

# STRONGER TOGETHER



CRESTON VALLEY- KOOTENAY LAKE

**Economic Action Strategy**

*June 2018*



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CRESTON VALLEY- KOOTENAY LAKE

## Economic Action Strategy

### VISION

The five communities of CV-KL work together to ensure a thriving local economy that is inclusive, supports a high quality of life, and builds on our strengths in agriculture, tourism & recreation and small business. Residents can find or create work that meets their needs, and businesses can find qualified staff. Local businesses collaborate for shared success and have the community and government support they need to thrive. New residents and businesses are drawn to the area by the high quality of life and services available. CV-KL is a place for innovation, collaboration, and living a great life.

### OBJECTIVES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Build a thriving local business sector
2. Attract new business and investment
3. Create more good jobs
4. Attract more families / young people
5. Diversify our economy
6. Keep the area peaceful; protect the character
7. Improve services
8. Increase number of local entrepreneurs

### ACTIONS

There are five 'pillars' of economic actions and projects needed to reach the economic objectives of Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake. In addition, there are a number of 'foundational' actions that are ongoing, cross cutting, and would support the projects in the other pillars. The graphic on this page shows the overall framework, and some key themes within each pillar. The actual actions within the pillars are shown on the following page.

#### TOURISM AND RECREATION DEVELOPMENT

- Product development;
- Branding and marketing;
- Regional collaboration

#### LOCAL BUSINESS MATTERS

- Workforce development and attraction;
- Improved business collaboration;
- Local purchasing and procurement;
- Training and support for business

#### AGRICULTURE

- Shared services and infrastructure;
- Technology adoption;
- Marketing

#### QUALITY OF LIFE / RESIDENT ATTRACTION

- Services and program;
- Housing affordability;
- Daycare;
- Resident attraction

#### NEW DIRECTIONS

- Supporting tech and other emerging sectors;
- Tech adoption and value-add within traditional sectors;
- Openness to innovation

#### FOUNDATIONAL ACTIONS

Single point of contact; liaising, linking, supporting; ongoing actions



## Introduction

Recognizing that their economies are linked in many ways, the communities of Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake (which includes Lower Kootenay Band's Creston 1 reserve, Regional District of Central Kootenay Areas A, B and C and the Town of Creston) have come together to look for **regional economic opportunities and challenges**, and ways to **address these in a collaborative way**.

This collaboration is called the Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake Economic Action Partnership (EAP).

Through research and community and stakeholder engagement, the EAP has developed various actions and strategies to work towards a stronger, healthier regional economy. The resulting strategy is called '*Stronger Together – Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake Economic Action Strategy*'.

## Purpose of the “Stronger Together” Strategy

The purpose behind having this strategy is to guide the Creston Valley- Kootenay Lake (CV-KL) region to improve the regional economy in the next 5-10 years.

This economic development strategy provides:

- Analysis of the current economic situation in Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake;
- Community-supported economic development goals and vision, which can guide economic development decision making in the coming years; and
- A set of priority actions for economic development in the region that can be undertaken by local governments, organizations, businesses, and community members from throughout CV-KL.

### Who will implement the *Stronger Together* strategy?

Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake consists of five areas, each with their own governing structure and processes for conducting economic development. As part of this project, the five communities are discussing how they can work together to implement actions for the economic betterment of the region. No decision has yet been made, but several key design criteria have emerged.

A regional economic function should:

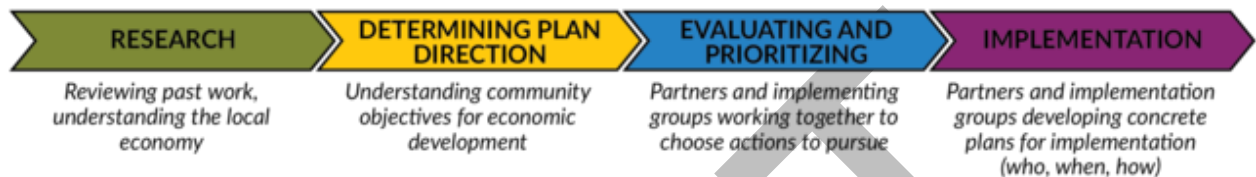
1. Seek to leverage and support the work that is already taking place within the area (e.g. organizations, groups, individuals) rather than attempting to house all economic development related action and knowledge under one roof.
2. Include input from businesses and other economic stakeholders (e.g., Chambers of Commerce, Community Futures, Fields Forward) in addition to elected officials.
3. Be flexible and able to ‘evolve’ over time to meet changing conditions.

Until a final decision is made on the structure for regional collaboration, this strategy will act as a collective to-do list that partners can choose projects to work on together on a one-off basis. The strategy can also guide the work of community groups and economic stakeholders (e.g., Fields Forward, recreation organizations, Community Initiatives Coordinator, Building East Shore Tourism).



## Process

This project ran from the Summer of 2017 to Spring of 2018. The planning work was organized around a four-phase strategic planning approach (shown below) that was designed to answer four guiding questions:



- 1. Where are we now? (Research)**  
*What's the current state of Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake's economy? Are there issues that need to be address? What assets can be built on?*
- 2. Where do we want to go? (Determining plan direction)**  
*What is the vision for economic development? What are our objectives and goals for economic development? What kind of economic development do community members want to see? What do they NOT want to see?*
- 3. How do we get there? (Evaluating and prioritizing actions)**  
*What actions should be undertaken in the short, medium, and long terms? What actions are realistic to implement, given finite time, money, and capacity? Who will do them and when?*
- 4. Have we arrived? (Implementation)**  
*Once there is a strategy in place, how can it be tracked to make sure it's helping achieve the economic development vision and objectives?*

## Building on Past Work

This planning process builds on the significant community effort put into recent planning work and research in the area. A number of past reports, plans, and documents were reviewed in the creation of this strategy. These documents provided context and direction and allowed the EAP to see what progress was and was not made on past plans, and why. Together they provided valuable lessons that have been incorporated into this strategy.

Past main plans and reports that were reviewed included:

1. Town of Creston Freshly Picked Future Official Community Plan (2017)
2. Columbia Basin Business Retention and Expansion Project (2016)
3. Creston Valley Community Conversations: Creating Collaborative Culture (2015)
4. Creston and District Happiness Report Card (2015)
5. Cultivating Creston (Integrated Community Sustainability Plan & Age-Friendly Action Plan) (2014)
6. Lower Kootenay Band "Building an Economy" Economic Sector Strategic Plan (2014)

## Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The Strategy was developed by and for the community, local businesses, and implementation partners of CV-KL. It builds on and broadens the community input from the Creston Valley Official Community Plan process, numerous existing plans and processes.

The community was engaged in a variety of ways to gain a clear understanding of people's goals for the local economy, their ideas for actions to make things better, and how they want to see progress measured. Broad community engagement was undertaken, as well as more targeted engagement with the business and economic community (e.g., business owners, Chambers of Commerce).

Stakeholder groups included: Residents, businesses and elected officials from Lower Kootenay Band Creston 1, Town of Creston and Area A, B and C; Community Ambassadors (one from each area); Area A Economic Development Commission; businesses and sector networks and groups; implementation organizations; and community groups, including those serving vulnerable populations.

Engagement activities included the following, and reports that show feedback collected are available on the project website [eap.kes.bc.ca](http://eap.kes.bc.ca):

- **Community wide communications:** The EAP kept community members aware of the project and opportunities to get involved through:
  - Project webpage and social media
  - Traditional media releases, such as four articles in the *Creston Valley Advance* and *Eastshore Mainstreet*
  - Information materials distributed around the community, such as a newsletter
  - Engagement advertising posters and handbills
- **Community Ambassadors:** Five community members (one from each of the five partner communities) shared project updates with their communities, supported public engagement and maintained two-way communications
- **Steering Committee:** A project Steering Committee was convened mid-project to discuss and set project direction. The Committee consisted of local business people, service organizations, economic development experts from the region, staff and elected officials. 30-40 organizations were represented on this Committee.
- **Presentations at community meetings:** EAP staff attended dozens of community meetings to provide information on the project and gather input from attendees.
- **Targeted engagement:** Specific stakeholder groups were engaged, including vulnerable and low-income individuals, businesses, Lower Kootenay Band, and Areas A, B, C and Town of Creston.
- **Youth engagement:** The EAP team presented to classrooms and conducted activities with youth, including an online survey.
- **Fall Fair booth:** A Booth was set up at the Fall Fair to engage passersby through a game with prizes and a chalkboard for people to write comments. Over 300 comments were received.
- **Public open house:** The EAP team hosted a project open house at the Community Complex.



- **One-on-one interviews:** Dozens of people were interviewed individually to develop an understanding of some of the area's key issues and opportunities.
- **Naming contest:** A naming contest was held to gather ideas for naming this strategy.
- **Community-wide Survey:** A survey was sent out (both on paper and online) with the same questions asked the Fall Fair in order to reach a broader audience than those who participated in person. There were about 650 responses to the survey.
- **Business survey:** Business owners and managers were asked to fill in a more specialized survey that dove deeper in the business-related themes that came up in the community-wide survey. There were over 100 responses to this survey.
- **Engagement with implementation partners for action selection:** This was done both in person and through one-on-one phone calls to work with the partners who will be implementing the actions to determine how to do so.

Feedback from these events and activities was used to identify community issues and goals, and develop and prioritize action ideas.



# 1. Where Are We Now?

## Regional Economic Context

In order to plan for Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake’s future, it’s important to understand where the community is now. Here are some highlights from a “Community Economic Profile” of the area. The full profile is available on the project website at [eap.kes.bc.ca](http://eap.kes.bc.ca).

Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake’s total population has been growing slowly since 2006, but at a slower pace than provincial and regional averages. Most newcomers to the area come from within the province. The area’s population is also aging: the median age of 55 years is well above the provincial average of 43 years, and the number of youth and families is decreasing (though this varies across the region, with Area A seeing the biggest decrease in youth in the past ten years, and Creston seeing no decrease).

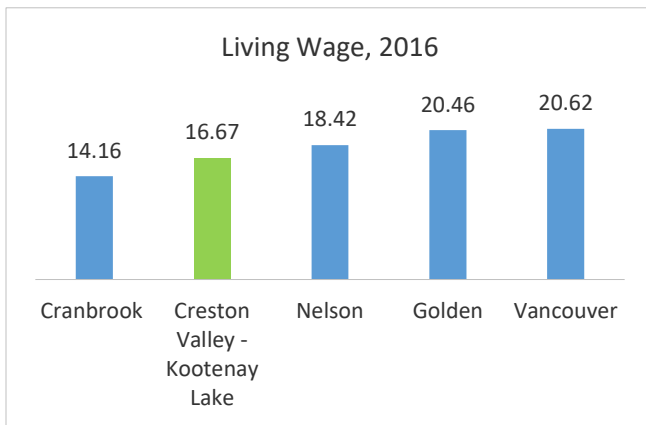
Partly because of the aging population, the labour force participation rate (i.e. the percentage of people that are working or looking for work compared to the entire population that is 15 years of age and above) declined between 2006 and 2016. Despite this, employment in the Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake area grew by about 5% in the past ten years. Between 2006 and 2016, the unemployment rate in this area stayed almost the same between while both regional and provincial levels saw much larger increases.

Biggest industries by employment currently (2016)	Industries with most job openings projected over next ten years
Healthcare & Social Assistance	Retail Trade
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	Construction
Retail Trade	Residential Care Facilities

Relative to provincial averages, the sector with the most opportunity for growth in CV-KL is in the ‘knowledge’ industries like IT, culture, finance, and professional, scientific and technical services. With new high-speed internet and high housing prices in major cities driving rural migration, this presents a growth opportunity. 60% of businesses felt that the local business climate will improve over next 5 years.<sup>1</sup>

The area’s median income is \$24, 053, slightly lower than RDCK and provincial averages.

