RDBN)
- City of Enderby and Splotsin First Nation
- Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD)

In addition to reviewing the economic development programs noted above, each of the economic development officers/staff persons rolling out the programs was interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to determine the foundational pieces of each of the programs/services, to learn what made the programs successful, and to find out what program developers and managers would do differently if they could. Outlines of economic development organizations associated with the regional districts and communities noted above are listed in Appendix A1.

Similar to the UBCM document, the structure of each of the economic development services is unique based on local objectives. According to economic development officers and staff members, despite obvious program differences, success of their respective programs relied on the same basic ingredients listed below:

- Obtain stable long-term funding
- Have broad representation from all jurisdictions and local business on boards/committees
- Communication between board/committee members
- Outline clear and concise terms of reference, memorandum of understanding or similar guiding document
- Share resources with similar groups wherever possible
- Have a staff person or third party staff person consistently moving forward on objectives and respective action items

## 2.3 Feedback

Across all of the four project areas there has been feedback collected from local governments, including First Nations, local businesses, and the public. Input was gathered via personal communications, online surveys, and at open houses held across the northern SLRD. Based on guidance from the NEDI Committee and feedback from the public, a draft proposal for a sub-regional economic development service was drafted. On June 24<sup>th</sup>, a workshop was held in Lillooet and feedback was received on the draft version of Project A.

Overall the Project A draft was well received as noted below in section 3.0. The feedback was largely focused around communication and relationship building rather than details of the proposed service. Workshop participants felt that it would be best to have an existing (and non-local) charitable society manage an unstructured committee while relationships between the District of Lillooet, Squamish-Lillooet Regional District, Xwisten, Ts'kw'aylaxw, Sekw'el'wás, Tsal'alh, Xaxli'p, and T'it'q'et are strengthened. It was recommended that the Fraser Basin Council continue the economic development work already underway and move into impartial secretariat support role in the fall of 2014.

A key outcome of the workshop was that regular communication and information sharing regarding economic development opportunities and coordination is needed, with representation from all groups, local governments, and First Nations governments in the northern SLRD. The ideal delivery model would merge several existing committees into one comprehensive, coordinated economic development service that can support multiple initiatives across the economic sector.

## 3 Summary & Recommendations

---

The recommended shared economic development service for the northern SLRD is based on literature reviewed from other BC jurisdictions regarding economic development, recommendations made by past planning processes, and feedback from local governments including First Nations, local businesses and business groups, and members of society at large.

### 3.1 Committee Development - Best Practices

From the experience of the Fraser Basin Council in providing support to multi-party jurisdictional structures since 1997, effective governance for an unstructured committee or the like, must include the following best practices:

- Representation from all governments and stakeholders – select a nonpolitical chair
- Decision making using consensus
- The development of and adherence to a terms of reference that clearly outlines roles and responsibilities for members
- The development of the following plans:
  - communication (including meeting schedule/type and reporting guidelines)
  - funding
  - work (including milestones and time frame)
- Consider and take on projects that are within the scope of the work plan and terms of reference
- Create opportunities for professional development for members of the group

### 3.2 Service Boundaries

The boundaries for shared services will include the northern Squamish-Lillooet Regional District sub-region (Electoral Areas A and B) as shown below in Figure A1.



Figure A1: SLRD and electoral area boundaries – *Squamish-Lillooet Regional District website*

## 3.3 Service

For the first year the service will be guided by an inclusive, unstructured committee composed of the partners listed in section 3.4. The committee will have secretariat support provided by a third party, non-profit society as relationships are strengthened between committee members. After the first year, a part-time staff person will be hired to carry out the economic development work.

The committee will guide the coordination of sub-regional economic development work including the following:

- 1) Regular sub-regional economic development meetings
  - a) Purpose:
    - i) Identify, explore, and develop economic development opportunities and partnerships and assess existing economic development conditions on key topics and sectors
    - ii) Each host community will present current opportunities, initiatives, challenges, and barriers
    - iii) Develop relationships, trust, and foster a sub-regional perspective for economic development
    - iv) Identify how the work will be done beyond year one from the following options:
      - (1) Ongoing secretariat support from a third part, non-profit society
      - (2) Amalgamation with an existing local non-profit society
      - (3) Forming a new non-profit society
  - b) Timing – quarterly face to face meetings
  - c) Attendance – funding partners and other participants
  - d) Location – will rotate around sub-region between members
- 2) Fund development – leveraging core funding with other sources
- 3) Project development
- 4) Workshop development and delivery (in partnership with all members)
- 5) Coordinated sub-regional training opportunities
- 6) Act as a liaison for existing sub-regional initiatives (Agriculture Area Plan)

The service provided may move to a regional scope (overall or for specific projects) including the entire SLRD, should the committee see fit to do so.

