

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO
NORTHERN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE
AGENDA**

Thursday, February 21, 2019

11:30 A.M.

Oceanside Place

This meeting will be recorded

Pages

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**
3. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**
 - 3.1 **Northern Community Economic Development Select Committee Meeting - May 17, 2018** 3

That the minutes of the Northern Community Economic Development Select Committee meeting held May 17, 2018, be adopted.
4. **INVITED PRESENTATIONS**
 - 4.1 **Pam Shaw, Executive Director, Mt Arrowsmith Biosphere Region - Mt Arrowsmith Biosphere Project (MABP)** 7
 - 4.2 **Kim Burden, Executive Director, Parksville & District Chamber of Commerce - Mid Island Tech Forum** 12
 - 4.3 **Brian Taylor, Vice President, Parksville & District Historical Society - Digital Heritage Exhibition** 74
5. **DELEGATIONS**
 - 5.1 **Kim Burden, Parksville & District Chamber of Commerce** 78
6. **CORRESPONDENCE**

7. REPORTS

7.1 Regional Economic Development

79

1. That a meeting be organized with the organizations listed in Attachment 2 to consider the creation of a region-wide economic development service.
2. That to assist with the meeting, a background report that incorporates input from the other organizations be prepared addressing the current state of economic development in the Regional District of Nanaimo.

8. BUSINESS ARISING FROM DELEGATIONS

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1 Overview of Northern Community Economic Development Program
Presentation by Sharon Horsburgh

9.2 NCED Roundtable

9.3 NCED Program Application Area of Focus 2019

9.4 Northern Community Economic Development Committee Terms of Reference

9.5 Next Meeting (Verbal)

10. ADJOURNMENT

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO
MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, May 17, 2018
9:30 A.M.
Oceanside Place

In Attendance:	Director B. Rogers	Chair
	Director J. Fell	Electoral Area F
	Director J. Stanhope	Electoral Area G
	Director B. Veenhof	Electoral Area H
	Director K. Oates	City of Parksville
	Director T. Westbroek	Town of Qualicum Beach
Also in Attendance:	P. Carlyle	Chief Administrative Officer
	G. Garbutt	Gen. Mgr. Strategic & Community Development
	P. Thompson	Mgr. Long Range Planning
	S. Horsburgh	Sustainability Coordinator
	B. Ritter	Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

It was moved and seconded that the agenda be approved as amended to include one Correspondence item.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Northern Community Economic Development Select Committee Meeting - February 15, 2018

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Northern Community Economic Development Select Committee meeting held February 15, 2018, be adopted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Jim Windsor, Director, Echo Players Society – Mural Project Summary Report

J. Windsor, Director of Echo Players Society, gave a presentation on the success of a mural project, funded in Spring 2017 by the RDN's Northern Community Economic Development Select Committee program, painted on the Village Theatre building in downtown Qualicum Beach in 2017.

DELEGATIONS

The following delegations gave presentations on their projects and funding requests:

Patrick Jiggins, President, Lighthouse Country Business Association, re Lighthouse Country Familiarization Tour

Patrick Jiggins, President, Lighthouse Country Business Association, re Deep Bay Information Booth

Peter Drummond, Director, Qualicum Beach Streamkeepers Society, re Seaside Nature Park “Brant Viewing Platform”

Anne Dodson, Chief Executive Officer, Qualicum Beach Chamber of Commerce, re Social Media Ninja

Anne Dodson, Chief Executive Officer, Qualicum Beach Chamber of Commerce, re Empty Spaces Tour

Jolynn Green, Executive Director, Community Futures Central Island, re LEAP (Local Entrepreneurship Accelerator Program)

Chelsea Pedersen, General Manager, Innovation Island Technology Association, re Tech Savvy Talk & Leaders Roundtable

Cheryl Dill, Executive Director, Central Vancouver Island Job Opportunities Building Society, re Blade Runners 2018-2019

Kim Burden, Executive Director, Parksville and District Chamber of Commerce, re Mid Island Tech Attraction Strategy

Kim Burden, Executive Director, Parksville and District Chamber of Commerce, re Presentation on Economic Development Function for District 69

CORRESPONDENCE

It was moved and seconded that the following correspondence be received for information:

T. Unger, re Letter of Support for Innovation Island Technology Association

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

REPORTS

Northern Community Economic Development – Spring 2018 Proposals

It was moved and seconded that the Northern Community Economic Development Select Committee consider nine proposals for funding through the Spring 2018 intake.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

IN CAMERA

It was moved and seconded that pursuant to Section(s) 90 (1) (j) and (m) of the *Community Charter* the Committee proceed to an In Camera meeting for discussions related to third party business interests and a matter that, under another enactment, is such that the public may be excluded from the meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

TIME: 10:50 AM

The regular meeting reconvened at 11:30 AM

REPORTS

Northern Community Economic Development Summary Report Update

It was moved and seconded that the proposed changes to the Northern Community Economic Development (NCED) Application Form and Summary Report be approved.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

NEW BUSINESS

Alternate Approaches to Funding Blade Runners

It was moved and seconded that staff prepare a report on alternate approaches to funding the Blade Runners program.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

RISE AND REPORT

Northern Community Economic Development – Spring 2018 Proposals

It was moved and seconded that Lighthouse Country Business Association - Lighthouse Country Familiarization Tour - be awarded \$1,200.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It was moved and seconded that Lighthouse Country Business Association - Deep Bay Information Booth - be awarded \$4,700.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It was moved and seconded that Qualicum Beach Chamber of Commerce - Social Media Ninja - be awarded \$5,240.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It was moved and seconded that Qualicum Beach Streamkeepers Society - Seaside Nature Park “Brant Viewing Platform” - be awarded \$5,324 on the condition that it include indigenous history, arts and culture.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It was moved and seconded that Parksville and District Chamber of Commerce Mid Island Tech Forum Strategy - be awarded \$4,286.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It was moved and seconded that Community Futures Central Island - LEAP (Local Entrepreneurship Accelerator Program) - be awarded \$5,000.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It was moved and seconded that Innovation Island Technology Association - Tech Savvy Talk & Leaders Roundtable - be awarded \$4,250.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

It was moved and seconded that Central Vancouver Island Job Opportunities Building Society - Blade Runners 2018-2019 - be awarded \$20,000.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

TIME: 11:45 AM

CHAIR

PROJECT TITLE: Amazing Places Geotourism Program					
NAME OF ORGANIZATION: Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region – Vancouver Island University					
CONTACT PERSON: Pam Shaw, Research Director		TELEPHONE NUMBER: 250.753.3245 x 2620		EMAIL ADDRESS: Pam.Shaw@viu.ca	
TOTAL NCED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$3,000.00			TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET: \$24,000.00		
PROJECT START DATE (YYYY/MM/DD): May 23, 2017			PROJECT END DATE (YYYY/MM/DD): August 31, 2018		
PERCENT COMPLETE: 100% of project initiation and implementation is complete (pursuant to this funding). This project will continue to operate into the long term.					
IF NOT COMPLETE, WHAT ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT REMAIN? PROVIDE ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE: N/A					
PROJECT AREAS (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY):					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARKSVILLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> QUALICUM BEACH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AREA 'E'	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AREA 'F'	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AREA 'G'	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AREA 'H'
PLEASE PROVIDE A SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT RESULTS:					
<p>Funding received from the Northern Community Economic Development (NCED) grant went towards establishing new partnerships and marketing materials for the Amazing Places project. Specifically, funding supported the development of a Geotourism program that encourages residents and tourists to explore the Amazing Places while also spending additional time in local stores, restaurants and organizations within the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region (MABR). Geotours combine geocaching and tourism into a fun activity that connects visitors and residents to various destinations across the world. They do this by driving extended visitation to the region, capturing a broad audience in an activity that is appropriate for all age and skill levels, and creating new and innovative ways of exploring and learning about the region, even for those already familiar with the area. In doing so, they support strong, thriving and creative local economies.</p> <p>Although attempts were made to form a visioning session made up of local business owners and stakeholders to discuss how a regional passport program could be economically beneficial,</p>					

low engagement was an issue. With input from the regional tourism association, whose role it is to closely engage with tourism and business providers on various projects and programs, we were advised not to allocate additional resources into gaining input from these stakeholders due to a recent and prolonged period of low engagement. Rather, a decision was made to create an innovative and flexible project that would provide local economic benefit, facilitate long-term opportunities for collaboration when the time was right, and address the goals of the NCED fund. Therefore, the Amazing Places Geotourism program represents a more relevant iteration of the proposed passport program, attracting new visitors to the region and promoting adventure, sustainability, ecological and historical awareness, as well as local economic development.

The Geotour program is comprised of a series of geocaches - 6 traditional geocaches and 2 multi-caches – hidden at each of the Amazing Places. An informative and interesting Geotour Field Guide provides lots of information on each Amazing Place, and guides participants to each of the sites, challenging them to find both the geocache and the Amazing Places interpretive sign that is installed at each place.

Geocachers can download their Field Guide for free from the Amazing Places website or buy a hard copy from the local Chamber of Commerce or Tigh-Nah-Mara Resort Gift Shop for ten dollars. In the Field Guide is a Cache Code Collection Page that must be completed with coin rubbings from each cache and the answer to each Geoclue, determined by reading the interpretive signage at each site. Submitting the completed Cache Code Collection Page earns participants the reward of a customized Amazing Places geocoin – a highly prized item. Hints and clues guide participants through parks, urban areas, and businesses showing visitors what makes the biosphere a special place.

Reduced funding from the NCED grant limited the team’s ability to purchase and fully launch the Geotourism program. However, additional funding was provided by the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association and Destination BC, and the project was launched in November of 2018.

DESCRIBE THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OR OTHER OUTCOMES THAT HAVE RESULTED FROM THIS PROJECT:

Regionally, the Amazing Places Geotourism program has already attracted the attention of local tourism providers interested in collaborating with the MABR. This includes interest in promoting the program to their clients, offering reduced fees for services to those participating in the program, designing tourism products around the program, and selling Field Guides as a means of attracting new visitors to their place of business. These opportunities are sure to be of economic benefit to the community. Furthermore, because the program takes some time to complete, visitors are encouraged to spend time in the region – visiting local restaurants and shops, purchasing goods and souvenirs, and in some cases, requiring accommodation or engaging in other local activities. To illustrate, in the first week of the program’s launch comments appeared on the Geotour landing page from participants in Seattle who wrote that

when they saw that a new Geotour had been launched they took the ferry to Vancouver Island from Washington State right away. They enjoyed spending time at the Amazing Places so much, they were unable to complete the Geotour in one weekend and wrote that they would be back again to spend another weekend in this quaint community they'd never before visited.

Promotion on the world geocaching hub – geocaching.com – combined with a two-month, province-wide digital advertising campaign, has provided the region and the program with substantial exposure. Visitors have arrived to complete the Geotour from Washington State, communities in the BC interior, Vancouver, as well as across Vancouver Island. With time, visitation is expected from much farther afield, and is typically the case with Geotours. Creative and interesting programs such as the Amazing Places Geotour enhance local economic resilience by diversifying the tourism amenities of the region and providing opportunities for future development and collaboration. They also showcase local businesses, environment and culture in a sustainable way.

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation has the potential to generate \$646 billion per year in consumer spending and approximately \$80 billion in federal, provincial, and local tax revenue; these numbers include dollars spent on travel-related expenses such as lodging, restaurants, and more. Collectively, this project will increase regional foot traffic by broadening the demographic that desires to visit the Regional District of Nanaimo and MABR.

PLEASE DESCRIBE HOW THE PROJECT HAS MET THE PROGRAM PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITY AREAS:

The Amazing Places project met four of the principles established by the NCED grant while also contributing to various priority areas. Firstly, the project focused on the *Flexibility* principle to ensure that the program developed reflected the values and vision of everyone involved with, and to benefit from, the initiative. The passport program was reworked to suit the needs of the community and local businesses, resulting in the development of a Geotour. Today, the geotour attracts visitation to the region and as a result, expenditure within the region. However, substantial potential exists for future development of the project that will promote collaboration and offer the potential for sustained economic benefit to the region.