<sup>1</sup> Columbia Basin Business Retention and Expansion Project, RDI (2016)



About 37% of respondents who were working full time (self-employed or employed by others) were making *at or below* the living wage in Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake. (2017 EAP Survey)

In terms of housing affordability, 15% of homeowners spend more than 30% of their income on housing (considered the threshold for affordability), as do 45% of renters. Furthermore, there is a serious lack of rental housing in Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake<sup>2</sup> which means that finding affordable rental housing is even more difficult. This is a barrier to recruitment for local businesses. High daycare costs in the area are also a significant challenge to affordability and recruiting families to the area.

<sup>2</sup> As reported by local businesses, residents, and a property rental agency in Creston



## 2. Where Do We Want to Go?

This strategy aims to create a value-driven local economy that meets the needs and vision of the people of CV-KL. Community input led to the development of the following vision and goals for economic development. Collectively, the vision and goals drove the planning process.

### Economic Vision

The five communities of CV-KL work together to ensure a thriving local economy that is inclusive, supports a high quality of life, and builds on our strengths in agriculture, tourism & recreation and small business. Residents can find or create work that meets their needs, and businesses can find qualified staff. Local businesses collaborate for shared success and have the community and government support they need to thrive. New residents and businesses are drawn to the area by the high quality of life and support services available. CV-KL is a place for innovation, collaboration and living a great life.

### Goals for Economic Development

The goals for economic development were developed through broad community engagement, and ranked by the project steering committee, elected officials, and stakeholders. The goals answer the question “WHY should we pursue economic development?”. Actions were evaluated and prioritized based on how well they would contribute towards these goals. The success of this strategy will be measured in how well we meet these goals.

1. Build a thriving local business sector
2. Attract new business and investment
3. Create more good jobs
4. Attract more families / young people
5. Diversify our economy
6. Keep the area peaceful; protect the character
7. Improve services
8. Increase number of local entrepreneurs

### 3.How Will We Get There?

#### Action and Strategy Development

Action ideas came from community and stakeholder engagement, past planning work, and research and best practices. Through several rounds of engagement – starting with broad community engagement and ending with targeted groups of stakeholders around specific sectoral themes – action ideas were generated, evaluated based on goals, and prioritized.

The input received through engagement is available on the project website ([eap.kes.bc.ca](http://eap.kes.bc.ca)).



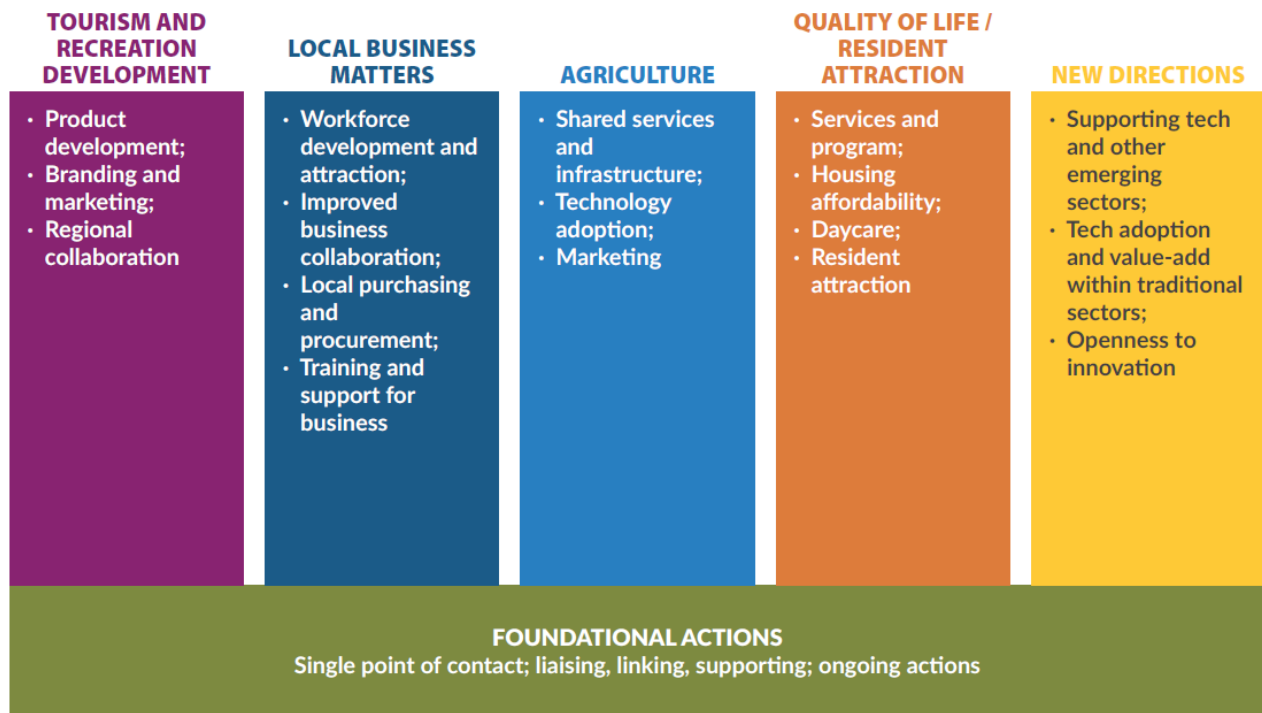
## The “Five Pillars” and “Foundational Actions”

From the engagement, research and evaluation, five key ‘pillars’ of the strategy emerged.

*Pillars = groupings of projects that are important for regional economic development (e.g. themes)*

Additionally, a set of underlying, ‘foundational’ actions emerged, which would underpin the success of the other pillars, or are ongoing opportunities that are critical for regional prosperity.

The five pillars are schematically shown below, along with some key themes that make up each pillar.



There are many linkages between the pillars, for example, actions to improve quality of life could make the area more desirable to tourists as well.



## Timing: Three ‘Tiers’ of Actions

Within each pillar, stakeholders prioritized the actions based on

- Impact on goals
- Expert input by knowledgeable stakeholders
- Whether or not there were champions to move a project forward
- Funding availability, etc.

Based on this prioritization, actions were placed into three ‘Tiers’, which are described below.

### Tier 1 Actions (0-6 months)

Tier 1 actions are Quickstarts that can be completed in next six months, or are urgent opportunities that must be started immediately.

### Tier 2 Actions (urgent priorities)

Urgent priorities. These actions should be started opportunistically (based on the availability of funding, champions, etc.), or when Tier 1 actions completed/ underway.

### Tier 3 Actions (less urgent priorities)

Tier 3 actions are regional priorities but are less urgent than Tier 1 and 2 actions. They are to be started opportunistically (based on funding, champions etc.), or when Tier 2 actions are completed or underway.

It’s important to understand that the placement of projects within Tiers is not “set in stone”. The actions should be revisited regularly (e.g., yearly) and projects can be chosen opportunistically based on the existence of new funding, new champions, new information or other factors.

**The actions are described in detail in Appendix A.** The following page shows an overview of the actions within each pillar and the foundational actions.



## 4. Are We There Yet?

This section talks about how the communities of CV-KL will actually **implement the strategy**.

As discussed on page 6, it is not yet decided what the form of collaboration between the communities of CV-KL will look like. This section therefore lays out very high-level considerations for implementation, and a monitoring and evaluation plan.

### Implementation Discussion

#### **Community groups and organizations are key to implementation**

CV-KL is a region of 'doers'. Unlike many communities, the issue is not that no one is doing the work. More often than not, it's that several groups are doing pieces of the work and may not be working together or even aware of each other.

Therefore, the implementation of this strategy will need to involve these groups and individuals in implementation, by building on the work they are already doing and linking and supporting them as needed.

Working with these groups on implementing the actions in this plan will have numerous advantages, including speed of implementation, cost, and ensuring a sense of agency for the economy throughout the region (rather than dependency).

#### **The importance of partners and networks for Implementation**

There are many Partners that should be engaged to help implement this plan. These include:

- Regional District of Central Kootenay
- The Regional Manager from the Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development
- Funding agencies: Columbia Basin Trust, provincial agencies and others
- Community Futures
- Kootenay Employment Services
- Neighbouring regions (e.g., Nelson area)
- And many more

Ongoing discussions with these groups should take place in order to understand where priorities align, emerging opportunities and funding streams, and looking for ways to reduce duplication of efforts and maximize outcomes for CV-KL.

### Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

In order to know if this strategy is working and to hold local governments and partners accountable to implement it, it is important that to have plan to monitor and evaluate the implementation of *Stronger Together*.



Monitoring and evaluation for *Stronger Together* could be undertaken as a whole by a single region-wide group, or it could be undertaken in small pieces as needed in a more distributed model (e.g., a regional tourism body could monitor the actions related to tourism).

Definitions:

**Monitoring** = collecting data on the implementation of the actions in *Stronger Together*.

**Evaluation** = evaluating the data to see if we need to make changes to the strategy and actions

CV-KL will have to monitor and evaluate two things:

### 1. Monitoring and evaluating the process

**What?** Checking whether or not the actions are being carried out as planned (i.e. are staff, elected officials and community groups doing what they agreed to do?).

**Who is responsible for carrying out this monitoring and evaluation?** Unclear at this time.

**When?** Process M&E should take place every three to six months. Progress reports should be presented regularly to elected officials and community members. Progress will be monitored and reporting using the 'Clear Impact' system (an online tool).

**How?** The project team (or others) will use Clear Impact to record the status of all the actions within the Stronger Together strategy. After entering progress data in the tool, the project team should consider and discuss the following:

- Organizational issues or challenges to implementing the actions.
- What actions need to be **refined or changed**?
- Do we need to **add new actions** or **remove some** that aren't working?
- Do the timelines **need to be changed or expanded** (e.g., moving a Tier 3 action to a Tier 1 action)
- Do resources need to be reallocated in order to help achieve actions (i.e. do we need more time, staff, or money in order to complete the action?)?

### 2. Monitoring and evaluating the outcomes

**What?** Outcome monitoring helps ensure that the actions / projects are **having the desired effect on CV-KL's goals**.

The results from outcome monitoring will help us determine whether we have chosen the right planning actions, or if we need to try something else. We will be able to see where large

gains are being made, or where actions need to be refined, adjusted or replaced with other more effective actions.