## 3.4 Committee Membership

The unstructured committee will be made up of representation from local governments including First Nations, business organizations, and members of existing committees or groups doing similar work. The committee will include but will not be limited to representation from the following:

- District of Lillooet
- SLRD Area B
- Xwisten (Bridge River Indian Band)
- Tsal'alh (Seton Lake Indian Band)
- Xaxli'p (Fountain Indian Band)
- T'it'q'et (Lillooet Indian Band)
- Sekw'el'wás (Cayoose Creek Indian Band)
- Ts'kw'aylaxw (Pavilion Indian Band)
- SLRD Area A (Bridge River Valley Community Association)
- Lillooet Chamber of Commerce

- Seton Portage – Shalath & District Chamber of Commerce
- St’at’imc Government Services
- Community Futures - Sun Country
- Agriculture Area Planning Representative
- Member of society at large
- Other representation as required

Upon the completion of year one, several communities/areas should be taken into consideration for partnership with the sub-regional committee or at minimum, given regular communication updates where region wide opportunities arise. Areas for consideration include:

- SLRD Electoral Area C
- SLRD Electoral Area D
- Resort Municipality of Whistler
- Village of Pemberton
- District of Squamish
- Lil’wat, Samahquam, Skatin, Douglas, N’Quatqua and Squamish Nations

## 3.5 Governance Structure

The proposed governance structure is an inclusive non-profit society composed of staff-level economic development representatives for each of the funding partners and non-voting participation by non-funding participants. To best support this service, all local government and First Nation staff person members must have economic development as part of their respective portfolios.

The unstructured committee as described above should continue to receive secretariat support from a third-party, non-profit society until there is funding in place to create a staff position and until the economic development society is formed. When the developmental year is complete and the society has been formed including membership, terms of reference, communication plan, and work plan, there will be a half to full-time staff person contracted by the society, housed in an office separate from any of the funding members.

## 3.6 Mandate

To merge several existing committees into one comprehensive coordinated economic development service that can support initiatives in multiple economic sectors across the northern Squamish-Lillooet Regional District.

## 3.7 Funding

A sub-regional shared service requires stable, long-term funding via taxation or contribution or a combination of the two. During the initial development of the committee and service (year one), funding will be split equally between the District of Lillooet and the SLRD. Funding for year two and beyond will be split between the following groups:

- District of Lillooet
- SLRD Electoral Area B
- Xwisten (Bridge River Indian Band)
- Tsal'alh (Seton Lake Indian Band)
- Xaxli'p (Fountain Indian Band)
- T'it'q'et (Lillooet Indian Band)
- Sek'wl'wás (Cayoos Creek Indian Band)

Ts'kw'aylaxw (Pavilion Indian Band) is not listed as a funding partner as that community feels more closely linked to Cache Creek and Kamloops compared with Lillooet. Similarly, SLRD Area A is not included as a funding partner because the communities in that area are more closely linked with the Village of Pemberton both economically and geographically.

Project specific funding will be obtained via grants and other sources applied for by a third party, non-profit society in year one and by a staff person in year two, as guided by the unstructured economic development committee. Initial funding requirements and allocations are outlined in Appendix A2.

### 3.7.1 Funding Sources

There are several funding sources available for economic development across all sectors. Grants and other funding sources are often short term, project specific, and in many cases require matching funds. There is a strong interest in the northern SLRD around agriculture and related products thus agriculture funding sources have been included. Some of the existing funding sources and specific funds are as follows:

1. Northern Development Initiative Trust
  - Capacity Building – Economic Development Capacity Building, Grant Writing Support
  - Community Development - Business Façade Improvement
  - Economic Diversification Infrastructure
  - Community Foundation Matching Grants
2. Mountain Equipment Co-op
  - Community Contributions
3. Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC
  - Buy Local Program
  - Emerging Sectors
  - BC Agrifoods Export Program
  - Food & Beverage Processing Initiative
4. BC Agriculture Research & Development Corporation
5. Vancouver Foundation
6. TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
7. Federation of Canadian Municipalities
  - Green Municipal Fund Feasibility Studies & Field Tests
8. Government of Canada
  - Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund
  - Western Economic Diversification Fund
  - Building Communities Through Arts & Heritage - Local Festivals
  - Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

## 3.8 Implementation

Implementation of the governance model for shared service in the northern SLRD sub-region will begin in fall 2014 (pending funding). Year one will be a developmental year where the unstructured economic development committee is provided with secretariat support from a third-party, non-profit society. In year two, the unstructured committee will become a non-profit society, become part of an existing non-profit society, or continue to be supported by a third-part, non-profit society.

### 3.8.1 Year One

During the developmental year, secretariat support for the unstructured committee will be provided by a third-party non-profit society. During the developmental year, the objectives of the committee are as follows:

- Determine and maintain committee membership
- Build relationships between committee members
- Share economic development information and opportunities
- Host quarterly workshops and meetings
- Obtain funding related to the work plan goals and objectives where possible
- Determine the structure of the committee for year two and beyond

Quarterly committee workshops will be held in October, January, April, and July and will address the items listed below.

#### *Workshop 1 - October 2014*

Building Respectful and Effective Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Relationships – Fraser Basin Council

#### *Workshop 2 – January 2015*

Committee Development and Governance

- Review draft terms of reference (until such time as the terms of reference is drafted, the committee will follow the best practices in section 3.1)
- Review draft communication plan
- Consider base funding for year two
- Share economic development opportunities

#### *Workshop 3 – April 2015*

Work Planning and Development

- Secretariat to report back to committee with the following:
  - economic development funding opportunities
  - draft work plan for year two
- Finalize committee structure going forward
- Share economic development opportunities

#### *Workshop 4 – July 2015*

Sharing & Moving Forward

- Share information and opportunities
- Finalize model and work plan for year two

### 3.8.2 Year Two

The structure and work plan for year two will be determined during the second and final workshops of year one. Ideally, the committee will identify the following:

- Membership
- Terms of reference
- Base funding/project funding
- Committee structure going forward (continued third-party secretariat support, structured committee/society, or amalgamation with an existing society)