The project also meets the *Foster Diversification* principle by promoting the regions attractiveness as a Geotourism destination. The program developed has created a unique opportunity that distinguishes the MABR from other parts of Vancouver Island. Currently, there are a total of four Geotours in Canada, with the closest being in Vancouver and Chilliwack. The only Geotour on Vancouver Island, the project adds diversity to the region's tourism portfolio, and broadens the region's attractiveness as a tourism destination. Ultimately, the program offers visitors a fun, exciting experience while visiting the Amazing Places located in the RDN. Visitors will have the opportunity to solve riddles, adventure, site see, and gain a better connection to the area while also checking out local businesses where clues and geocoins will be hidden/sold. The program will provide each participant with a unique peak into what it

means to be a UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve in Canada.

The Amazing Places project has also contributed to the *Facilitate Cooperation* principle through the development of new partnerships both locally and nationally. Through this initiative we have been able to establish a network of partnerships with local businesses, municipalities, entities, and five of Canada's UNESCO-designated biosphere reserves. Through these partnerships, we have had the opportunity to engage with a number of diverse organizations to enhance local, regional and national economics. Funding attained from the NCED grant has provided the team with funding to leverage these new partnerships while also investing in marketing materials for the Amazing Places project.

Finally, Amazing places has met the *Create Regional Benefits* principle as it has created opportunities for businesses and organizations to leverage a program that distinguishes them geographically. The new Geotourism program is a brand that will belong to Canada's UNESCO biosphere reserves, and can be utilized by local businesses as an asset to increase economic profit at their leisure. Further, it can be leveraged as a marketing ploy to engage a broader demographic in tourism visitation.

PLEASE CAN YOU HELP QUANTIFY THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THIS PROJECT ON THE COMMUNITY. THIS WILL ASSIST THE RDN TO MEASURE THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF THE NCED PROGRAM ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

TO MEASURE ECONOMIC OUTPUT LOCALLY WE HAVE PREPARED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. HOW MANY JOBS WERE FUNDED THROUGH THIS PROJECT?

In total, three jobs were funded to develop and manage the Amazing Places Project. Two part-time positions were created to oversee the national program as well as a temporary work-op position to engage students in Vancouver Island University's Tourism and Recreation program. The student position was funded to help with material development, social media marketing campaigns, while also providing support to the Amazing Places coordinator and MABR Coordinator.

2. HOW MANY SHORT TERM LONG TERM POSITIONS WERE CREATED?

One long-term and two short term positions were created.

3. PLEASE OUTLINE THE AMOUNT OF GOODS AND SERVICES PURCHASED LOCALLY?

During our trial of the Geotourism program goods from the MABR were purchased to fill each of the ten geocache boxes. Various objects and printed materials were supplied in each of the caches and were purchased locally within the biosphere reserve. All printing of materials were sourced and purchased from Vancouver Island Universities printing department. Local post cards, keychains, magnets, and book marks were purchased from the Parksville District Chamber of Commerce, Coombs Fair, Shades of Green and other local businesses. In total, 60 post cards, stickers, magnets keychains, and

bookmarks were purchased and shared with participants from the Canada C3 voyage.

To develop the full-scale program that launched in November, 2018, numerous materials and services were purchased locally, including cache materials, geocoin manufacturing, Field Guide writing and printing, and creative development.

4. WHAT IS THE LASTING LEGACY OF THIS PROJECT ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY?

The Amazing places project has contributed directly to socio-economics in the RDN by developing and implementing a Geotour program that aims to diversify tourism in the region. The program offers unique economic opportunities that will enhance the region’s resiliency in regards to year round tourism. Our new tourism product can be a model initiative for other regions outside of the biosphere, but within the RDN, to enhance the following: job opportunities, marketing of RDN as a tourist destination, local income for businesses, promotion of sustainable tourism initiatives as well as increased cultural exchange.

5. WOULD THIS PROJECT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT FUNDING FORM THE NCED?

Seed funding from the NCED program allowed the MABR Amazing Places team to enhance local and regional partnerships through the development of the Geotourism product. The product would not have been developed without funding from the NCED program as it enhanced our ability to fund project coordination and development as well as facilitation of dialogue between various entities. Although funding received was less than the requested amount, it provided our team with an opportunity to continue developing a product that suited the needs of local businesses and residents.

OFFICE USE ONLY:

DATE RECEIVED:

RECEIVED BY:

POSTED ONLINE:

YES NO

VICEDA Technology Attraction Strategy Final Report

December 2018

**Prepared for
Vancouver Island Coastal
Economic Developers
Association (VICEDA)**



Prepared by



Executive Summary

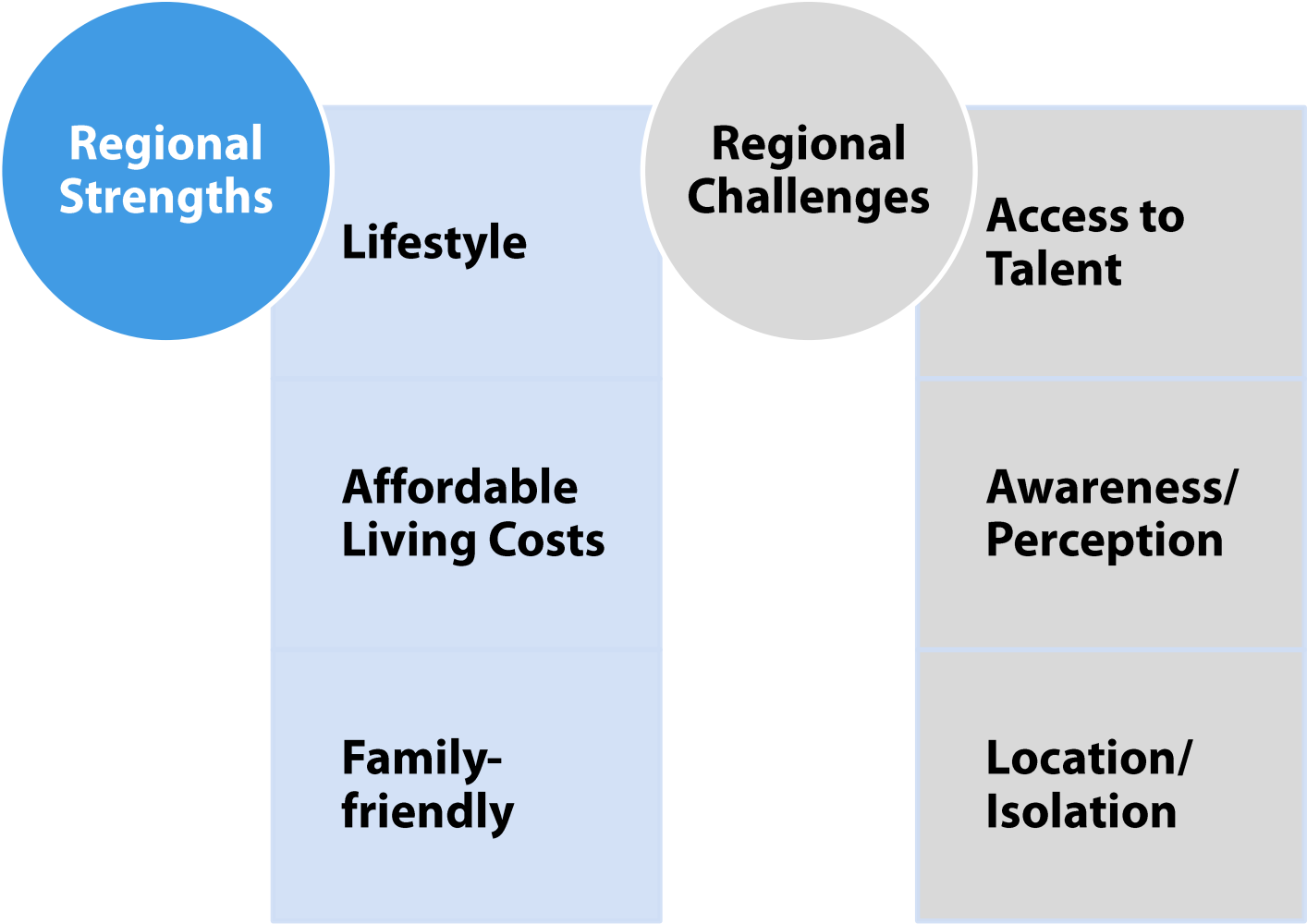


Sector Inventory | Key Findings

Vancouver Island’s tech sector (north of the Malahat) is made up of over **100 companies** mainly in Digital Media, Design and Marketing, as well as Clean/Resource Technology. **Data Solutions, Digital Health** and **Aerospace** technologies offer increasing opportunity for growth in the region.

78% of companies are located in **Nanaimo**, and the **Comox** and **Cowichan** Valley Regional Districts.

Key resources include access to federal and provincial **funding** as well as local assets such as **Innovation Island**.



Strategic Recommendations | Summary



Convene and Coordinate

Strategy 1 brings together what already exists in the tech sector. That is, making information on existing stakeholders and key resources (e.g., funding, space) available (e.g., through an online tool) both for island tech sector stakeholders and those interested in the sector further afield.



Support Mid-growth Companies

Strategy 3 recommends dedicated support for mid-growth companies that are looking to scale-up. It includes developing an expert understanding of what companies looking to scale are going to need along their growth path.



Focus on the Achievable and Sustainable

Strategy 2 aims to develop a sustainable tech sector by focusing attraction on smaller companies instead of what are often tempting, anchor companies. It also recommends focusing on short-term wins for labour supply, such as specialized training programs.



Tell the Island Tech Story

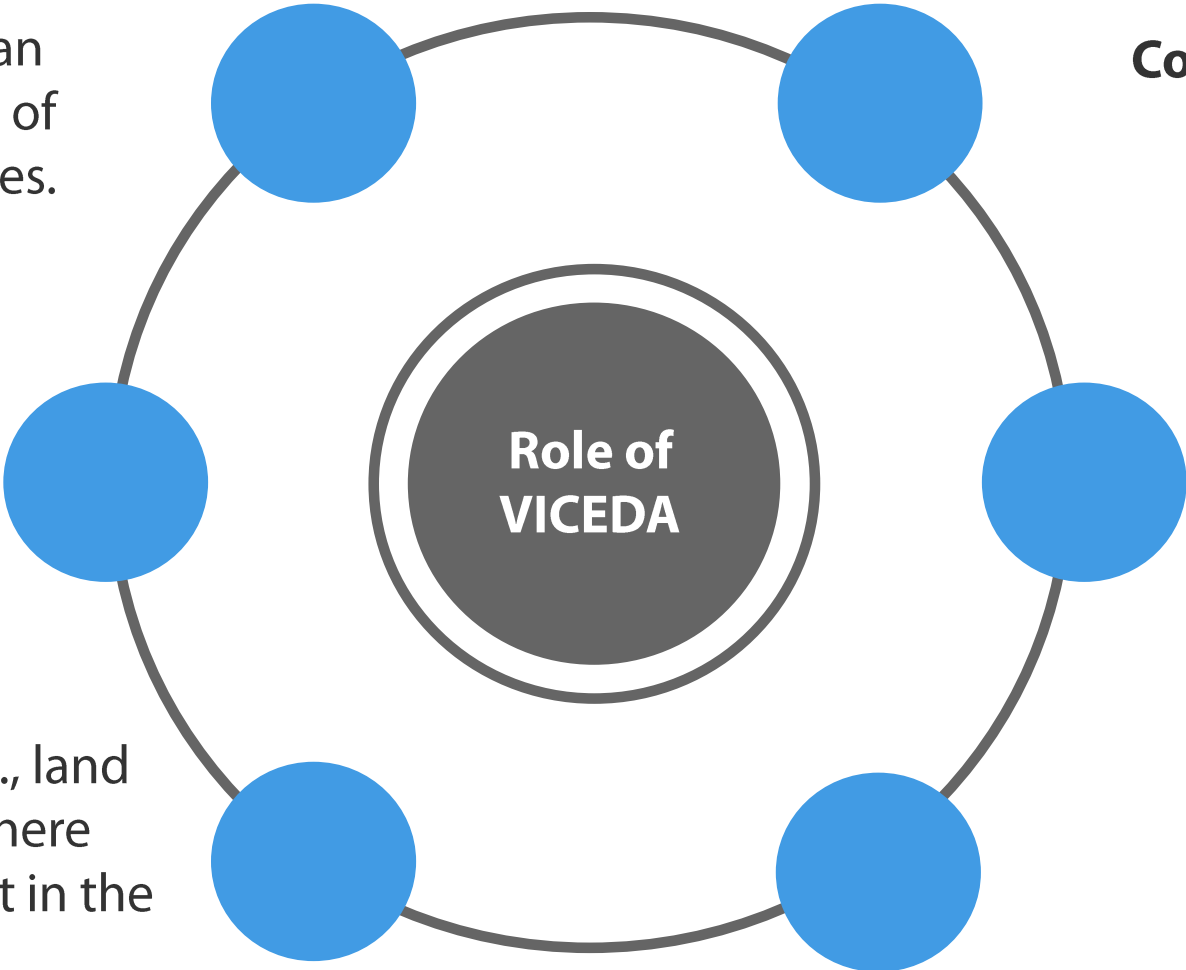
Strategy 4 tells the story of the island's tech sector both internally and externally. That is, sharing the value of tech locally to continue driving momentum in the sector. Sharing the island's opportunities both nationally and internationally is fundamental.