**Who is responsible?** Unclear at this time.

**When?** Outcome monitoring and evaluation should take place yearly.

**How?** To measure progress, the project team developed simple indicators (shown below) for each of the economic development goals. These can be tracked using Clear Impact. *Over time, as the actions are implemented, we can see if the actions are having the positive impacts we had expected.*

## Indicators for measuring outcomes

Goal	Potential Indicator(s)	Data Source
Build a thriving local business sector	1. Number of businesses licenses issued in Creston 2. # of vacant storefronts	1. Town of Creston 2. Staff/volunteers
Attract new business and investment	1. Interviews with Chambers and staff to estimate # of businesses and investment	1. Staff/elected officials or knowledgeable stakeholders (e.g. Chambers)
Create more good jobs	1. # of 'employed' individuals 2. Median income	1. and 2: Statistics Canada Census (every five years)
Attract more families / young people	1. Regional population 2. Median Age	1. and 2: Statistics Canada Census (every five years)
Diversify our economy	1. Herfindahl Index* (see next page) using Census data on employment by industry	1. Statistics Canada Census (every five years)
Keep the area peaceful; protect the character	1. Subjective. Should be scored based on a scale that compares the state of the natural environment to the 2018 baseline (1 = environment greatly degraded, 3 = the same as 2018, 5 = environment greatly restored/improved)	1. Knowledgeable stakeholders (e.g. Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area)
Improve services	1. Subjective. Should be scored based on a scale that compares the availability of local services (e.g. transit, daycare, affordable housing) to the 2018 baseline (1 = greatly deteriorated, 3 = the same as 2017, 5 = greatly restored/improved)	1. Staff/elected officials, or knowledgeable stakeholders
Increase number of local entrepreneurs	2. # of new business formations in Creston (rolling 3-year average) 3. # of self-employed individuals	1. BC Statistics, Business Incorporations (yearly) (under "Business Formations and Failures") 2. Statistics Canada Census



#### \* Herfindahl Index

The Herfindahl index is a widely used measure of market concentration in industrial literature, but it is also often used for measuring economic diversity. The Index indicates the extent to which a regional economy is dominated by a few sectors and is expressed as follows:

$$\text{Herfindahl Index} = \sum_{i=1}^n S_i^2$$

Where  $S_i$  is the share of employment in the  $i$ th industry. The Herfindahl Index varies from 0 (when the economy is perfectly diversified) to 1 (where one sector accounts for all the employment). A decline in the Index overtime signifies greater diversification.

The Herfindahl Index can be easily calculated using employment-by-industry data from the Canadian census.

#### Schedule for reviewing the entire strategy

In addition to the ongoing and yearly monitoring and evaluation described above, the entire *Stronger Together* Strategy should be re-evaluated **every five years**. This process should include updating the community economic profile in order to get a more current picture of the local economy, as well as community and stakeholder engagement to ensure that the vision, goals and actions still meet community needs.

#### Communicating progress

The results from monitoring and evaluation should be communicated to the community, businesses, staff and elected officials on a regular basis. Everyone put significant time into the development of *Stronger Together*, and it will be important that they are kept up to date on progress.

It is important the monitoring and evaluation is a transparent process, with *all* results (of successes and challenges) made public.

#### Communications activities that should take place include:

- CV-KL is using the **Clear Impact Scorecard** in order to community results from community and economic development. Clear Impact should be updated regularly and used in regular discussions with elected officials and others.
- Quarterly updates on progress and outcomes made available to the public through social media, local news outlets, posters etc. These communications tools can link back to the Clear Impact Scorecard for those who are interested in more details.

## Appendix A: Action Descriptions

The following section provides information on each action/project.

For each Tier 1 and Tier 2 project, the following information is provided:

- **Description & Rationale:** Details about the project and the community-supported reasons for undertaking it.
- **Related Goals:** Which goals (from page 7) will this action support?
- **Next steps:** General steps that could be taken to get the project started. Since there is no lead agency (at this time), the steps are written to be general enough that they could be taken up by local governments, organizations or individuals.
- **Resources required:** High level notes of staff time and financial resources required to undertake the project (note that staff time is used in the general sense, and could be replaced with volunteer time if appropriate).
- **Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):** The project team has researched funding sources that *may be applicable* for each action. The list of funding sources for each project is not exhaustive, nor is it guaranteed that the project is eligible. Details about each funding source (including upcoming deadlines) is in Appendix B.

For each foundational action and Tier 3 action, a brief description is provided.

## *Foundational Actions*

Foundational Actions are those that underpin the success of the other pillars, or are needed on an ongoing basis for regional prosperity (in other words, they aren't 'projects' with a start and end date, but are needed indefinitely). The ten foundational actions are described below.

### **F1: Single point of contact for economic and business inquiries**

Currently, prospective residents or businesses are contacting elected officials or others regarding doing business in Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake. Having a single, clear point of contact for economic inquiries can free up time for elected officials, bring efficiencies and provide consistent information in a timely manner.

Having a central point of contact will also generate region-wide information about what types of inquiries are being made, by what types of businesses/investors and how many, to then further improve the ease of investment or new business set-up in the region.

### **F2: Maintain “Imagine Kootenay” Resources**

As of 2017, Imagine Kootenay is the primary portal for information on living, working and investing in CV-KL. CV-KL is currently one of the top three most viewed communities on the site. In order to ensure that Imagine Kootenay remains an effective tool for CV-KL investor and resident recruitment, it will need to be continually promoted and updated based on site analytics, emerging trends and opportunities.

### **F3: Facilitate connections and collaboration**

Facilitate between groups across the region in order to reduce duplication, find areas for partnership and increase overall efficiency.

A recurring theme in the engagement for this project was the need for improved coordination across the region. Engagement revealed that CV-KL would benefit from the following forms of collaboration and coordination:

- Coordination between sector organizations – e.g. Fields Forward, Chamber of Commerce, BEST
- Business to business collaboration: e.g. package deals, cross promotions, shared learning opportunities. (The Chambers of Commerce are already undertaking these types of actions. Support them as needed)
- New business ‘match making’: Introducing new entrepreneurs to support services and to existing businesses
- Introducing investors to businesses

### **F4: Maintain Regional Calendar**

A regional calendar could be hosted and maintained by the EAP (after project set-up in *Action T8: Initiative region-wide calendar*). There is also a need to coordinate event / festival dates within the wider Kootenay region (to avoid conflicts).

### **F5: Coordinate between Colleges, employers and sectors (in progress)**

This action involves facilitating ongoing coordination between local-serving colleges (College of the Rockies, potentially Selkirk College), employers and sector needs. One of the challenges identified by local employers was the “ability to recruit the labour we need”, part of which was a result of not being able to find applicants with the required qualifications. Additionally, the agriculture sector identified that workforce development was a challenge, and that they have a need for a farm school to train agricultural workers.

The College already attends Creston Valley Chamber of Commerce meetings in order to understand the needs of employers. This action would involve ensuring that businesses/organizations that are not Chamber members are also in regular contact with the College to meet emerging or unmet needs.

### **F6: Reporting on progress and opportunities**

Using Clear Impact Software or other means, regularly report to elected officials and to the community on economic development progress. Progress updates should include project status, impacts, and emerging opportunities. Also, regularly update elected officials and other decision makers on emerging opportunities and sectors.

This will ensure that community members and businesses are aware of the effort and progress being made, and that decision makers can make decisions based on the current economic state of the region and can promote and support emerging opportunities.

### **F7: Project oversight for the Strategy and the actions in the five pillars**

This action involves overall oversight for the implementation of the CV-KL Economic Development Strategy, including project tracking and support for projects within the “five pillars” (Tourism and Recreation Development; Local Business Matters; Agriculture; Quality of Life/ resident attraction; New Directions).

The form that this action takes will vary depending on the action in the strategy. In some cases, there may be community groups that are already undertaking the project, in which case the role would be simply to track progress on the project and support as needed. In other cases, there may be champions identified but no one has started work on the project – in which case there could be support provided to convene meetings and start up the project. Other forms of support could include providing grant writing or back-end support, making introductions between groups, etc.



### **F8: Ongoing research and improvements**

Conduct research as it is needed and make continual improvements to the business environment and investment readiness of CV-KL. An excellent tool for using to improve investment is BC's Investment Readiness Assessment Checklist.

### **F9: Photo Bank management**

Through the Economic Action Partnership, the communities of CV-KL have been coordinating on the development of a 'photo bank' of images of the region that can be used for marketing and other economic development purposes and organizations (e.g. Imagine Kootenay, resident attraction, physician attraction, Farmers Market, Fields Forward and others).

The photo bank has been populated with initial images (taken by local photographers) but will need to be managed and updated over time. This will require staff time and photography fees.

### **F10: Support existing business networks**

The Creston Valley Chamber of Commerce, Kootenay Lake Chamber of Commerce and Creston Entrepreneurs Network are valuable groups for local business coordination and promotion. Support their growth and ability to meet local business needs as needed.

# Actions: Tourism and Recreation

## Pillar 1: Tourism and Recreation Development

Actions in this pillar are designated with a 'T' for tourism.

Tourism and recreation development were identified as very important opportunities for economic development in CV-KL. Key areas of opportunity within this pillar included:

- **Product development:** More activities/amenities to draw tourists to the area or keep them in the area for longer. This includes the development of new activities and amenities, but also better signage and promotion of existing ones (e.g. trails, water access).
- **Branding and marketing:** Let's let the world know what we have here. This includes better marketing of the region as a whole, but also support for individual businesses to increase their marketing reach (e.g. through digital marketing).
- **Regional collaboration:** Tourism stakeholders recognize a need for greater collaboration within the sector. This can range from individual business collaboration (e.g. packaged tours, referrals) to a region-wide tourism organization.

Public engagement identified dozens of tourism related projects, and the EAP worked with tourism stakeholders to evaluate and prioritize these actions. The resulting list of priority projects is shown in the 'pillar' to the right, and described on the following pages.

### TOURISM AND RECREATION DEVELOPMENT

TIER 1: 0-6 months

**T1:** Tourism marketing at the ferry

**T2:** Support existing tourism programs

**T3:** Bring 'Remarkable Experiences' program

**T4:** Visitor Centre presence at Farmers Market 2018

**T5:** Consider LKB/Retallack Lodge proposal

TIER 2: Urgent Priorities

**T6:** Digital marketing training for tourism businesses

**T7:** Initiate region-wide calendar

**T8:** Wayfinding/signage improvements

**T9:** Establish a regional tourism body

TIER 3: Less Urgent Priorities

**T10:** Water access improvements

**T11:** Rack card program throughout CV-KL

**T12:** Mobile Visitor Centre and Ambassadors

**T13:** CV-KL tourism marketing outside of CV-KL

**T14:** Customer service program

**T15:** Encourage outdoor recreation businesses

**T16:** Continue to develop tourism product

## Actions: Tourism and Recreation – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

### Tier 1 Actions (0-6 months)

Tier 1 actions are “Quickstarts” that can be completed in next six months, or are urgent opportunities that must be started immediately.

#### **T1: Tourism Marketing at the Ferry**

##### Description & Rationale

Ensure that Summer 2018 visitors on the Kootenay Lake Ferry are exposed to tourism marketing for Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake. This could include on-board posters, rack cards or maps, as well as materials at the ferry terminals while people are waiting. Consider other high visibility opportunities such as the Canadian Rockies International Airport and billboards on HWY 3.

##### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract new business and investment | Diversify our economy | Attract more families / young people

##### Next Steps

- Coordination with CV-KL Co-op Tourism Campaign, Building East Shore Tourism (BEST), and Visitor Centre to understand where materials are already placed and what materials exist
- Distribution of tourism marketing materials
- Refresh throughout the season as needed

##### Resources Required

- Staff time for free marketing opportunities (e.g. posters on bulletin boards)(low effort)
- \$ for paid opportunities (e.g. rack cards, billboards)
- \$ for producing new materials, if needed

##### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- BC Rural Dividend

## Actions: Tourism and Recreation – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

### T2: Support CV-KL Co-op Tourism Campaign, and other existing tourism programs

#### Description & Rationale

Liaise with CV-KL Co-op Tourism Campaign to understand what forms of support could be provided to further leverage this campaign. Similarly, continue to liaise with the Community Initiatives Coordinator (CIC) and Building East Shore Tourism (BEST) and provide support as needed. Support could include design, strategy, back-end services, research, program evaluation, introductions or other.

Action T3 (*Bring Remarkable Experiences Program to CV-KL*) would also support existing tourism initiatives, as it addresses some of the goals of existing tourism programs (e.g. supporting tourism businesses in digital marketing and revenue enhancement).