Action Plan | Role of VICEDA

Placemaking through urban planning and the provision of important municipal services.

Ensuring **connectivity** and broadband supply, including advocating for continued investment in fibre.

Optimizing **incentives** (e.g., land zoning, licensing, taxes), where possible, to lure investment in the region.



Coordinating and convening existing resources and stakeholders in the sector.

Marketing and promotion of opportunities in Vancouver Island's tech sector.

Creating and sharing **important resources**; helping to leverage existing assets.

Action Plan | Unique Value Proposition (UVP) and Target Markets

Vancouver Island provides an affordable, youth-friendly, and high-quality of life for tech companies and families to grow: *"It is the best climate for growing your ideas."*

Given this UVP, some potential markets to target for tech attraction are listed below:



Lack of outdoor lifestyle

Toronto
New York



Unaffordable living costs

Seattle
Silicon Valley



Abundance of start-ups

London
Tel Aviv

Action Plan | Potential Partners

Educational groups

Formal PSI's (e.g., VIU or NIC)
Lighthouse Labs
BrainStation

Groups with knowledge of start-up / growth activity

Front funder
Spring
Other incubators (e.g., Launch Academy)

Local tech companies / leaders

Cloudhead Games
Resonance Software (Worksight)
Coulson Group

Existing island assets

Innovation Island / VIEA
Tech 'meetups' or other networking groups (e.g., ComoxAI)
Mentorship groups (e.g., CR Modern Entrepreneur Series)

Next Steps



VICEDA could develop a user-friendly and informative web-presence as a key resource to bring together the sector and tell its story to the world.

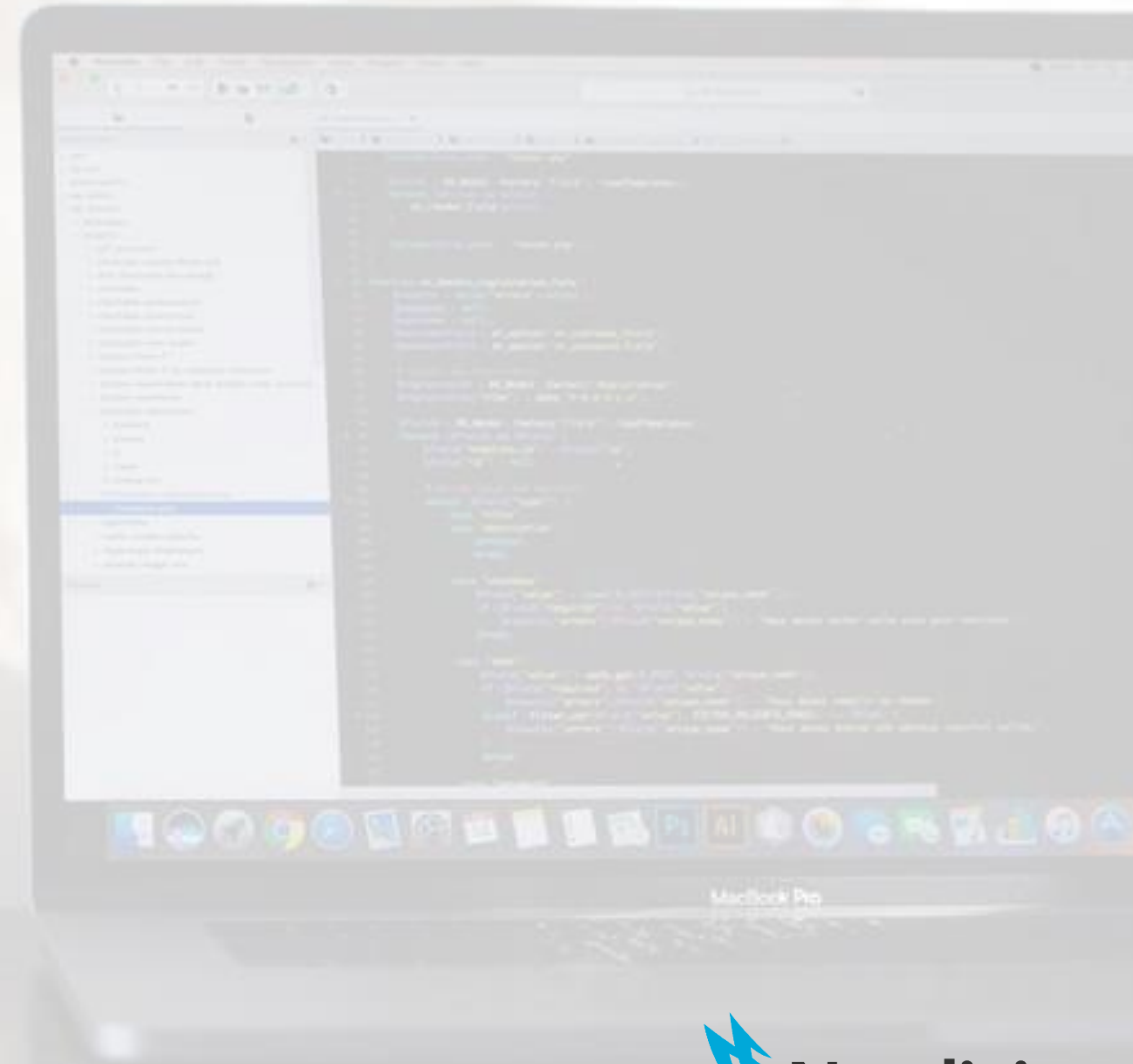


VICEDA could convene a Tech Task Force with industry stakeholder to help carry out strategic recommendations, despite limited resources.

In terms of **marketing** to tech companies, VICEDA's biggest **challenge** will be the lack of an adequate **talent pool** in the region, an important draw for tech companies. However, **opportunities** exist to utilize a new **online** presence to tell the island's **story**, target specific companies and help clear negative perceptions of the region. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to **leverage cost-effective labour** given the current weakened value of the CAD.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT
2. TECH SECTOR INVENTORY SUMMARY
3. SUMMARY OF REGIONAL STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES
4. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS
5. ACTION PLAN
6. APPENDIX 1 – FULL TECH SECTOR INVENTORY
7. APPENDIX 2 – LIST OF INDUSTRY EVENTS FOR POTENTIAL TECH ATTRACTION



Section 1

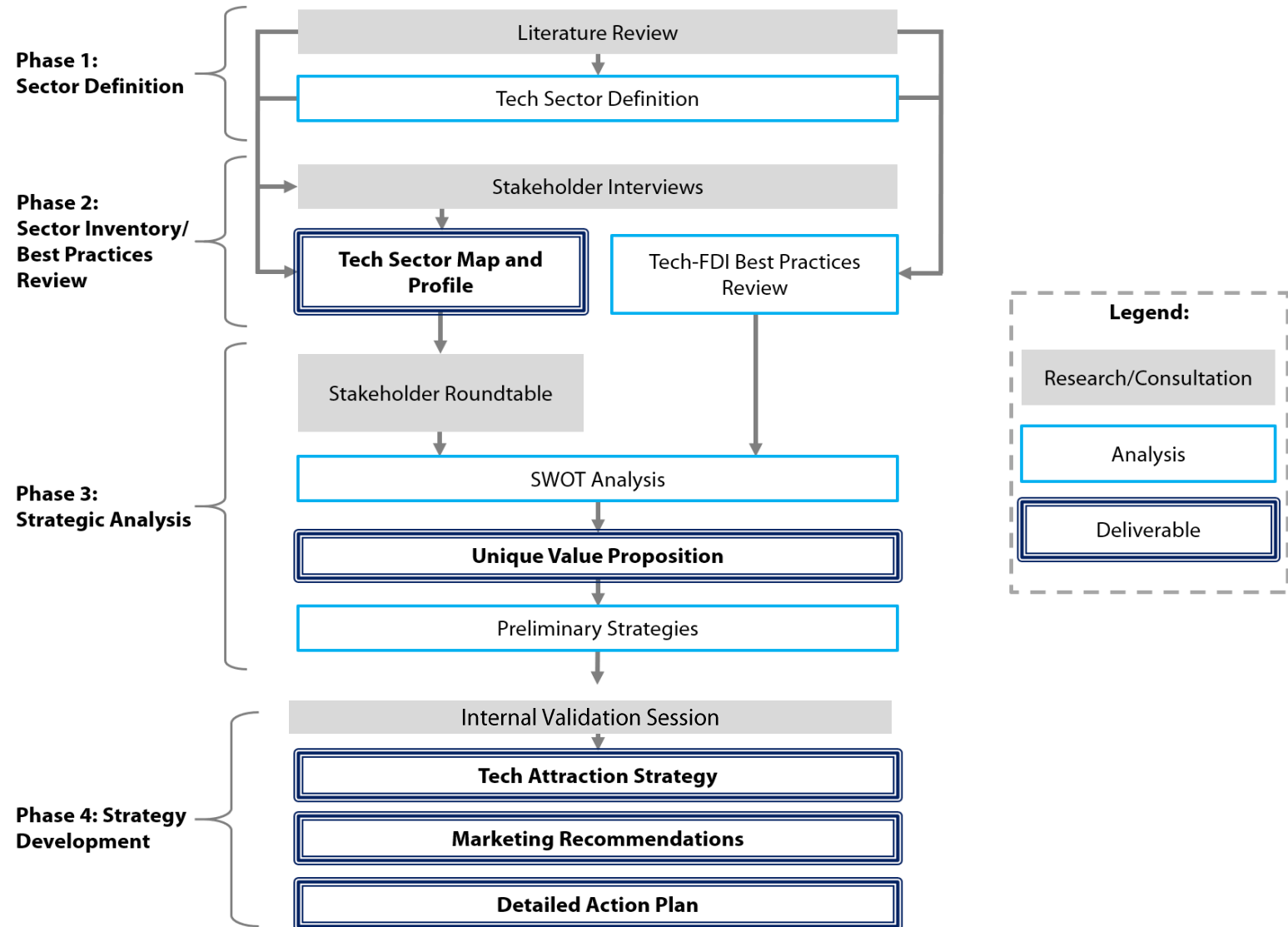
Introduction and Context



This section describes the purpose and approach to the project as well as the provincial and local context within which the report was developed.

Our Approach

In order to develop a future-facing, cost-effective and sustainable **Tech Attraction Strategy**, Nordicity developed a bespoke approach to the work. The data collection included extensive research of **best practices** and engagement with nearly **30 stakeholders** through workshops and interviews. It culminated in the development of a tech **sector inventory** and a detailed **Technology Attraction Strategy**.



The Provincial Context



According to the recently released [BC Technology Report Card](#), BC has made 'incredible strides' in recent years, developing products, undertaking world-leading research and showing consistent growth in revenues and GDP contributions. The **tech sector's exports 5 year CAGR is 8.1%**, a notable increase from two years ago. Furthermore, it is an important job creator with employment growing 49% since 2001, creating jobs that pay **83.7% more** than the provincial average.



As an important **gateway** to Asia and the Cascadia Region, the BC tech growth story is likely to continue. However, while companies are continuing to scale and grow, developing the talent required to continue to scale is likely to remain the most critical issue.

Local Context

The strategy contained herein provides strategic recommendations for the Vancouver Island Tech Sector within the seven participating communities, described below.

- The city of **Nanaimo** is the largest urban centre in the region and offers strong transportation links to the rest of the island, Vancouver, and the world through highways, ferries (two terminals) and a busy airport. One of the biggest draws for newcomers is Nanaimo's surrounding natural beauty, including 1,400 hectares of parks, trails and open spaces.
- The **Comox Valley Regional District** is one of the fastest growing regions in the Province. With a diversified economic base driven by key sectors and new investment, including a \$331m new regional hospital, two campuses in Campbell River and Comox Valley, and new foreign direct investment at Mount Washington Alpine Resort, the Comox Valley is poised to continue to be a strategic location for investors.
- The **Cowichan Valley Regional District** has four municipalities in the southern part of Vancouver Island. With a population of over 80,000 residents, the city of Duncan is the largest urban community in the CVRD, and hosts a Vancouver Island University (VIU) campus. From the rolling hills to seaside towns, the district has an impressive profile.

Local Context (cont'd)

- The city of **Port Alberni's** historic development was forestry, fishing and marine commercial industries. A deep water, sheltered, ice-free seaport now welcomes other commercial opportunities, as well as a global aerospace firm.
- The city of **Campbell River** is embracing innovation and technology in a changing economy. The City has invested in a progressive Municipal Broadband Network to support emerging opportunities in the high technology and creatives industries sectors. Campbell River offers a dynamic and forward thinking environment, with amenities of a large city and the welcoming feel of a small town.
- The town of **Qualicum Beach** is located on the north-eastern coast of Vancouver Island. With a picturesque town core, a complete range of family amenities, and an airport with regular flights to YVR, the town is currently home to numerous creative technology companies and entrepreneurs.
- The city of **Parksville** is located on the sheltered east coast of Vancouver Island and is a high-profile vacation destination. Parksville is an active community with residents often choosing to live there for the quality of life and natural environment.

Section 2

Tech Sector

Inventory Summary

This section summarizes the tech sector findings including the sector breakdown by company type and geography. Additionally, it describes the regional sector as it relates to key sector pillars: talent/labour; finance/support; and, other tech assets such as connectivity and coworking spaces.

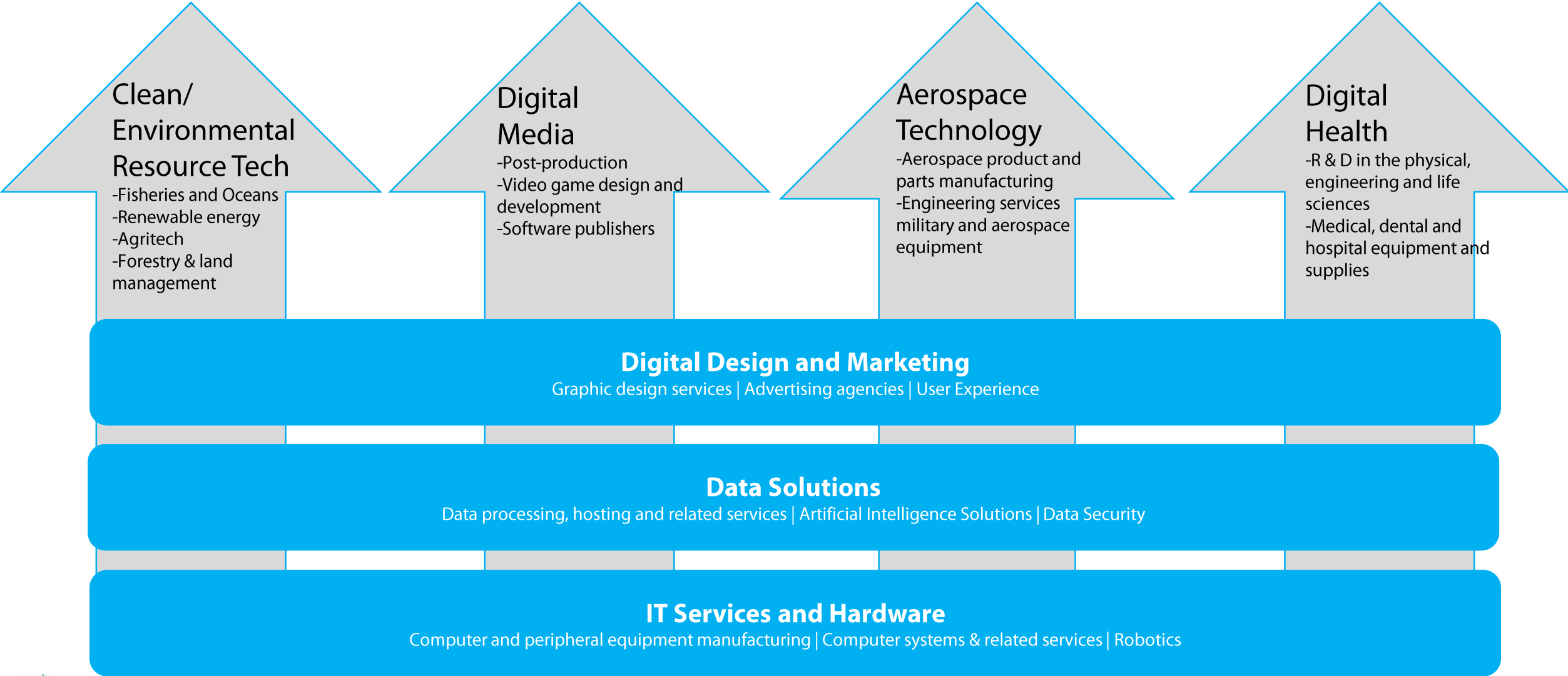


Inventory | Introduction and Approach

- Currently, there is no standardized definition for the tech sector. As such, Nordicity created a custom definition for the Vancouver Island tech sector, described below and in further detail in Appendix 1.
- First, utilizing a foundational list of NAICS (codes shown to the right) and Dun and Bradstreet Databases, Nordicity created a **custom definitional framework of the tech sector**, found on the subsequent page.
- In total, Nordicity estimates that there are more than **100 tech companies** operating on Vancouver Island (north of the Malahat).
 - This contrasts *BC High Technology Sector – 2017 Edition’s* data, which estimated the industry to be over 500 companies in same region.
- However, using that same definition as a proxy, the size of the industry on Vancouver Island **has increased by 5%** since 2014.

NAICS	Description
5415	Computer Systems Design and Related Services
5417	Scientific Research and Development Services
5112	Software Publishers
115	Support Activities for Agriculture and Forestry
5414	Specialized Design Services
51219	Postproduction Services and Other Motion Picture and Video Industries
334	Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing