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Diversify our economy

#### Next Steps

- Meet with CIC and BEST to discuss their work, how the Economic Action Partnership could support them
- Carry out supportive actions as needed
- At the end of the 2018 tourism season, assess how campaigns and support went and make a plan for improving upon this for 2019

#### Challenges and Risks

- Lack of coordination among the various tourism initiatives in the area
  - EAP can work to mitigate this through regular communications with all programs, providing shared services and support, and ensuring that roles are clearly defined for all groups

#### Resources Required

- Staff time, varying depending on types of support

Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- BC Rural Dividend



## Actions: Tourism and Recreation – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

### T3: Bring 'Remarkable Experiences' Program to CV-KL

#### Description & Rationale

Digital marketing is a known 'area for improvement' among CV-KL tourism operators<sup>3</sup>. Destination BC's "Remarkable Experiences" Program is a four-day workshop for tourism operators that includes one-on-one digital media assessment and coaching, as well as locally-relevant travel data and training on 'experience design' for increasing revenue.

By bringing this program to the area in the Fall of 2018, tourism operators will have sufficient time to adjust their marketing and operations for the Summer 2019 season.

The program requires a minimum of 15 participants and costs \$450 per participant.

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Diversify our economy

#### Next Steps

- Gauge interest to attend and participate
- If interest is sufficient, work with Destination BC on logistics and market the event to participants
- Coordinate workshop logistics (venue, food, etc.)

#### Challenges and Risks

- Insufficient interest to participate, or sufficient interest but not enough funding to cover the \$450 fee.
  - EAP can highlight the one-on-one coaching and the benefits of the program, and could also consider bursaries or sponsorships for interested businesses.
- Hosting the meetings in Creston may be a barrier to Area A or other tourism operators.
  - Ask potential attendees if it would be a barrier. If so, consider holding the event closer to where most attendees are based.

#### Resources Required

- Staff time to gauge interest, market the event and participate in the workshop (medium level effort)
- Venue and food

#### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- BC Rural Dividend

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<sup>3</sup> Many tourism operators indicated in the 2017 CV-KL business survey that they wanted support in digital marketing

## Actions: Tourism and Recreation – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

### T4: Visitor Centre presence at 2018 Farmers Market (*in progress*)

#### Description & Rationale

Work with the Creston Valley Visitor Centre to support a “mobile” Visitor Centre or Visitor Centre Ambassadors at the 2018 Farmer’s Market. There are a large number of visitors at the summer Farmers Markets, and this action will alert them to other opportunities in the region.

The Visitor Centre is planning on having mobile ‘ambassadors’ this summer who will attend the Farmers Market. There may be opportunities for a more visible presence (e.g. a booth) or working with them to provide specific agri-tourism tie-ins (such as directions to farm stands or wineries). The Visitor Centre has also expressed interest in volunteer ambassadors, so there could be a linkage with *Action Q1: Volunteer Bank*.

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract more families / young people | Diversify our economy

#### Next Steps

- Meet with the Farmers Market to understand how a Visitor Centre presence could fit into, and enhance, the Farmers Market experience
- Meet with the Visitor Centre to understand their existing plans for the Farmers Market, and how these could be supported and leveraged
- Coordinate with both parties and support as needed

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (minimal)

### T5: Consider Lower Kootenay Band/Retallack Lodge proposal

#### Description & Rationale

Lower Kootenay Band has partnered with Retallack, a Nelson-based heli-skiing operation, in a proposal to provide a range of summer and winter guided adventure tourism activities on the East side of Kootenay Lake.

As part of the CV-KL area, Lower Kootenay Band's many economic activities benefit the region. This action is to consider their proposal, recognizing their economic importance to the region and their role as a trusted partner in the Economic Action Partnership.

#### Related Goals

Attract new business and investment | Create more good jobs | Diversify our economy

#### Next Steps

- Evaluate the proposal and the economic, social and environmental impacts
- Discuss support needed with Lower Kootenay Band (potentially including letters of support or formal statements)
- Provide support if appropriate

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (low)
- Elected official time (low)

## Actions: Tourism and Recreation – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### Tier 2 Actions (urgent priorities)

Urgent priorities. To be started opportunistically (funding, champions), or when Tier 1 actions completed/ underway.

#### T6: Digital marketing training for tourism businesses

##### Description & Rationale

Increasingly, trips and travel are planned online. Tourism operators in CV-KL have expressed an interest in enhancing their digital marketing in order to reach broader audiences and increase revenues. Digital marketing is fast evolving and it can be difficult for small businesses - who have limited time and marketing budgets - to fully use this marketing channel to its full potential.

This action is to coordinate or support digital marketing training for CV-KL tourism operators, including assessments of their current digital marketing, plans for digital marketing, and training so that they can implement the changes over time. Coaching could be provided in a group setting, but up-take (and therefore impact) may be higher with individual coaching if feasible.

Coordination with existing regional tourism programs (e.g., B.E.S.T. and CV-KL Co-op Marketing Program), as well as with provincial programs will be critical to avoid duplication and have the most impact.

NOTE: This action could be partially achieved by *Action T3: Bring Remarkable Experiences program* which includes digital marketing assessment and coaching.

##### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Create more good jobs | Diversify our economy

##### Next Steps

- Research provincial programs and funding sources
- Coordinate with existing tourism programs
- Consider local talent that could deliver training
- Identify businesses that are interested in training

##### Resources Required

- Staff time for outreach and planning (medium)
- Potentially funding for hiring digital marketing experts to deliver content

Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- BC Rural Dividend

## Actions: Tourism and Recreation – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### T7: Initiate region-wide calendar

#### Description & Rationale

The need for a region-wide calendar came up again and again through the CV-KL region as a priority for quality of life as well as resident attraction and tourism expansion. Many people expressed frustration that there is no central point for knowing what is going on, and that this is a barrier to potential new residents (who may not be able to explore the events and activities that the region has to offer). A central calendar would aid in tourism event planning, by avoiding scheduling events on the same weekend within CV-KL or with neighbouring regions.

In many communities, a central calendar is hosted on a local government website (e.g., Kimberley, BC), or a tourism related website (e.g., Nelson and Kootenay Lake, BC).

#### Related Goals

Attract more families / young people | Keep the area peaceful; protect the character | Improve services

#### Next Steps

- Inventory the existing calendars in the region (e.g., My Creston Now, Creston Valley Advance, Linked2Creston, MainStreet Newspaper, Creston Valley Chamber of Commerce)
- Meet with all calendar administrators to discuss options
- Determine details (who will host, who will maintain, how to coordinate funding)
- Perform outreach and marketing to individuals and groups that organize activities/events
- Organize implementation and ongoing operations (see Foundational Action F4: Maintain region-wide calendar)

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (low but ongoing)
- Potentially web developer fees



## Actions: Tourism and Recreation – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### T8: Wayfinding/signage improvements

#### Description & Rationale

Improved wayfinding and signage is needed throughout CV-KL. Tourists, and many residents, are unaware of the many amenities and activities that the region has to offer. A clear place to start is signage along HWY 3, where volumes can reach over 8,000 vehicles per day during the summer months<sup>4</sup>.

The Town of Creston already has a wayfinding project underway. This action would include exploring whether there are opportunities for aligning regional wayfinding (in terms of look and feel) as well as overall improvement of signage.

#### Related Goals

Create more good jobs | Attract more families / young people | Diversify our economy | Keep the area peaceful; protect the character | Improve services

#### Next Steps

- Meet with all regional partners to understand current status of wayfinding projects and opportunities for alignment
- Conduct wayfinding gap analysis and best practice analysis, needs assessment study

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (medium-high)
- Potentially consultant fees
- Signage design, fabrication and instalment fees

#### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- Legacy Fund – Building Communities through Arts and Heritage, Government of Canada  
Canadian Heritage

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Traffic Data program (2015 data)

## Actions: Tourism and Recreation – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### T9: Establish a regional tourism body

#### Description & Rationale

The tourism sector has identified a need for an overarching tourism coordination body in CV-KL. There are several existing tourism programs in the CV-KL (e.g., B.E.S.T. and the Co-op Marketing Program), but all parties have identified a need for a regional body. How these existing bodies fit into that would need to be determined.

The form and function of a regional tourism body is not yet determined, but key tourism stakeholders have put forward the following ideas:

- **Organization:** A regional tourism body could be a Destination Marketing Organization, a common format in BC, which is funded by a 2% hotel bed tax. In this model, the CV-KL Destination Marketing Organization could be established as a stand-alone organization overseen by a board of directors representing the tourism industry and stakeholders.
- **Roles/Responsibilities:** The regional tourism body could manage both the Creston Valley and Kootenay Lake visitors' services, regional marketing, cross promotion and coordination of tourism operators, and other services as determined by the sector (e.g., listings, booking services, administration of a regional calendar).

This body could also be responsible for carrying out other important regional actions identified in this plan (e.g., Tier 3 Actions Tourism T10-T16), the HWY 3 Corridor Destination Strategic Priorities and others.

- **Funding:** Sustainable funding could be provided through 1) the 2% Municipal Regional District Tax and/or 2) service agreements with local government.

In the first two years of this process, this organization could be "incubated" within an existing organization like KES, where it could have access to affordable resources like office space, tech support and printing while it established itself (similar to Fields Forward).

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract new business and investment | Create more good jobs | Attract more families / young people | Diversify our economy | Keep the area peaceful; protect the character | Increase number of local entrepreneurs

#### Next Steps

- Following the 2018 tourism season, continue discussions with tourism operators and organizations

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (medium)

## Actions: Tourism and Recreation – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- BC Rural Dividend

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## Actions: Tourism and Recreation – Tier 3 (less urgent priorities)

### Tier 3 Actions (less urgent priorities)

Tier 3 actions are regional priorities but are less urgent than Tier 1 and 2 actions. They are to be started opportunistically (funding, champions), or when Tier 2 actions completed/ underway.

#### **Tier 3 Actions for Tourism and Recreation:**

##### **T10: Water access improvements**

Improving river and lake access has long been a priority in the area. The research and engagement for this project confirmed that it is still a major priority for both tourism and quality of life / resident attraction throughout the CV-KL area. This action includes both improved signage and promotion of existing water access, and development of new water access.

##### **T11: Rack card program throughout CV-KL**

A rack card program would ensure that visitors to one attraction or part of CV-KL are aware of the other opportunities in the area. Rack cards are a simple and effective way of promoting businesses and amenities throughout a region, and rack cards could be set up at participating businesses.

##### **T12: Mobile Visitor Centre and Ambassadors (in progress)**

Support the Visitor Centres to spread tourism information throughout the region. Two areas that are being explored currently are mobile visitor centres that can provide a 'pop-up' Visitor Centre experience, and tourism 'Ambassadors' who could move through areas with tourists providing information as needed. The Creston Valley Visitor Centre expressed interest in exploring volunteer Ambassadors, if the Volunteer Bank (Action Q1: *Volunteer Bank*) was started.

##### **T13: CV-KL tourism marketing outside of CV-KL**

This action would involve marketing the area along HWY3 and beyond, for example through Billboards. This is something that could be led by a regional tourism body (see Action T9: *Establish a regional tourism body*).

##### **T14: Customer service program**

Many tourism businesses indicated a need for region-wide customer service training (for tourism businesses and also non-tourism businesses that are public facing, such as gas stations and restaurants.) Consistent, high quality customer service experiences throughout the region would support repeat visitation and word-of-mouth marketing. Consider off-the-shelf training options such as SuperHost, and research best practices such as Whistler Experiences.