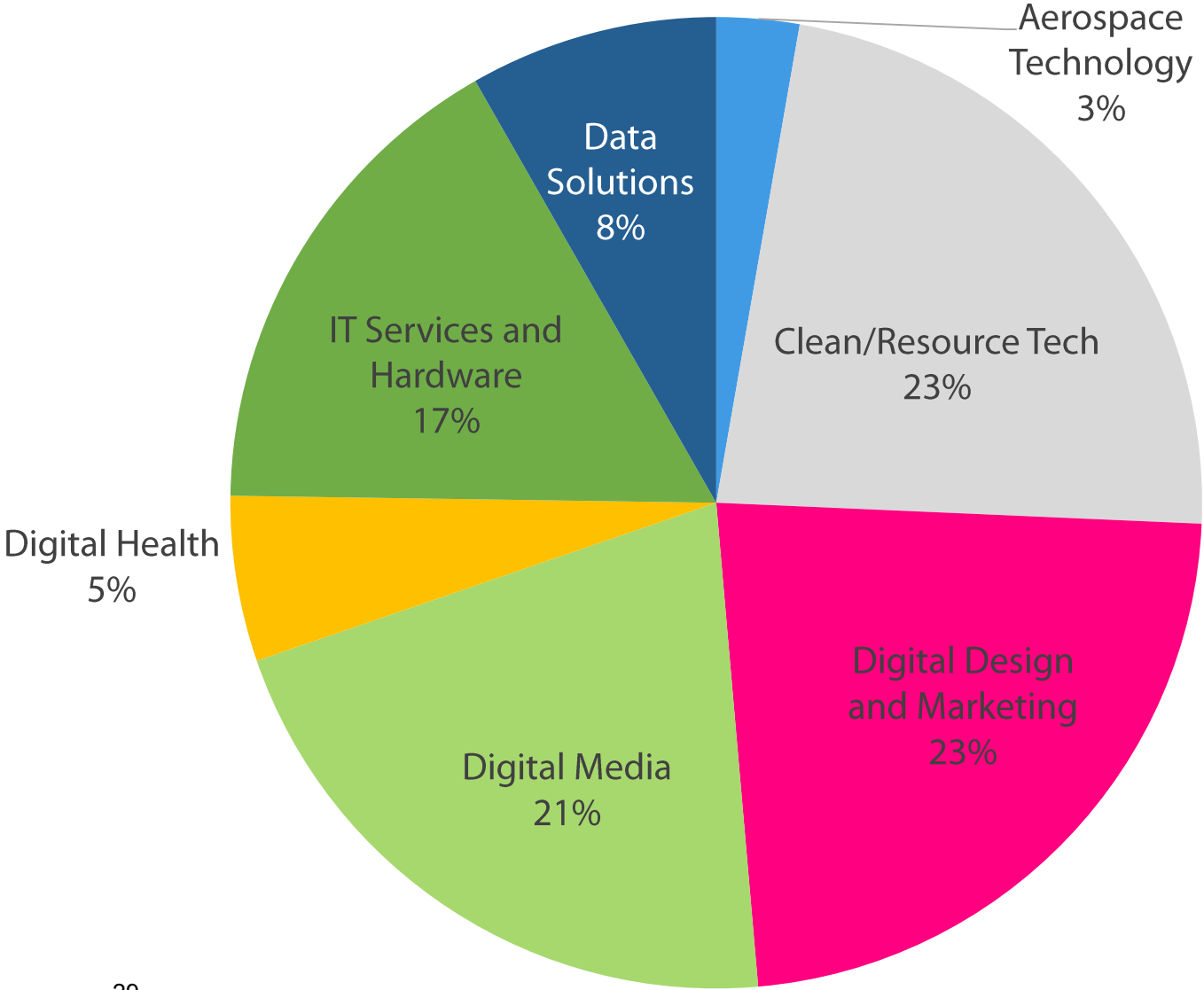
Inventory | Definitional Framework



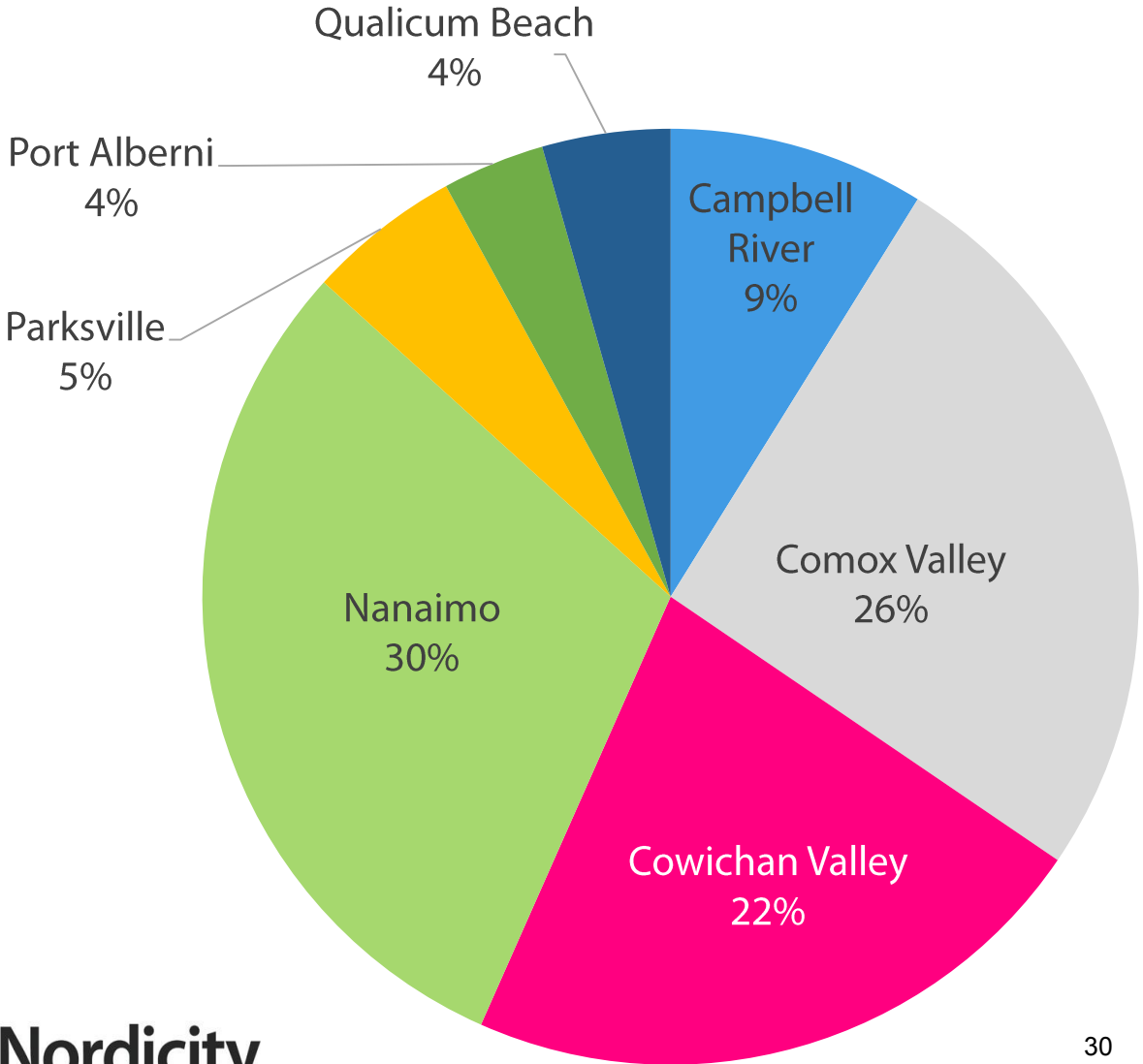
Inventory | Company Types



Using the custom definition, the breakdown of the sector depicts a diverse range of over 100 companies. While established in sectors such as **digital media** and **clean/resource tech**, there is clearly room to grow in key sectors such as **aerospace** and **digital health**. Note, lengthier descriptions of each sub-sector and examples of companies operating within them can be found in Appendix 1.



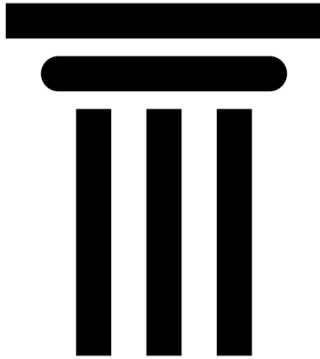
Inventory | Company Geography



As displayed, technology companies are located throughout the seven participating communities, with the significant majority (78%) located in **Nanaimo** and the **Comox Valley** and **Cowichan Valley** Regional Districts.

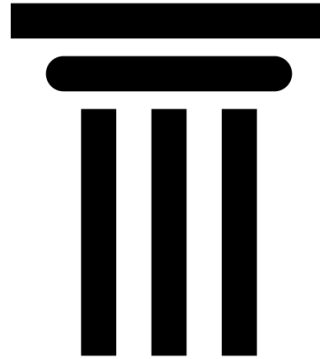
Inventory | Key Tech Pillars

Talent / Labour



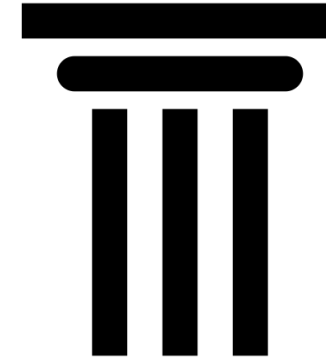
- Skilled labour supply
 - Formal education (PSIs)
 - Informal training
 - Immigration

Finance / Support



- Access to finance
 - National
 - Provincial
 - Local/private

Other Tech Assets



- Tech assets
 - Connectivity
 - Networks/support
 - Co-working spaces

The subsequent sub-sections will describe the three pillars of the tech sector in the context of Vancouver Island. Note, lengthier discussions of each can be found in Appendix 1.

Talent | A Key Challenge for The Island

Access to highly skilled, trained and credentialed talent is a key pillar for the development of a tech sector.

Adequate talent is in short supply on the island (and the wider province), due in large part to **inadequate educational offerings.**

This is perhaps the **most pressing weakness** of Vancouver Island's tech sector.

Talent | Education Offerings

Vancouver Island University (VIU) is home to the region's only computer science degree program. It also has programs in Applied Trades and Technology, though both were noted by stakeholders for being outdated. The university is perceived to be largely focused on the natural sciences.



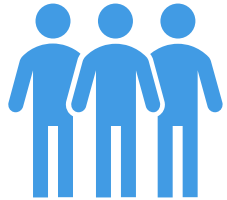
North Island University (NIU), with campuses in Campbell River and Courtenay, is currently consulting with industry for the launch of a new technology certificate program with 40 spaces. No details as to whether they are focused on providing developers or equipment maintenance staff.



Talent | Key Opportunities



While formal educational programs are crucial, **informal technology training** can often offer targeted training to fill specific technical gaps.



Companies and municipal leaders can work together to build capacity by supporting **innovative short-term** targeted training.



Collaborating with the **First Nations School Association** and communities can introduce training and programs that provide employment opportunities for youth, remotely or close to home.

Talent | Key Opportunities (cont'd)

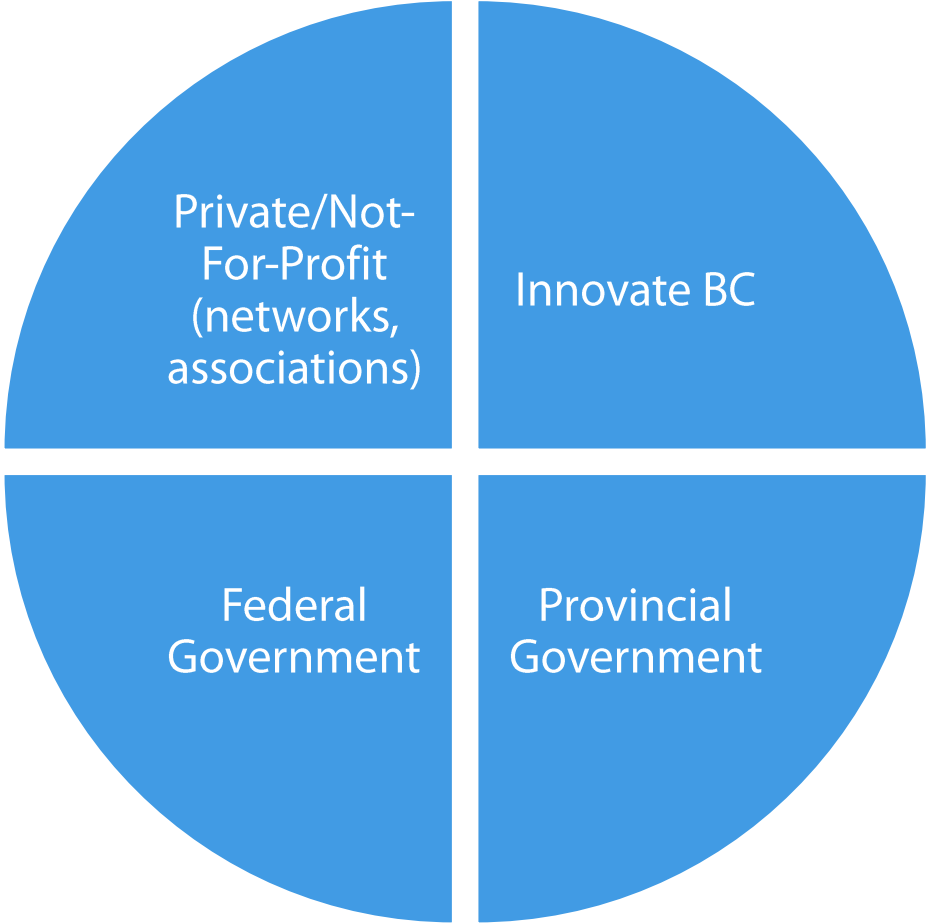
BC Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP) has two streams which may be useful in addressing the shortage of talent for the tech sector:

- **The Entrepreneur Immigration Stream** attracts immigrants willing to invest in BC through the expansion of an existing business or establishment of a new business.
- **The Skills Immigration Stream** is an economic immigration option intended for people with the skills, experience and qualifications needed by BC employers.



Financing and Support | Overview

- Financing and support available to local tech companies ranges from **broad programs** to very specific, **targeted programs**.



Financing and Support | Overview (cont'd)

■ Island-specific Tech Support:

- **Venture Acceleration Program (VAP)**, at Innovation Island, is a BC Acceleration Network initiative supported by Innovate BC.
- **Community Futures – Central Island** programs offer entrepreneur and small business loans. The support also includes training, planning and advisory services.

■ Support for Municipalities:

- **The Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET)** was created to support economic development initiatives on central and northern Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.
- **BC Rural Dividend** program has assisted rural communities in support of community resilience, as well as social, cultural and economic viability.

Financing and Support | Overview (cont'd)

▪ Support from Innovate BC (crown agency):

- **New Ventures Competition** is a 10-week business seminar and networking series within a competition.
- **Industry & Innovation Group** connects technology entrepreneurs, researchers and industry leaders in BC. The current focus is cleantech and the natural resource industry, including agri-foods, energy, forestry, mining and oceans.

▪ Opportunities at the provincial level:

- **WUTIF Capital (VCC) Inc.** is a novel angel fund that co-invests with angel investors in promising new technology ventures in BC.
- **BC Small Business and Venture Capital Program** incentivize investors to make equity capital investment in BC's small businesses with a 30% tax credit on their investment in a Venture Capital Corporation or an Eligible Business Corporation.

Financing and Support | Overview (cont'd)

There are numerous **federal programs** that offer incentives and financial incentives to digitally-focused businesses and research initiatives in Canada. A few key programs are listed below:

- **Canada Media Fund**, a public-private partnership that supports TV and digital media innovation.
- **Scientific Research and Experimental Development's (SR&ED) Tax Incentive Program** offers varying funding amount, typically between 30-45% of project costs.
- **National Science Engineering Research Council (NSERC)** funds research conducted at universities which attracts high caliber faculty, students and companies.
- The federal **Western Diversification Program (WDP)** is the main program through which WD makes strategic investments in initiatives that enhance and strengthen Western Canada's economy.

Financing and Support | Key Opportunity

Canada's Digital Technology Supercluster initiative, a consortium of private technology firms and organizations (from Boeing to start-ups), has recently received matching federal funds.

The initiative has four key themes:

Developing a
Diverse Digital
Workforce

Building a Robust
Digital Economy

Indigenous Skills
Training

Women in
Technology
Leadership

The first phase of projects will focus on three initial areas:

Precision Health | Digital Twins | Data Commons

Participants can also submit project proposals for broader capacity-building initiatives to support the ecosystem.

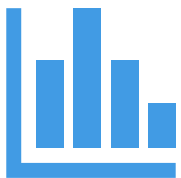
Other Tech Assets



Broadband connectivity in urban cores **comparable to most cities** around the country. However, limited **rural connectivity remains a barrier** for those working outside of urban cores.



Even with affordable commercial space (a key value proposition), **~4 co-working spaces** offer unique opportunities to network and foster organic interactions.



Innovation Island plays a vital role in early stage tech ecosystems, but many stakeholders noted a general gap in **mid-stage company support**.

Section 3

Summary of Regional Strengths & Challenges

This section summarizes the strengths and challenges facing the Vancouver Island tech sector. Themes were identified through the research undertaken for the sector inventory, as well as from engagement with nearly 30 local stakeholders.