##### **T15: Encourage outdoor recreation businesses**

CV-KL has wonderful outdoor opportunities, but limited opportunities for visitors to experience them (for example, kayak or mountain bike rentals or guides). This action would be to work with

## Actions: Tourism and Recreation – Tier 3 (less urgent priorities)

existing tourism businesses to explore opportunities for branching out into this sub-sector (e.g. hotels could rent bikes), or to work with Community Futures and others to encourage new business entrants.

### **T16: Continue to develop tourism product**

Work with the Chamber and others to ensure that there are events, tourism experiences, and businesses that attract visitors and encourage longer stays or season extension.

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## Pillar 2: Local Business Matters

Actions in this pillar are designated with a 'B' for Business.

There was significant outreach and engagement with local business during the strategy development process. Through this, four key themes emerged as areas where attention was needed to support existing local businesses, and attract new business:

- **Workforce development and attraction:** Ensuring that workers have the skills needed for locally available jobs and addressing issues that make it difficult to attract employees (rental housing, daycare, perception of lack of amenities).
- **Improved business collaboration:** Businesses expressed an interest in more opportunities for collaboration, shared learning, and a stronger 'voice' for business.
- **Local purchasing and procurement:** Local purchasing is critical for a thriving economy, and there are opportunities to increase local purchasing through education, behavior change campaigns, research, and policy interventions.
- **Training and support for businesses:** Businesses identified several areas where they would like training and support. While the two areas that came up most were 'digital media' and 'reaching new markets', there is a growing understanding that ongoing training will be necessary to keep up with technological changes, and that there needs to be systems in place to support businesses in this learning.

Public engagement identified dozens of actions to improve the business environment, and the EAP worked with business stakeholders to evaluate and prioritize these actions. The resulting list of priority projects is shown in the 'pillar' to the right, and described on the following pages.

### LOCAL BUSINESS MATTERS

**B1:** Multiply the impact of events

**B2:** Creston Valley Advance business 'star' column

**B3:** Increase local procurement by large purchasers

**B4:** Shop local program

**B5:** Coaching on new markets

**B6:** New business mentorship program

TIER 1: 0-6 months

TIER 2: Urgent Priorities

TIER 3: Less Urgent Priorities

## Actions: Local Business Matters – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

### Tier 1 Actions (0-6 months)

Tier 1 actions are “Quickstarts” that can be completed in next six months, or are urgent opportunities that must be started immediately.

#### **B1: Multiply the impact of events (2018 season to start)**

##### Description & Rationale

Create a program focused on multiplying the positive impacts of events and festivals on local businesses and resident attraction. When visitors come to town for events, they should be encouraged and supported in exploring the region and in shopping locally. This action could include things such as:

- A welcome package for attendees with maps, visitor information, and local businesses listed – consider coupons to draw people to local stores
- Support event organizers in hosting local food, craft and goods vendors at the event (e.g. listings of vendors, information on liability and regulations, lending physical stalls for vendors)
- Other support to event organizers as needed to grow and enhance events (graphic design and marketing, social media instruction, information on local procurement etc.)

##### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract more families / young people | Diversify our economy

##### Next steps

- Meet with several event organizers to understand what forms of support would be useful or welcome, and logistics for distribution (e.g. do they already have a welcome or registration package?)
- Carry out pilot projects with one or two events, starting small and with existing materials (e.g. maps, visitor guides) as needed
- Evaluate program success after each season and adjust/grow as needed

##### Resources Required:

Would vary depending on projects chosen, but could include:

- Staff time
- For a welcome package, existing materials can be used at first for 2018 (e.g. maps, visitor guides), which could have printing costs but no additional design costs. Additional materials

## Actions: Local Business Matters – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

like coupons would require staff time for design and business collaboration, as well as printing costs

- Vendor support could include the purchase of tables, tents or stalls for vendors

Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- Tourism Events Program, Destination British Columbia (deadlines: October 31, 2018; April 30, 2019; October 31, 2019)
- Local Festivals – Building Communities through Arts and Heritage (deadlines January 31, April 30, September 30)

## Actions: Local Business Matters – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

### B2: Creston Valley Advance business “star” column (*in progress*)

#### Description & Rationale

Coordinate with the Creston Valley Advance to have a regular (ideally weekly) feature that highlights a “Local Business Star.”

20% of business owners identified that the main challenge they face in growing their business is that local residents “don’t understand the importance of shopping locally”<sup>5</sup>. Telling the story of local businesses in the local newspaper may reduce this challenge by creating more of a connection between business owners and local residents. The stories can highlight their products and services and how they benefit the local community, among other things. There could be a special offered each week, to incentivize people to read them and visit the stores (e.g. mention this article and receive a free coffee with your lunch).

When determining what is ‘local’ (e.g. is a locally owned franchise local?), consider using LOCO BC’s criteria (<http://bcbuylocal.com/why-local/>, scroll down).

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector

#### Next Steps

- Meet with the Creston Valley Advance to understand what, if any, support is needed

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (low if coordinating, medium if writing the articles)

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<sup>5</sup> EAP Survey 2017

## Actions: Local Business Matters – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### Tier 2 Actions (urgent priorities)

Urgent priorities. To be started opportunistically (funding, champions), or when Tier 1 actions completed/ underway.

#### **B3: Increase local procurement by large purchasers**

##### Description & Rationale

Local governments, institutions and businesses purchase goods and services to run their organizations. Collectively, these procurement decisions are major flows of money within communities (local government and school district purchasing account for about 5.4% of GDP here in Canada<sup>6</sup>).

Shifting a proportion of this procurement to local businesses can have major impacts on the economy, and dollar for dollar, can be much more efficient than trying to influence the purchasing decisions of individuals consumers through buy-local campaigns, or actions to bring new money into the community through tourism, exports or other means. In other words, it can be low hanging fruit for economic development.

This action is multi-faceted, and would include:

- Working with governments and other purchasers to make the case for local procurement on a full-cost accounting basis (e.g., taking into account local multipliers, increased local tax revenue) and providing support and templates for drafting policies that favour local procurement.
- Advocating for local food purchasing requirements from Kootenay area funders (see Action A2: *Advocate for Local Food Requirements from Funders*)
- Providing matchmaking services between local businesses and local purchasers.
- Working with local businesses to increase their ability to win procurement contracts (e.g., coaching on finding procurement opportunities, adjusting or scaling up offerings to meet the needs of larger purchasers, and support on applying for contracts)

This action could also encompass exploring other procurement tools beyond 'local,' such as provisions for Aboriginal content or social impact.

An excellent resource used by local governments and institutions in BC is:

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<sup>6</sup> From Buying Local: Tools for Forward Thinking Institutions, as calculated from the following three sources:

1) Statistics Canada. "CANSIM Table 183-0002, Public Sector Employment, Wages and Salaries, Seasonally Unadjusted and Adjusted." 2009.

2) Statistics Canada. Provincial and Territorial Economic Accounts, Local Government Revenue and Expenditure, Canada. 2009.

3) Denis Audet. "Government Procurement: A Synthesis Report." OECD Journal on Budgeting. Vol. 2, No. 3 (2002), p. 159. Retrieved from: [www.oecd.org/governance/budgetingandpublicexpenditures/43506020.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/governance/budgetingandpublicexpenditures/43506020.pdf)

## Actions: Local Business Matters – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

- Buying Local: Tools for Forward Thinking Institutions (Columbia Institute, LOCO BC, Sauder School of Business UBC)

### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Create more good jobs

### Next Steps

- Identify large purchasers in the region, and their purchasing needs
- Conduct initial research into the existing local purchasing habits and policies of some local institutions
- Conduct initial research into the needs of local businesses with regards to winning procurement contracts
- Research best practices, policy templates, challenges and opportunities as needed
- Work with purchasers and suppliers as needed

### Resources Required

- Staff time (medium)

### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- Agrilnnovation Program (open until March 31, 2023)
- CanExport
- Agrifood (Technology) Venture Acceleration Program
- BC Rural Dividend



## Actions: Local Business Matters – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### B4: Shop local program

#### Description & Rationale

This action would require working with partners (Chambers, Creston Entrepreneurs Network) to develop a program to increase local spending by consumers (residents and visitors). To begin addressing this need, during the planning process, EAP took part in BC Buy Local Week and piloted an innovative and successful 'Santa Bucks' program for local shopping.

The need to shift a proportion of consumer purchasing towards local businesses was one of the most popular action ideas put forward through public and stakeholder engagement for this strategy.

There are two sides to the local purchasing coin – consumer decisions and business decisions. Both would be important components of a shop local program in CV-KL:

- **Consumer decisions:** The number one 'barrier' identified by local businesses owners was that consumers did not recognize (and act on) the importance of shopping locally. Education and marketing campaigns to shoppers (residents) are needed about the direct benefits of them to buying local (e.g., service, uniqueness, thriving communities, local jobs). The BC Buy Local week experience was important, but a need has been expressed for a year-round campaign. There are a number of forms that a buy-local campaign could take, from the small and simple (marketing materials) to the larger and more complex (local debit cards in conjunction with a credit union, local purchasing rewards programs paired with an app<sup>7</sup>, etc.)
- **Business decisions:** In a 2017 EAP survey of almost 700 CV-KL residents and businesses, the number one reason that people did not shop at local businesses (by far) was selection, not price. This indicates an opportunity for local businesses to increase local purchasing by providing products and services that more closely match the needs of residents. This action could include educating businesses about consumer preferences, working with businesses to develop consumer feedback program, or other tasks.

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract new business and investment | Create more good jobs | Diversify our economy | Increase number of local entrepreneurs

#### Next Steps

- Work with the Chambers and local businesses to develop a local purchasing campaign/program (consider contacting LOCO BC (the BC Buy Local Network) about accessing their 'shop local' materials (posters, social media content, programming, etc.). This can be a cost-effective way of developing shop local programs).
- Work with the Chambers and local businesses to discuss local product and service selection and ways to match offerings to local needs.

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<sup>7</sup> Off the shelf options are available. As an example, see Victoria's Think Local First program, which uses an app developed by the BC Economic Development Association.

## Actions: Local Business Matters – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### Resources Required

- Staff time (medium)
- Various items depending on what actions are pursued (graphic designer fees, printing, licensing fees, etc.)

### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- BC Rural Dividend

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## Actions: Local Business Matters – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### B5: Coaching on new markets

#### Description & Rationale

This action would be to work with the Chambers, the Province and others to deliver training to CV-KL businesses on reaching new markets (workshops or one-on-one).

In survey after survey<sup>8</sup>, CV-KL local businesses have consistently identified that they have a need for training and professional development in reaching new markets. New markets could mean online customers, new customer types (e.g., government procurement) or new geographic areas (e.g., exporting across provincial or international borders).

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract new business and investment | Create more good jobs | Attract more families / young people | Diversify our economy | Increase number of local entrepreneurs

#### Next Steps

- Review past business engagement results in order to tailor offerings to business needs
- Research existing programs and funding sources (e.g., Province of BC, Community Futures)
- Deliver programming

#### Resources Required

- Staff time for outreach and coordination (low to medium)
- Potentially fees for program delivery or hosting

#### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- Agrifood (Technology) Venture Acceleration Program
- CanExport

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<sup>8</sup> 2016 Business Walks survey, 2017 EAP survey, 2017 EAP business survey

### Tier 3 Actions (less urgent priorities)

Tier 3 actions are regional priorities but are less urgent than Tier 1 and 2 actions. They are to be started opportunistically (based on the presence of funding or champions), or when Tier 2 actions completed/ underway.

#### **Tier 3 Actions for Local Business Matters:**

##### **B7: New business mentorship program**

Mentoring is a proven approach to speeding up learning and development for mentors and mentees. Both new entrepreneurs and experienced ones expressed interest in a CV-KL business mentorship program. Mentorship should be coordinated throughout the region with the Chambers, EAP and other organizations to avoid duplication and ensure that mentors and mentees are matched with the best fit

## Pillar 3: Agriculture

Actions in this pillar are designated with an 'A' for Agriculture.

Agriculture is the heart of the CV-KL area economy. The sector is a major employer; a source of pride, innovation and differentiation; and the fields and farms provide a unique feel that residents and visitors love.

The CV-KL agricultural sector has recently come together under a unifying agricultural body, Fields Forward, that is supporting collaboration, shared learning and advocacy for the sector.

EAP worked with Fields Forward and individual agricultural businesses (producers, processors, etc.) to understand the actions that would have the most regional impact. These actions fell into a few themes:

- **Shared services and infrastructure:** There are opportunities for efficiencies through collaboration and shared services.
- **Technology adoption:** Agricultural businesses are interest in adopting new technologies but may not know what technologies would be most appropriate.
- **Marketing:** Producers and processors expressed interest in a 'Creston Valley' brand/Kootenay Farms brand, and for support with marketing at the individual level (e.g. coaching or workshops)

Public engagement identified dozens of actions related to agriculture, and the EAP worked with agricultural stakeholders to evaluate and prioritize these actions. The resulting list of priority projects is shown in the 'pillar' to the right, and described on the following pages.

### AGRICULTURE

**A1:** Online agriculture marketplace (in progress)

**A2:** Advocate for local food requirements from funders

**A3:** Improve signage and parking for Farmers Market (2018)

**A4:** Funding and support for Fields Forward

**A5:** Ag/tech innovation support

**A6:** Explore shared services and food hub

**A7:** Marketing support to individual producers

**A8:** Support program for regulatory and certification processes

**A9:** 'Farm gate' sales expansion

**A10:** Permanent location for farmers market

TIER 1: 0-6 months

TIER 2: Urgent Priorities

TIER 3: Less Urgent Priorities

## Actions: Agriculture – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

### Tier 1 Actions (0-6 months)

Tier 1 actions are “Quickstarts” that can be completed in next six months, or are urgent opportunities that must be started immediately.

#### A1: Online Agriculture Marketplace (*in progress*)

##### Description & Rationale

The online agriculture marketplace is a platform for local producers, farmers and value-added processors to sell their products to individuals and restaurants (target groups of individuals are families, seniors, and people with disabilities). Many people in the area (including residents and tourists) want to buy and eat more local produce, and this ‘direct to consumer’ marketplace will allow people to do so at home and at restaurants. A key consideration will be making the marketplace financially and operationally self-sustaining.

##### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Create more good jobs | Diversify our economy | Keep the area peaceful; protect the character

##### Next Steps

- Identify other successful examples of online marketplaces (e.g. Cow-op, Farmers’ Market Direct, Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild) (completed)
- Gather more information of the needs for farmers and producers – volume of product, frequency, target markets, ability to deliver, etc.
- Gather more information on the needs of consumers and target audiences - volume, frequency, delivery or pick up, etc.
- Identify funds to set-up the online platform (in progress)
- Develop a strategy for ongoing operations (funding or income stream, staff time, etc.)

##### Resources Required

- Staff time (high)
  - Staff time for research and business planning
  - Staff and development time for off the shelf platform set up
  - Staff time and marketing materials for recruiting sellers and buyers
  - Ongoing time for maintenance, operations and marketing



## Actions: Agriculture – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- AgrilInnovation Program (open until March 31, 2023)
- Bioenterprise BC
- BC Rural Dividend
- Columbia Basin Trust

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### A2: Advocate for Local Food Requirements from Funders (in progress)

#### Description & Rationale

This action involves advocating to Kootenay-area funders (e.g. Columbia Basin Trust) to include a requirement for local food procurement policy in their granting program requirements. Fields Forward is already working on this action.

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Create more good jobs | Diversify our economy

#### Next Steps

- Continue advocacy with funders

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (low)

### A3: Improve Signage and Parking for Farmers Market (2018)

#### Description & Rationale

The Farmers Market is an economic driver for agriculture and tourism, and it provides a critical market channel for agricultural growers and a space for new food-product entrepreneurs to sell their products. Increasing the accessibility and prominence of the Farmers Market will enhance tourism, provide a larger market for sellers and enliven the downtown area.

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract more families / young people | Diversify our economy | Keep the area peaceful; protect the character | Increase number of local entrepreneurs

#### Next Steps

- Work with the Farmers Market to assess current signage and parking, opportunities and challenges
- Create a plan for increasing signage and parking and carry out the plan

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (medium)

### A4: Funding and Support for Fields Forward

#### Description & Rationale

Support Fields Forward in obtaining funding for operations and programming, and in developing sustainable financial streams in the longer run.

Fields forward is the voice of CV-KL agriculture, and is driving policy and program changes that benefit the sector (e.g. mobile juice press, exploring co-op services, advocacy). However, as a new organization, it is not yet financially sustainable, and needs core funding in order to continue its work.

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Diversify our economy | Keep the area peaceful; protect the character

#### Next Steps

- Support Fields Forward in obtaining funding

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (medium)

#### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- AgrilInnovation Program (open until March 31, 2023)
- Agrifood (Technology) Venture Acceleration Program
- Bioenterprise BC
- BC Rural Dividend

## Actions: Agriculture – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### Tier 2 Actions (urgent priorities)

Urgent priorities. To be started opportunistically (funding, champions), or when Tier 1 actions completed/ underway.

#### A5: Agriculture/technology innovation support

##### Description & Rationale

Support agricultural producers and processors in adopting new technologies. This action could take several forms depending on the needs of producers and processors, such as research and education, workshops, or setting up meetings between producers / processors and technology experts or providers. In some cases, it may make sense to work with a group of producers within a sub-sector (e.g. greenhouse producers, tree-fruit producers) who may have the same opportunities for technological efficiency improvements.

This type of targeted support is necessary because it can be difficult, time consuming and confusing for individual producers to do the necessary research to determine which technological interventions to pursue. Furthermore, individual producers may be too small for a tech innovation to be affordable or effective, but groups of producers would jointly purchase or share some products.

In addition to convening meetings, this action would include targeted follow up with producers as needed (e.g., additional research, meetings, introductions, support with accessing grant or loan programs like AgrilInnovate Canada).

##### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract new business and investment | Create more good jobs | Diversify our economy | Keep the area peaceful; protect the character

##### Next Steps

- Identify producers, technology sector local experts and others who are interested in participating (e.g., i4C out of Trail, Government of Canada representatives of the AgrilInnovate program) to assess interest, needs and offerings
- Coordinate meetings
- Provide follow-up and support as needed

##### Resources Required

- Staff time (low), meeting space

## Actions: Agriculture – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- AgrilInnovation Program (open until March 31, 2023)
- Bioenterprise BC
- BC Rural Dividend

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## Actions: Agriculture – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### A6: Explore shared services and food hub

#### Description & Rationale

Explore additional opportunities for collective marketing, processing and distribution for CV-KL agricultural operators. This action can include a physical space for collective use (“food hub”) or distributed shared services like marketing. The “food hub” idea can exist in many forms, on a spectrum from loose collaboration using existing, distributed spaces (current situation in CV-KL) to a centralized, physical space that houses storage, commercial kitchens, processing space, and even a farmers market.

The Province and Columbia Basin Trust have expressed interest in supporting food hubs, and Creston is an ideal candidate to host such a hub. This action would include working with funders and producers to understand potential, needs assessment and feasibility.

Efficiencies from shared services would make local agricultural producers more competitive and could spur new value-added products or new market entrants.

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Create more good jobs | Attract more families / young people | Diversify our economy | Keep the area peaceful; protect the character | Increase number of local entrepreneurs

#### Next Steps

- Work with producers to assess needs and feasibility of shared services (e.g., joint marketing, branding, distribution)
- Work with Columbia Basin Trust, the Province, and local producers to understand the demand and feasibility of a food hub, and where on the ‘spectrum’ of food hubs the CV-KL region should aspire to be

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (high)
- Various, depending on shared services provided (e.g., time or consultant fees for marketing, capital costs for infrastructure)

#### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- AgrInnovation Program (open until March 31, 2023)
- Agrifood (Technology) Venture Acceleration Program
- Bioenterprise BC
- BC Rural Dividend



### Tier 3 Actions (less urgent priorities)

Tier 3 actions are regional priorities but are less urgent than Tier 1 and 2 actions. They are to be started opportunistically (based on the presence of new funding or champions), or when Tier 2 actions completed/ underway.

#### **A7: Marketing support to individual producers**

Individual producers identified that they needed support in marketing, including digital marketing. This could take the form of coaching, workshops, or fee-for-service marketing support.

#### **A8: Support program for regulatory and certification processes**

‘Our strong suit is growing, not paperwork’ – producer

For some producers/processors, obtaining certifications (such as organic) could open new markets and improve profitability, however, the process of obtaining them can be convoluted and time consuming. A need was identified for a third party

#### **A9: 'Farm gate' sales expansion**

Roadside sales (e.g. market stands, fruit stands, or even ‘honour system’ sales shacks) can increase sales and provide access to a new market – tourists and drivers. This action would be to explore the potential for increased roadside sales (from a producer and tourism perspective) and support producers in setting up stands if it is viable.

#### **A10: Permanent location for farmers market**

Support the Creston Valley Farmers Market in finding a permanent location that better suits their needs.

# Actions: Quality of Life and Resident Attraction

## Pillar 3: Quality of Life and Resident Attraction

Actions in this pillar are designated with an 'Q' for Quality

A high quality of life was identified as the number one asset in CV-KL for economic development. Business owners identified quality of life as the number one reason that they do business in CV-KL, and there is a clear link to tourism and resident attraction.

Ensuring that *all* residents of CV-KL have access and opportunity to experience a high quality of life was identified as an important priority for the region. The EAP worked directly with service organizations that work with low income and vulnerable residents to ensure that the plan included diverse voices.

Through broad public engagement, as well as targeted outreach to service organizations, the following key themes for improving local quality of life and resident attraction were identified:

- **Services and programs:** CV-KL has a number of high quality programs for residents (such as libraries, sport and recreation), but these could be expanded and made more accessible to all income levels. Programs for seniors, new parents, and low income residents are limited by funding availability.
- **Rental housing and daycare availability:** There is a rental housing shortage in CV-KL, and very limited daycare spaces. Both were identified by employers as barriers to employee attraction and retention, and both disproportionately impact lower income residents.
- **Promoting what we've already got (resident attraction):** The people who live in CV-KL know this place is something special. But do people outside the area? How can we better promote this as a place to live?

Through engagement, the EAP collected dozens of actions to improve quality of life, and the EAP worked with service organizations and other related stakeholders to evaluate and prioritize these actions. The resulting list of priority projects is shown in the 'pillar' to the right, and described on the following pages.

### QUALITY OF LIFE / RESIDENT ATTRACTION

Q1: Volunteer Bank

Q2: Support Yaqaan Nukiy public transportation access

TIER 1: 0-6 months

Q3: Actions to address rental housing shortage

Q4: Advocate for quality of life policy changes

TIER 2: Urgent Priorities

Q5: Explore 'Community Advocate' idea

Q6: Resident attraction marketing campaign

TIER 3: Less Urgent Priorities

## Actions: Quality of Life – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

### Tier 1 Actions (0-6 months)

Tier 1 actions are “Quickstarts” that can be completed in next six months, or are urgent opportunities that must be started immediately.