Key Strengths of the Region

This word cloud summarizes the strengths of the island related to growing its tech sector, inputs from the **stakeholder engagement roundtable** on November 11th, 2018.

Lifestyle emerges as a key strength, while affordability, and family friendliness are also popular responses.



Strengths | Affordability

- **Commercial space** is affordable in the region, which is especially important for companies trying to take the next step in their growth.
- Young people can actually **afford housing** which is not the case in many other tech hubs.
- **Land** is available at very affordable rates, which is key for some tech sub-sectors (e.g., clean/resource or environmental tech).
- Average living expenses are **25% less in Nanaimo than in Vancouver** ([Numbeo](#)). The contrast is even more stark when compared to San Francisco or Seattle.

“I can actually afford a house here and still have disposable income. This would not be the case in Vancouver.”

Island Tech Entrepreneur

Strengths | Lifestyle

“There is so much to do here. I am always finding time to get out to bike and ski in the winter. Even if you are not into outdoor sports, there are great trails and indoor facilities.”

Island Tech Entrepreneur

- Vancouver Island offers fresh air, clean water and **natural beauty** that is world renowned.
- Outdoor **sports and leisure** activities are abundant – e.g., trails, beaches, diving, mountains.
- Small municipalities and less traffic mean there are **shorter commute times**.
- A strong feeling that there is a better work life balance on the island. The slower pace is commonly referred to by many as **“island time”**.

Strengths | Family Friendly

- Stakeholders all agreed that most communities on the island are **welcoming**; lots of other families moving into these communities to raise families.
- There are a variety of **family activities** on offer in all communities – e.g., rec centres, trails, skiing and biking.
- Respondents feel **safe** in the island's neighbourhoods, allowing them to comfortably raise their families.

“Appeal to parents about a better life for their kids! You could offer [potential tech talent] a tax credit or a discount when they buy a home on the island.”

Island Tech Entrepreneur

Regional Challenges

This data graphic summarizes the strengths of the island related to growing its tech sector, inputs from the **stakeholder engagement roundtable** on November 11th, 2018.

As displayed, talent was most commonly noted by stakeholders at the session. Many themes also relate directly to awareness or perception of the region.



Challenges | Talent

- There is an inadequate supply of **training** and education options available to people interested in learning tech skills.
- People looking to upskill, learn new coding languages or related technology sector skills **have to leave the region** to access specialized training.
- There is the perception of **limited interest from young people** in learning tech skills (most are learning trades). Those who are interested in technology often leave the region.

“Biggest barrier is the lack of a talent pool. Companies are having to develop their own talent. If they can’t, they have to look elsewhere, sometimes even out of the country.”

Island Tech Entrepreneur

Challenges | Awareness / Perception

“[There’s an impression that]...they can’t go to the opera, even if they never want to. They focus on what they can’t do instead of what they can do.”

Island Tech Entrepreneur

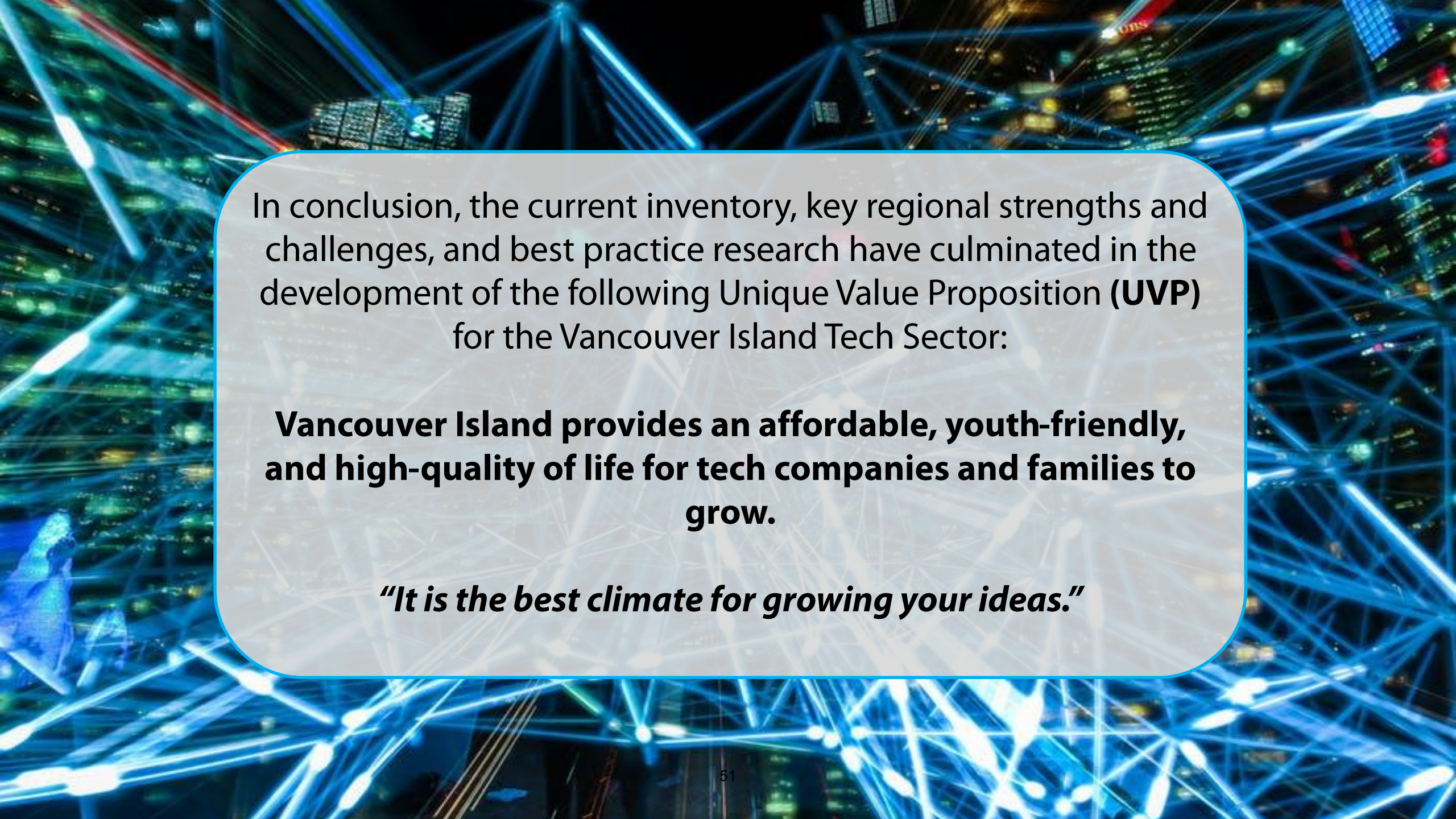
- There is a perception that there is **nothing happening** in the region. Many worry about what they would do if they are not outdoorsy, or if their partner would find work.
- Ideas about the **rural mentality** generate perceptions about the type of people that live in the region (i.e., not urbanites).
- The region is perceived to be in the **shadow** of larger tech centres in Victoria or Vancouver. Currently, people don’t naturally think of the region as a place to **grow** tech companies.
- There exists no significant ‘anchor’, or critical mass, to **draw attention** or spread the word; thus, the region’s **visibility is limited**.

Challenges | Location

- It can be **expensive** to move teams to and from the island; it can be a big move for many (e.g., need ferries, flights).
- People feel the region is too **remote or isolated** from the mainland or other tech hubs. Many of those working in the tech sector find they were operating in **isolation from each other**.
- No direct international flights from the island means **longer journey times** to important tech hubs (e.g., Silicon Valley).
- Transportation or **shipping logistics** cost many companies significant time and money.

“Logistics are tough. We try and store most of our equipment in Houston to ensure our customers get what they need when they need it. For a start-up or smaller company, the cost of doing business here could be detrimental.”

Island Tech Entrepreneur



In conclusion, the current inventory, key regional strengths and challenges, and best practice research have culminated in the development of the following Unique Value Proposition (**UVP**) for the Vancouver Island Tech Sector:

Vancouver Island provides an affordable, youth-friendly, and high-quality of life for tech companies and families to grow.

“It is the best climate for growing your ideas.”

Section 4

Strategic Recommendations

This section outlines four strategies:
Coordinate and Convene the Sector;
Focus on the Achievable and Sustainable;
Support Mid-stage Companies to Scale;
and, Tell the Island Tech Story.

For each strategy, we describe key
components, expected outcomes and
resources required.



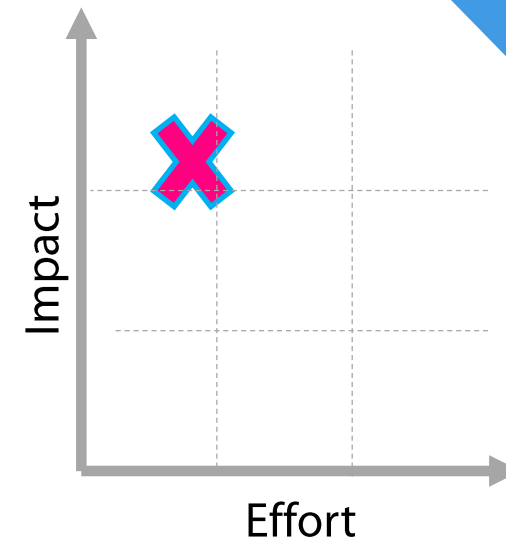
Strategy 1 | Coordinate and Convene the Sector

Key Elements

- **Convene labour** supply and demand, including developing opportunities to **intern** or '**learn**' with existing companies.
- Bring together those in need of **capital** with existing resources (e.g., funding options) or those that have capital (e.g., local retirees looking to invest).
- Coordinate **existing groups** (e.g., Modern Entrepreneur Series in Campbell River, OpenHack Cumberland and Comox AI).
- Help compile **key resources** that already exist (e.g., provincial, national funding, tech events) and make them accessible and understandable. This should eventually become a **formalized platform** (e.g., online tool/database) that could be easily shared and accessed by interested parties.

"I'd like to see the opportunity to connect with others who are also growing. That's what VICEDA can do to help us."

Island Tech Entrepreneur



Strategy 1 (cont'd)

Expected Outcomes

- **Maximized impact** of existing program, initiatives and existing companies.
- Efficient, clear and **easy navigable tool** to find support.
- Increased industry **collaboration**.

Resources Required

- Cooperation amongst **stakeholders** and support entities.
- Funding for the development of **materials** (e.g., online presence) and **programming** (e.g., mentorship, networking events).

Comparable Research: West K-Tech

Similar to Vancouver Island, the West Kootenay's have a talent shortage. However, by successfully coordinating existing companies with talent and interested learners, they have helped combat this challenge. West K Tech (West Kootenays) provides one-year employment program supporting West Kootenay employers with recruitment, on-boarding and training for technology-related positions.

[Source](#)



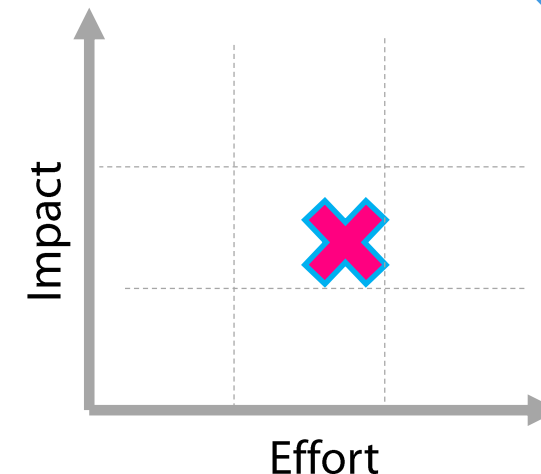
Strategy 2 | Focus on What's Achievable and Sustainable

Key Elements

- Develop and promote key **services for start-ups** (e.g., information about funding, networking and mentorship opportunities).
- Ensure that access to this important **information is accessible** and user friendly and, optimally, **online**.
- Focus less on attracting large 'anchor' companies but on **multiple smaller companies** or 'service outposts' that stay on the island and **grow in place**.
- Seek **short-term wins for labour** (e.g., training programs or informal coding opportunities before seeking opportunities with new larger formal programs).

“By focusing on the SME’s [instead of anchor companies] you get a better understanding of their value. It’s a better play.”