#### Q1: Volunteer Bank

##### Description & Rationale

CV-KL has a very active volunteer culture, yet agencies are still in need of volunteers and potential volunteers may not know about volunteer opportunities. In fact, several groups indicated throughout this project that a lack of volunteers is having a direct impact on economic development: The Visitor Centre would like volunteer ambassadors on busy summer weekends since there is too much demand for visitor services at these times, and the Creston Valley Community Housing Society said that a lack of qualified board members and rental management volunteers *is holding up the development of new affordable housing units*.

Currently there is no central repository for volunteer positions (where potential volunteers can find agencies with open volunteer positions, and vice versa). The ‘Creston Valley Volunteer Bank’ has not been updated since 2016, but it was a promising service that generated a lot of positive interest from volunteers and agencies.

This action would involve creating an online volunteer matching service for the CV-KL area, including promoting it to agencies and volunteers on an ongoing basis. There are several options for doing this, the simplest of which would be to contact the Creston Valley Volunteer Bank and see if they would be interested in restarting it, and what support they need. Their site could also be sold or donated to EAP to restart. The site would need to be expanded to include Area A. Another option would be to use an existing service (e.g. [govolunteer.ca](http://govolunteer.ca) or VolunteerMatch) or build a site from scratch, which would require significantly more time and money.

##### Related Goals

Keep the area peaceful; protect the character | Improve services

##### Next Steps

- Discuss needs with organizations that require volunteers (e.g., Library, Gleaners, Spectrum Farms, Visitor Centre, Creston Valley Community Housing Society)
- Consider short term solutions while a website is being restarted/developed, including a simple listing of agencies in need of volunteers and their requirements, that can be distributed to all agencies for referrals (e.g. if someone approaches one agency but does not have the right skills or time availability, they could refer them to other agencies).

## Actions: Quality of Life – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

- Reach out to the Creston Valley Volunteer Bank to understand current status, interest in restarting the site and support needs, etc.
- Develop a business plan for site development, as well as site maintenance and operations

### Resources Required

- Staff time (medium)

### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- Community & Employer Partnerships Funding ?
- BC Rural Dividend ?

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## Actions: Quality of Life – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

### **Q2: Support Yaqaan Nukiy public transportation access in meetings with BC Transit (*in progress*)**

#### Description & Rationale

Continue to take part in discussions for the Regional 10-Year Transportation Planning Strategy with BC Transit. Revisit and look for creative ways to provide better service for Yaqaan Nukiy. Area A public transportation should also be evaluated.

Access to transit was identified as a barrier to employment opportunities, a safety issue and an equity issue. Providing public transit will allow people to more easily get to work throughout the region in a safe way.

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector (by ensuring that staff can get to work) | Improve services

#### Next Steps

- Continue engagement with BC Transit
- With BC Transit or separately beforehand, hold discussions between the communities of CV-KL about creative ways to provide transit to Yaqaan Nukiy, funding structures and ways of working together to provide this basic and much needed service.

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (medium)
- Elected officials time (medium)

#### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- BC Rural Dividend
- Western Economic Diversification Program (Check back with them for intake dates)

## Actions: Quality of Life – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### Tier 2 Actions (urgent priorities)

Urgent priorities. To be started opportunistically (funding, champions), or when Tier 1 actions completed/ underway.

#### Q3: Actions to address rental housing shortage

##### Description & Rationale

The lack of affordable rental housing (and rental housing in general) is a barrier to economic development in the area. Employers reported that it makes it difficult to attract employees, and groups that work with vulnerable populations reported it as a major issue for quality of life for many people.

According to the Creston Valley Community Housing Society, there is abundant funding for affordable housing at the moment (e.g., BC Housing Community Housing Fund), but a lack of people in CV-KL willing to work on this issue (volunteers or otherwise). The Community Housing Society does not have sufficient volunteer resources at the moment. This situation is leading to missed opportunities – for example, in December Columbia Basin Trust announced \$28 million of funding for affordable housing to nine other communities in the Basin.

This action is to meet with Creston Valley Community Housing Society, BC Housing\* and others to get a clear picture of the issue and brainstorm creative solutions for addressing it. This may include things like volunteer recruitment (see action Q1: *Volunteer Bank*), housing-focused community investment co-ops, considering paid support for project development (for example, through EAP), or linking and coordinating with other groups.

\*BC Housing has expressed interest in creative rental housing solutions and should be contacted for involvement or idea generation. The contact for the interior is Danna Locke, [dlocke@bchousing.org](mailto:dlocke@bchousing.org), director of the Interior Region.

##### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract more families / young people | Improve services

##### Next Steps

- Review 2011 Housing Need and Demand Assessment Update and Site Feasibility Study<sup>9</sup> and discuss current relevance or need for updated study

<sup>9</sup>[http://crestonhousing.com/uploads/3/5/1/7/35175490/cvchs\\_creston\\_valley\\_needs\\_and\\_demand\\_assessment-opt.pdf](http://crestonhousing.com/uploads/3/5/1/7/35175490/cvchs_creston_valley_needs_and_demand_assessment-opt.pdf)

## Actions: Quality of Life – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

- Meet with housing stakeholders to understand barriers to affordable rental housing and potential solutions

### Resources Required

- Staff time

### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- Community Housing Fund (intake closes September 17th, 2018)

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## Actions: Quality of Life – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### Q4: Advocate for quality of life policy and regulatory changes

#### Description & Rationale

Service organizations in CV-KL have identified a number of policy, regulatory and funding barriers to providing quality-of-life services like daycare, seniors programming, early childhood and parenting services, community living support for special needs individuals, library services and the like.

Local governments could play a key role in supporting quality of life by collectively advocating to other levels of government on policy, regulatory and funding issues. In some cases, these may be issues affecting many similar communities (e.g., rural communities), and a larger collective voice could be used.

The specific issues affecting quality of life will change over time, so a structure should be set up for ongoing dialogue with community service groups. Several initial ideas that were put forward include: making daycare licensing rules better suited to rural areas; and reinstating or raising funding for seniors-at-home-services, early childhood and parenting programming.

#### Related Goals

Attract more families / young people | Keep the area peaceful; protect the character | Improve services.

#### Next Steps

- Set up structures for ongoing conversations with service organizations
- Where appropriate, advocate as needed (e.g., letters of support, phone calls, attending meetings between service providers and funders)

#### Resources Required

- Staff time
- Elected official time

## Actions: Quality of Life – Tier 3 (less urgent priorities)

### Tier 3 Actions (less urgent priorities)

Tier 3 actions are regional priorities but are less urgent than Tier 1 and 2 actions. They are to be started opportunistically (based on the presence of funding, champions), or when Tier 2 actions are completed or underway.

#### **Tier 3 Actions for 'Quality of Life and Resident Attraction':**

##### **Q5: Explore 'Community Advocate' idea**

Explore the idea of a 'community advocate' – a resident (volunteer or paid) who conducts ongoing engagement with the community about quality of life, and advocates on their behalf to organizations like the Provincial Government, local governments, and Interior Health. This idea was popular at the stakeholder meeting for service organizations and community ambassadors and should be explored in more detail with this group.

##### **Q6: Resident attraction marketing campaign**

Explore resident attraction marketing materials, drawing on the content from Imagine Kootenay. Materials could be provided by major employers in their employee attraction efforts, physician recruitment, in real-estate agent packages, and potentially in targeted online or offline ads.

## Pillar 5: New Directions

Actions in this pillar are designated with an 'N' for New

*The only thing constant is change.* In order to thrive as a region in the long run, CV-KL will need to be open to emerging economic opportunities, and have systems in place to evaluate and support them as needed. At present, there are nascent opportunities in technology, bioenergy, cannabis production and other areas.

The following three themes emerged as important:

- **Support tech and other emerging sectors**
- **Tech adoption and value-add within existing sectors**
- **Openness to innovation and change**

Public and stakeholder engagement identified a number of potential actions to support 'emerging' sectors, which were then evaluated and prioritized by a stakeholder working group. The resulting list of priority projects is shown in the 'pillar' to the right, and described on the following pages

In addition to the actions identified in this pillar, a number of the 'foundational actions' will support new and emerging opportunities over time (for example, having a central point for economic inquiries, facilitating collaboration and connections, coordinating between businesses and the colleges, etc.).

### NEW DIRECTIONS

**N1:** TechDev101 workshop

**N2:** Explore CV-KL "Tech Meet-Up"

TIER 1: 0-6 months

**N3:** Tech and other new market mentorship and matchmaking program

**N4:** Tech/forestry innovation coordination

TIER 2: Urgent Priorities

TIER 3: Less Urgent Priorities

## Actions: New Directions – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

### Tier 1 Actions (0-6 months)

Tier 1 actions are “Quickstarts” that can be completed in next six months, or are urgent opportunities that must be started immediately.

#### **N1: TechDev101 Workshop (*in progress*)**

##### Description & Rationale

The tech sector is fast emerging as a potential rural economic driver, including throughout the Kootenays (e.g., Rossland, Trail). Internet-enabled work and expensive urban housing makes are driving tech workers and companies to seek locations based on lifestyle and amenities – both of which rural areas like Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake have in abundance.

It's important that economic development staff, business groups and elected officials understand this emerging sector, the potential it has for economic development, and how to tap into this potential.

The Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology (JTT) has a current program to provide one-day workshops on the role of technology in economic development. Creston Valley – Kootenay Lake is currently on the waiting list to host this program, which has no cost to the community. The program aims to have 20 participants in the room, including elected officials, economic development staff, decision makers, business community groups/leaders, post-secondary institutions, etc.

##### Related Goals

Attract new business and investment | Create more good jobs | Diversify our economy

##### Next Steps

- Find out more information about the workshop and gauge initial interest (completed)
- Contact JTT to sign up for workshop (completed)
- Follow up in July 2018 with Alanna Dixon ([alanna.dixon@gov.bc.ca](mailto:alanna.dixon@gov.bc.ca))
- Once confirmed, market the event and ensure that the appropriate people will attend

##### Resources Required

- Staff time (low)
- Venue and lunch

## Actions: New Directions – Tier 1 (0-6 months)

### N2: Explore CV-KL “Tech Meet-up”

#### Description

Examine the interest and viability of a ‘Tech Meet-up’ in Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake. If there is interest (even from just a few people), carry out one or more pilot meet-ups. Down the line, a CV-KL Tech Meetup group could determine if there is a need for other actions such as more formal mentorship programs or incubators.

#### Rationale

At the stakeholder meeting for ‘New Directions / Tech,’ the most popular actions all revolved around relationship building, mentoring and match-making. Individuals working in tech wanted more opportunities to get together and learn from each other (and this would also make it more welcoming for new tech workers moving to the area).

Tech meet-ups are a tried-and-true model to meet this desire for connection in the tech sector. Nelson’s tech and knowledge workers meet-up has over 650 members and has spawned numerous collaborations, friendships and mentorships.

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract new business and investment | Create more good jobs | Attract more families / young people | Diversify our economy | Increase number of local entrepreneurs

#### Next Steps

- Interview Rose Hoeher (founder of the Nelson Tech Meetup). She has expressed interest in supporting CV-KL in this endeavor
- Reach out to CV-KL tech sector workers to discuss the idea and gauge interest (starting with the sign-in sheet from the ‘New Directions / Tech’ stakeholders group meeting)

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (medium)

#### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- BC Rural Dividend

## Actions: New Directions – Tier 2 (urgent priorities)

### Tier 2 Actions (urgent priorities)

Urgent priorities. To be started opportunistically (funding, champions), or when Tier 1 actions completed/ underway.