Island Tech Stakeholder



Strategy 2 (cont'd)

Expected Outcomes

- Growth of a **specialized ecosystem** (e.g., cleantech) instead of a dominating anchor firm.
- Eventually, national or global **recognition as leader** in niche industry(s).
- Slow but impactful and **sustainable** growth of the **labour pool**.

Resources Required

- **Support from key players** that support start-ups (e.g., Innovation Island).
- **Marketing materials** aimed at start-ups.

Comparable Research: Greenville, Carolina

Noted as the the 'New Startup South', Greenville, a post-industrial textile town, has focused on attracting young start-ups to the city. They have promoted affordability and a youth-friendly lifestyle. As a result of this strategy, Greenville is a growing tech hub – start-ups and young people share a 'pride of place' in the town.

[Source](#)

Bloomberg Businessweek

Greenville has hit on a successful formula for incubating businesses. Could other cities in the region be next?

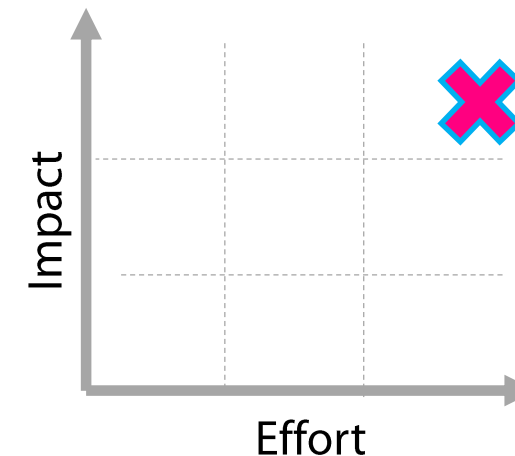
Strategy 3 | Support Mid-growth Companies to Scale

Key Elements

- **Dedicated support** for mid-growth companies that are looking to scale-up (e.g., specialized business and market support).
- An **expert understanding** of the future needs of start-ups and entrepreneurs (e.g., ensuring expert assistance for accessing capital, labour and markets is available when needed).
- Tailored **regulations** (where feasible) that are **conducive to growth** in the sector (e.g., subsidies, permits, licensing).

“Innovation Island no longer has the funding to support the mid-stage companies to scale. This causes a stall in the ecosystem.”

Island Tech Stakeholder



Strategy 3 (cont'd)

Expected Outcomes

- Companies that start here are **more inclined to stay here.**
- Increased attraction to the island for the 30+ crowd who seek to **grow their business and family.**
- Growth and success starts to become more abundant and widely shared.

Resources Required

- **Expertise** and **financial** resources specifically focused on mid-growth support.
- Eventually, a **physical space** (e.g., coworking space, dedicated business support space) where companies in similar stages can meet with advisors and mentors.

Comparable Research: Stratford/Perth Centre for Business

In a city of only 31,00 residents, the Centre for Business is leading the way in helping small business owners grow and scale in place. They have one dedicated events staff and an expert business advisor to offer inhouse, complimentary business services that are tailored to the needs of each business.

[Source](#)

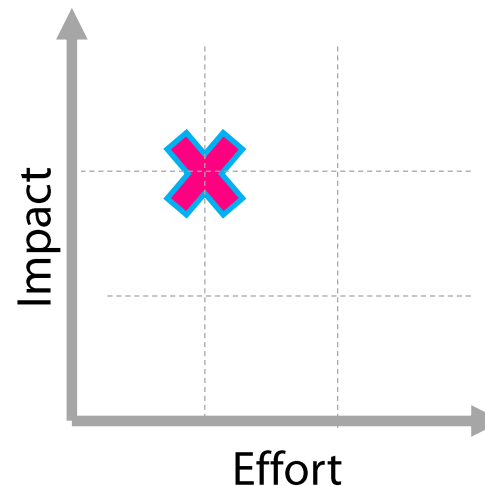
Strategy 4 | Tell the Island Tech Story

Key Elements

- Tell the **story of tech** to Vancouver Island (**inward**) – help the local community understand what is here and why it is valuable (e.g., create and promote events that celebrate local success such as an award show or local leaders night).
- Tell the story of Vancouver Island (**outward**) to **the tech community** – help outsiders understand that Vancouver Island is a great option to live/invest (e.g., VICEDA marketing through **online presence**, supporting tech companies to attend off island events like BC Tech Summit).

“No one seems to know what is happening of the island. We need to share it widely”

Island Tech Stakeholder



Strategy 4 (cont'd)

Expected Outcomes

- Greater interest from **international investors** or talented workers wanting to join the region's sector.
- Improved industry **self-confidence** and increased capacity to **compete off the island**.
- More interest from young people in joining the industry.

Resources Required

- A strong, user-friendly **online presence** that tells the story of the region as a whole.
- Sector/**marketing expertise** at VICEDA or the resources to contract such services.
- Investment in **targeted marketing** initiatives either online (e.g., website, social media) or in-person (e.g., attending trade shows).

Comparable Research: Cochrane, Alberta

The Economic Development Agency in this small rural town has led the way in telling the story of innovators that call Cochrane home. Their 'You Can Make it Here' campaign helped the city become the top entrepreneurial city in 2014. Recently, Garmin named Cochrane as their headquarter, giving the town a large anchor tech company.

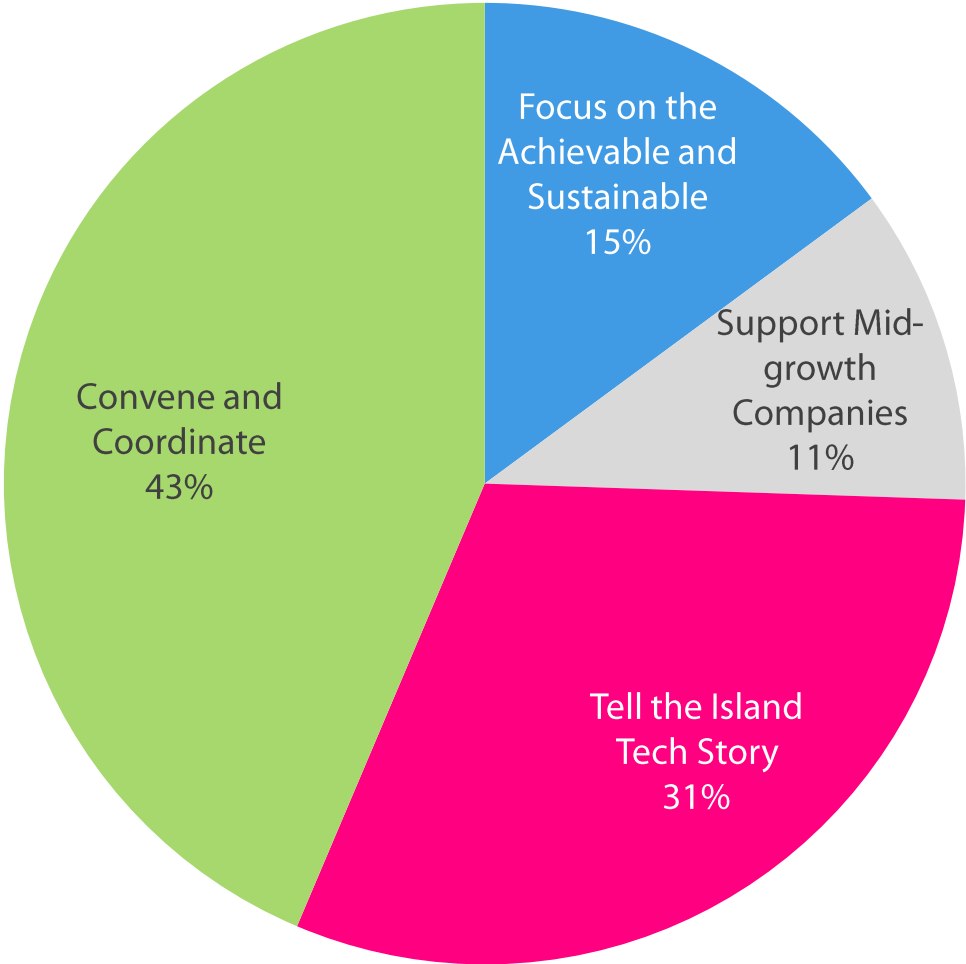
[Source](#)



Strategic Prioritization Summary

This chart illustrates the results of a **prioritization exercise** undertaken with VICEDA staff at the internal **validation session**, November 21st, 2018.

Prioritization of the strategies is not necessary (e.g., all or parts of all can be **done simultaneously**). However, in given the **limited resources**, it remains important to focus on what is **realistic** and **most critical**.



Section 5

Action Plan



This section describes specific actions for implementing the strategies described herein. The roles VICEDA could play are identified, along with potential partners and target markets. The section also provides specific recommendations on marketing techniques based on best practices, as well as a series of recommended next steps.



Action Plan | The Role of VICEDA

Some of the key roles for municipal economic development agencies in attracting tech investment are:

- **Placemaking**, through urban planning, an attractive provision of municipal services.
- Ensuring **connectivity** and broadband remain key assets, including advocating at all levels of government for continued fibre investment.
- Optimizing land **zoning** and **licensing** that can incentivize investments in communities throughout the region.
- **Coordinating** and convening existing actors in the sector.
- **Marketing, communication** and **promotion** of economic opportunities in the sector.

As illustrated in the graphic below, VICEDA representatives largely agreed with these roles, while stating that **coordination** and **aggregating support** and **communication** were the most critical ones.



Comparable Research | Economic Development in Tech Attraction

Calgary Economic Development (CED) has focused on developing the city's technology sector, despite Calgary's historical reputation for being a 'boring, conservative, resource' city. As shown below, similar to the UVP of Vancouver Island, CED has used enviable reputation (**outdoor lifestyle**), affordable **housing** and **competitive tax** rates as key pitches to those interested in Calgary. While they also pitch 'high quality talent', this is mostly in reference to a STEM educated workforce and not so much in terms of tech sector-ready talent. In fact, CED has recently launched numerous [campaigns](#) attempting to attract tech sector-ready to Calgary.



Technology

Calgary comes calling for Vancouver tech talent

City's efforts to diversify its economy creating more competition for B.C. workers

By Tyler Orton | October 26, 2018, 12:50pm

The Benefits of Coordination

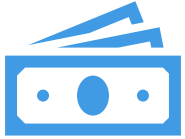
- Growing theme of **co-optition** – that is, when competitors work with each other on a project-to-project, joint venture, or co-marketing basis.
- Shared **branding** can make marketing and attracting much more efficient and appealing.
- Showcasing a UVP as a **region** instead of just one small town makes it more appealing.
- Spillover benefits from tech companies or talent will **create impact** in all surrounding towns in the region.

Comparable Research: Kootenay Association for Science and Technology

The KAST partnership serves a geographic area roughly equivalent to five Vancouver Island's (156,000km), with approximately 200,000 rural inhabitants with no communities larger than 20,000. Despite this, KAST has been largely successful in its mission to 'build a recognized, vibrant a prosperous technology community in the region by connecting and solving problems for entrepreneurs.'



Target Markets



Companies or talent in cities that lack easy access to **nature and the outdoor lifestyle** are more likely to be interested in the island's outdoor 'pitch'.

- For example, eastern seaboard cities such as **New York** and **Boston** don't have the easy access to the outdoors, meaning this could be a draw for those interested in a lifestyle change.



Many tech hubs are becoming increasingly **unaffordable**, meaning companies or talent in those markets may be looking for inexpensive markets.

- For example, **Seattle** or **Silicon Valley**, both on the west coast, are two of the most expensive places to live in North America.



Areas with an abundance of **start-ups** may be reaching a point of saturation, or have young companies looking to grow in places with less competition.

- According to [Startup Genome](#), both **London** and **Tel Aviv** are among the top startup ecosystems in the world.

Marketing to Tech Companies

- **Develop a user-friendly online presence**
 - This presence should not only tell the story of Vancouver Island's tech sector (Strategy 4), but also include easily accessible records of existing companies, key resources, etc. (Strategy 1)
- **Leverage 'effective labour cost' advantage**
 - Labour is the primary cost for most tech companies. Canadian labor is cheaper (at least compared to the US) given the lower CAD and the overall cost to retain an employee (including healthcare costs and employer liabilities).
- **Target based on the age of tech company**
 - Generally, the older a tech company is, the more likely they will respond to family-orientated lifestyle factors.
- **Aim directly at clearing perceptions of the region**
 - Targeting negative perceptions of the region (e.g., isolated, rural etc.) can be effective in immediately opening up the mindset of potentially interested investors.