### N3: Tech and other new market mentorship and matchmaking program

#### Description & Rationale

Create opportunities for entrepreneurs and tech sector workers to learn from mentors, and to network with potential collaborators and clients. This could take the form of a formal mentorship program, meet-ups, or one-on-one matchmaking support with potential clients, support services or funders.

At the stakeholder meeting for 'New Directions / Tech,' the most popular actions all revolved around relationship building, mentoring and match-making. Participants wanted opportunities to learn from others and to share their knowledge. Participants also identified that it can be difficult to meet potential clients, especially those in established sectors like agriculture.

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract new business and investment | Create more good jobs | Attract more families / young people | Diversify our economy | Keep the area peaceful; protect the character | Improve services | Increase number of local entrepreneurs

#### Next Steps

- Building on the tech meet-up (*Action N2: Explore CV-KL "Tech Meet-Up"*), identify experienced tech professionals in the area, and those who may want to be mentored by experienced tech professionals. If there is interest, establish a program to 'match' these mentors and mentees.
- Ongoing communications with emerging sector businesses (tech and other) to see if there are opportunities for matchmaking with potential clients, support services or funders

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (medium)

#### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- BC Innovation Council (BCIC) Tech Works
- Industrial Research Assistance Program ?
- BC Rural Dividend

### N4: Tech/forestry innovation coordination

#### Description & Rationale

Like most sectors, forestry is being transformed by technology, and the specific technologies and opportunities are evolving faster than ever before. This action involves ongoing coordination with the CV-KL forestry sector to support technology adoption. This could take the form of coordinating meetings between forest sector operators and technology companies, or sector wide meetings to look for shared opportunities or scaled-up technology adoption (e.g. sharing expensive resources). It could also include support with research, advocacy or other such actions.

#### Related Goals

Build a thriving local business sector | Attract new business and investment | Create more good jobs

#### Next Steps

- Contact forestry companies to understand potential technology needs
- Research as needed
- Coordinate one on one meetings as needed
- Follow up, support and problem solving as needed

#### Resources Required

- Staff time (low)

#### Potential funding sources (see Appendix B for fund details):

- BC Innovation Council (BCIC) Tech Works
- BC Rural Dividend



## Appendix B: Potential Funding Sources

The project team researched funds that *could be applicable* to the actions in this strategy. The funding streams are referenced in the body of the report along with each action. They are listed here in alphabetical order.

### **Agrifood (Technology) Venture Acceleration Program**

- Provides training, one on one coaching, and a network that empowers start-up and early stage agrifood technology entrepreneurs to maximize commercialization opportunities and growth
- Delivered by the Sumas Regional Consortium for High Tech (SRCTec)
- Plan is for 31 months, and will provide agri-tech entrepreneurs with coaching and resources that have historically been limited in BC

For more information: <http://srctec.org/avap/>

### **AgriInnovation Program**

- Part of this program invests in supporting projects that “prepare for commercialization of an innovative technology, process, or product through commercial demonstration, commercialization, or adoption” related to agriculture
- Priority areas:
  - o New or world leading clean technology (including precision agriculture)
  - o Increase productivity through advanced manufacturing, automation or robotics
  - o Strengthen Canada’s value-added agri-sectors
  - o Secure or expand new export markets
- Program provides repayable contributions
- Applications will be taken continuously until March 31, 2023

For more information: <http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/programs-and-services/list-of-programs-and-services/agriinnovation-program/?id=1460123349608>

### **BC Innovation Council (BCIC) Tech Works**

- Unites students with valuable training opportunities in BCs technology sector
- Employers receive \$2700 towards a co-op students salary
- Eligible companies: tech firms, non-profit organizations in the tech sector, and non-tech companies hiring for tech roles

For more information: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/funding-and-grants/bc-innovation-council-tech-works>

### **BC Rural Dividend (BC Ministry of FLNRORD)**

- Targeted towards communities of 25,000 or less
- Meant to assist communities in reinvigorating and diversifying their local economies
- Eligible applicants include local governments, First Nations, or non-profit organizations
- 4 project categories:
  - Community capacity building- projects that build capacity to deal with key economic challenges and changes
  - Workforce development- projects that offer training and skills development opportunities
  - Community and economic development- projects that help build foundation for economic growth, implement strategies for growth
  - Business sector development- projects that increase new business creation, retain businesses
- Funding:
  - Project development- maximum of \$10,000
  - Single applicant- maximum of \$100,000
    - Support implementation of community-driven projects
    - Eligible applicant must contribute at least 20% of total project cost
  - Partnerships- maximum funding of \$500,000
    - Eligible applicant and partner must contribute at least 40% of total project cost
- Next intake period has yet to be determined but will be posted on the website.

For more information: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/support-organizations-community-partners/rural-economic-development/rural-dividend/program-details2>

### **Bioenterprise BC**

- A business accelerator that supports the commercialization of innovations in agriculture, and helps to increase agri-food revenue
- Provides selected high growth agrifood and seafood businesses with advanced commercialization services, like market analysis, funding guidance, and mentoring, as well as access to international business, investor, and science advisory networks

For more information: <http://www.bioenterprise.ca>

### **Build in Canada Innovation Program**

- This program is designed to help get entrepreneurs/innovators from the development stage to the sale and use of their product

- The Government of Canada, through this program, buys pre-qualified goods and services, moves them to federal departments for testing, and provides feedback to suppliers on the performance, which also provides them with a first reference sale
- Open to private or public companies, not-for-profit organizations, universities, or individuals

For more information: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/app-acq/picc-bcip/index-eng.html>

### **CanExport**

- 5-year, \$50-million Government of Canada program that provides direct financial assistance to small and medium-sized businesses that are seeking to develop new export opportunities and markets, especially high growth emerging markets
- For funding, they provide reimbursement of up to 50% of eligible expenses, a min. contribution of \$10,000 and max of \$99,999.
- Open to all industry sectors except agriculture, fish, and alcohol
- The applicant must match funds on a one-to-one basis

For more information: <http://international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/funding-financement/canexport/index.aspx?lang=eng>

### **Community & Employer Partnerships Funding**

- Brings community organizations and employers together
- Works to address labour market issues, increase job opportunities for unemployed citizens, promote and simplify communication between stakeholders, share local labour market information, coordinate approaches to employment support in communities, discuss strategies and solutions to labour market needs, and develop innovative approaches to address social challenges beyond employment
- Funding can be provided for a project/opportunity that involves social innovation, job creation partnerships, labour market partnerships, research and innovation, and project based labour market training

For more information and to apply online:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/funding-and-grants/community-employer-partnerships>

### **Community Housing Fund (BC Housing)**

- Supports the development of mixed income, affordable rental housing projects for independent families and seniors
- Can provide capital grants (up to \$100,000 per housing unit), interim construction/take-out financing, and operating subsidies
- Project proposals must include (within a single building):
  - o 30% Affordable housing (moderate income)
  - o 50% Rent geared to income (housing income limit)
  - o 20 % Deep subsidy
- Open to non-profit housing providers or for-profit firms that partner with non-profit societies

- Intake closes at 2pm (PT) on September 17, 2018

### **Industrial Research Assistance Program**

- Innovation assistance program for small and medium-sized enterprises (less than 500 employees)
- Helps firms to develop technologies and successfully commercialize them in a global marketplace
- Provides advisory services by coaching clients projects through all stages of the innovation-commercialization process
- Provides financial support to qualified enterprises in Canada to help them undertake tech innovation
- Connects clients with industry experts and potential business partners
- Delivers youth employment programs

For more information: <http://www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/irap/about/index.html>

### **Legacy Fund - Canadian Heritage**

*Legacy Fund- Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage*

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/building-communities/legacy-fund.html>

- Provides funding for community-initiated capital projects, intended for community use
- Funding: Up to 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$500,000
- Who can apply?
  - local incorporated non-profit organizations;
  - local band councils, tribal councils or other local Aboriginal government and organizations (First Nations, Inuit or Métis);
  - Municipal administrations and their agencies, boards and commissions that demonstrate an active partnership with at least one community-based group for the purposes of the proposed project.
- Eligible Projects:
  - involve the restoration, renovation, or transformation of existing buildings or exterior spaces with local community significance that are intended for community use;
  - encourage arts and heritage activities in the local community that are intended for and accessible to the general public

### **Local Festivals – Building Communities through Arts and Heritage**

- Program provides funding for recurring festivals that present the work of local artists, artisans, or heritage performers
- Funding: up to 100% of eligible expenses up to a maximum of \$200,000
- Eligible projects and events
  - Applicants must be a local non-profit or group, or Indigenous group

- Applicants must encourage local community engagement and must have successfully organized a prior edition of the festival within the last 2 years
- Deadlines:
  - **January 31** – for festivals starting between September 1 and December 31
  - **April 30** – for festivals starting between January 1 and June 30
  - **September 30** – for festivals starting between July 1 and August 31

For more information: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/building-communities/festivals.html>

### **Mountain Equipment Co-op Community Grants**

- Targeted towards communities of active outdoor enthusiasts
- Organizations must demonstrate commitment to at least one and preferably both, of the following areas:
  - Identify and reduce barriers to outdoor activity and increase the community of active outdoor enthusiasts.
  - Teach responsible outdoor recreation practices and environmental stewardship
- Must focus on at least one of MEC's core activities (hiking, camping, climbing, skiing, snowshoeing, paddling, yoga, running and cycling) and minimize environmental impact
- Funding: up to \$20,000
  - Two funding cycles: January 9 to March 19, and July 3 to September 11
- Eligible organizations:
  - Registered charity or not-for-profit organization or association
  - Registered Canadian amateur athletic association
  - Registered association or club affiliated with a registered university
  - First Nations band registered as a qualified donee
- Government organizations are ineligible

For more information: <https://www.mec.ca/en/explore/spring-and-fall-grants>

### **Small Change Fund**

- *On hold until Summer 2018 according to their website*
- Helps Canadian communities generate fast, flexible funding for nature-related projects
- Aims to strengthen environmental sustainability at the local level by increasing the capacity of grassroots leaders
- Connects donors and community leaders
- Eligible companies: grassroots organization in Canada, registered Canadian charity or "qualified donee"; if not, the SCF can help still help find a sponsor

For more information: <https://smallchange.org/about-us/>

### **Tourism Events Program (Destination British Columbia)**

- Targeted toward community events that increase the volume of visitors to BC and/or increase global recognition for the province
- Funding: event budget less than or equal to \$500,000 can receive between \$10,000 and \$35,000 in funding
- Eligible events:
  - o Event must take place in BC
  - o The event is a sporting competition, arts, cultural celebration or festival
  - o Events must not be primarily commercial or academic in nature
  - o Event cannot be held over a period of time

Application Intake	Eligible Event Window
September 1, 2018 – October 31, 2018	May 1, 2019 – April 30, 2020
March 1, 2019 – April 30, 2019	November 1, 2019 – October 31, 2020
September 1, 2019 – October 31, 2019	May 1, 2020 – April 30, 2021

For more information: <https://www.destinationbc.ca/BC-Tourism-Industry/Municipal-and-Regional-District-Tax-Program/Tourism-Events-Program.aspx>

### Western Economic Diversification Program

- The program's webpage hasn't been updated since July 2017, and there is no information on the 2018 intake. However, this program is worth keeping an eye on, as one of the two priority streams was "indigenous economic growth", which could have been applicable for this project.
- 2018 stream may have a similar focus, or another applicable focus.
- Invests in community-driven projects and other initiatives designed to increase productivity and competitiveness, and improve the quality of life in western communities
- Eligible organizations: universities/post-secondary academic institutions, research institutes, industry associations, and other not-for-profit organizations, First Nations

For more information: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/funding-and-grants/western-economic-diversification-canada-programs>

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