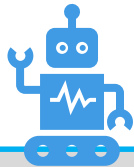
VICEDA's Challenge

A pillar to success in the growth of a technology sector is human capital (talent), currently not a strength of Vancouver Island. Finding ways to overcome this challenge and address it head-on is going to be key for VICEDA's marketing actions.

Potential Partners



Education groups will be important partners for improving the tech talent gap on Vancouver Island. Examples could include formal PSI's, especially in the longer term, while near future partners could include informal educators such as Lighthouse Labs or Brain Station.



Local tech companies and existing Vancouver Island tech leaders will be key partners in telling the story of the region's tech sector (Strategy 4). Resonance Software (Worksight), BRON, Coulson Group and Cloudhead Games are all well known leaders on, and off, Vancouver Island.



Groups with knowledge of start-up/growth activity can potentially help VICEDA identify companies that are young and maybe looking to expand (Strategy 3). Organizations such as Front Funder and Spring have a strong understandings of the different companies and trends in this space.



Existing island assets that can help in the coordination and convening of the sector (Strategy 1). Innovation Island, VIEA and tech meetups hosted by other groups such as Campbell River's Modern Entrepreneur Series, Comox AI or OpenHack Cumberland are all examples.

Next Steps



VICEDA should develop a user-friendly and informative web-presence.

This will drastically increase the ability for VICEDA to carry out all strategies, but especially the **top two prioritized strategies** (Convene and Coordinate and Tell the Island Tech Story). A web-presence will also give the region's tech sector a **central place to connect and seek information about available resources**.

Furthermore, it will help VICEDA reach important potential partners and **international markets**.



VICEDA should convene a Tech Task Force.

As part of the engagement process, the Project Team asked if stakeholders would participate on a task force. The responses were overwhelming positive, with nearly all **saying yes they would be participate**. Such a task force could become an important resource to help VICEDA carry out strategic recommendations with limited resources.

Appendix 1

Full Tech Sector Inventory

This appendix describes the full inventory of the Vancouver Island tech sector.



Appendix 2

Industry Events for Tech Attraction

This appendix provides a sample of potential industry events from around the world that could be attended by VICEDA to seek investment into the Vancouver Island tech sector.



Event	Place	Date	Main Focus	Target Attendees
Adobe Summit	Las Vegas, NV	March 26-28, 2019	Digital Marketing and content creation	Advertisers, analysts, publishers, content managers
Aviation Technology Forum	Shanghai, China	June 4-5, 2019	Aerospace and aviation technology	Professionals
AWE USA	Santa Clara, CA	May 29-May 31 st , 2019	VR, AR, MR	Professionals
Banff World Media Festival	Banff, AB	June 9-12, 2019	Digital Media, Media and Entertainment	Professionals
BCTECH Summit	Vancouver, BC	March 11-13, 2019	Comprehensive technology and entrepreneurship conference	Professionals and students
CES	Las Vegas, NV	January 8-11, 2019	Consumer technologies with a focus on VR, AR and MR in 2018	Professionals
Cleantech Forum	San Francisco	January 28-30, 2019	Clean and environmental tech	Professionals
DigiMarCon Canada	Toronto, ON	May 16-17, 2019	Digital Marketing and Social Media: emerging strategies and best practices	Professionals and students
DX3	Toronto, ON	March 6-7, 2019	Digital Marketing and Retail	Professionals
E3	Los Angeles, CA	June 11-13, 2019	Data solutions, video and mobile games	Professionals and public
FMX	Stuttgart, GER	April 30-May 3, 2019	Digital Visual Arts, VFX, Animation, Games and Transmedia	Professionals and public
GDC	San Francisco, CA	March 18-22, 2019	Interactive games and VR	Professionals
Internet World Expo	Munich, GER	March 12-13, 2019	e-Commerce and Digital Marketing	Professionals
iTech	7 shows in Canada	May-Nov 2019	Infrastructure, Cloud, Security, Data Centre and Mobility	Professionals
Mobile World Congress	Barcelona, SP	February 25-February 28, 2019	Mobile sector	Professionals
SIGGRAPH	Los Angeles	July 28 – August 1	Emerging Technologies	Professionals and students
Smart Materials and Sustainable Technologies	Toronto	April 8-9, 2019	Clean and resource tech,	Professionals and researchers
Startup Weeks	Edmonton is large one also in Vancouver BC	October, 2018	Entrepreneurship, startup community and innovation	Entrepreneurs



Northern Community Economic Development

Forms:

Application Form

Summary Report

EXPLAIN HOW YOUR PROJECT SUPPORTS THE PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITY AREAS OF THE PROGRAM:

LIST ANY MEASURABLE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OR OTHER OUTCOMES THAT WILL RESULT FROM THIS PROJECT:

PLEASE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL:

- An Organizational Chart illustrating the structure of your organization, including Directors and volunteers.
- A copy of a bank statement showing your organization's name and address.
- A copy of your organization's financial statements for the current year and one year prior.
- A copy of your organization's budget for the current year and one year prior.
- Any supporting materials you consider necessary to communicate your project idea.

SIGNATURE	DATE:
By signing here, you confirm that you have read the Program Guide and that you are signing on behalf of an eligible applicant.	

SUBMIT HARD COPIES TO: **NORTHERN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**
REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO
6300 HAMMOND BAY ROAD
V9T 6N2

SUBMIT DIGITAL COPIES TO: nced@rdn.bc.ca

OFFICE USE ONLY:	
DATE RECEIVED:	RECEIVED BY:
COMMENTS:	
FUNDING AWARDED: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	AMOUNT AWARDED:

Please Note: The Regional District of Nanaimo is subject to the provisions of *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and cannot guarantee that information provided can or will be held in confidence.

PROJECT TITLE: Digital Heritage Exhibition		
NAME OF ORGANIZATION: Parksville & District Historical Society		
CONTACT PERSON: Brian Taylor	TELEPHONE NUMBER: 250 248-6966 FAX NUMBER:	E-MAIL ADDRESS: manager@parksvillemuseum
TOTAL NCD PROGRAM FUNDING: \$ 5,000.00	TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET: \$ 6,100.43	
PROJECT START DATE (YYYY/MM/DD): 2016-12-06	PROJECT END DATE (YYYY/MM/DD): 2017-10-07	
PERCENT COMPLETE: 100%		
IF NOT COMPLETE, WHAT ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT REMAIN? PROVIDE ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE:		

PROJECT AREA (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARKSVILLE <input type="checkbox"/> QUALICUM BEACH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EA 'E' <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EA 'F' <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EA 'G' <input type="checkbox"/> EA 'H'
PLEASE PROVIDE A SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT RESULTS: <p>The computer hardware, server and WiFi are set up and operational. Each major exhibit/building has an interpretive sign with a brief summary of information and a QR code. The visitor can scan the QR code with their smart phone or tablet and would then be directed to the associated web page. This web page has additional information and photos. As time progresses more photos and information from the archives can be included on each web page for each exhibit.</p> <p>(Attach any documents or other materials produced as a result of this project).</p>
DESCRIBE THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OR OTHER OUTCOMES THAT HAVE RESULTED FROM THIS PROJECT: <p>Two local companies were contracted for the hardware and cabling installation which helps support local businesses. With the addition of interpretative panels the museum becomes more of a year round attraction. Visitors during closed hours or during the off season can now get a glimpse of what the museum offers during regular hours. It should be noted that the signs are accessible at all hours since the grounds are always open. This will entice them to come back during the regular season.</p> <p>The museum also has during both the open season and the off season pop up markets, events and rental of the heritage church for weddings and memorial services. These groups can now see some of the history through the panels and return later if the buildings were not open for their event.</p> <p>(Please attach any supporting information that quantifies the economic benefits of the project.)</p>
PLEASE DESCRIBE HOW THE PROJECT HAS MET THE PROGRAM PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITY AREAS: <p>The majority of the funds were spend on building the foundation of the system (hardware) so that the vast amount of digital data that the museum possesses can now be shared with the public. The web pages for each exhibit will now be an ongoing process, when data is cataloged from the archives it can be added to the exhibits web page.</p> <p>The above increases the marketability of the museum to visitors. During the summer (other than market day) the vast majority of the visitors are from off-island and quite a few from Europe. These visitors are looking for information and the close up experience with artifacts. The web page is just the appetizer to bring them in.</p>

OFFICE USE ONLY:		
DATE RECEIVED:	RECEIVED BY:	POSTED ONLINE: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

Please Note: Completed Summary Reports will be posted publicly on the Regional District of Nanaimo website.

Delegation: Kim Burden, Parksville & District Chamber of Commerce, re Presentation of Labour Market Needs Assessment for Parksville-Qualicum Beach Region

Summary: The full report is available at:

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn%3Aaid%3Ausc%3AUS%3A2e918b58-0195-4ff5-ad25-005feb8bf44>

Action Requested: Present a summary of the recently completed Oceanside Labour Market Needs assessment. Request is to receive the report as information.

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Paul Thompson
Manager of Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: Regional Economic Development

MEETING: June 12, 2018

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That a meeting be organized with the organizations listed in Attachment 2 to consider the creation of a region-wide economic development service.
2. That to assist with the meeting, a background report that incorporates input from the other organizations be prepared addressing the current state of economic development in the Regional District of Nanaimo.

SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of: the basic economic development service models; the general services offered by economic development organizations; the economic development initiatives currently underway in the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN); the economic development models currently in use by local governments on Vancouver Island; and a proposal to further the discussion on a regional economic development service.

While there are many initiatives and programs underway in the region there is no coordination of economic development at the regional level. With the wide range of disparate initiatives currently underway, in order to have effective economic development, activities should be delivered in a coordinated manner. In order to determine how best to proceed, a discussion is needed on the benefits of a region-wide economic development service. The recommendation is to proceed with the next step, which is to hold a workshop that includes all of the organizations involved in economic development in the region. Through this discussion, direction on approaches to economic development can be considered for the RDN on a go forward basis.

BACKGROUND

The Board directed that a report on establishing a regional economic development function be prepared in response to local economic trends, initiatives by private sector and business groups, changes to existing RDN economic development services, the collapse of the Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation and the desire to examine how to best promote sustainable growth and resiliency in our region. Establishing a regional economic development function requires a number of considerations. The first consideration is how the RDN could be more involved in economic development, or more specifically, what role should the RDN play in economic development considering there are number of

other organizations, including the member municipalities already active in providing this service. The role of the RDN will affect the type of service model, governance structure and funding to be provided. Recognizing that the RDN is already involved in the delivery of economic development services in the region, what part should the RDN play? Should the RDN services evolve into a coordinating role? Should the RDN directly coordinate and deliver a regional service? Is there a hybrid role for the RDN?

To provide background on the establishment of a regional economic development service, this report covers the standard economic development models; possible economic development services; economic development initiatives currently underway in the RDN; economic development services offered by other regional districts and municipalities on Vancouver Island; and, a proposed process to determine if there is a need and/or role for the RDN in region-wide economic development.

Local Government and Economic Development

Economic development is typically understood to encompass a number of goals and activities in furtherance of a higher standard of living for a community, a concept which itself is defined in any number of different ways. Economic development is thus about communities continually enhancing their competitiveness, increasing sustainable growth, improving their investment climate, retaining jobs, improving incomes, and ensuring that growth is inclusive of the community in which it occurs. It encompasses a range of disciplines including physical planning and economics and marketing. It also incorporates many local government and private sector functions including business development, infrastructure provision, real estate development and finance.

Economic development is often considered to be an important service for a community, because a local economy that is active and healthy will help create more public funds and generate higher and more cost-effective public revenues, allowing local government to provide better services to the community. In this region, economic development has been traditionally identified as a path to grow the local and regional economy, support job growth and address key sectors like resource management, tourism, tech sector and knowledge based industries. In recognizing the need to support growth, investment and employment, many local governments provide an economic development service. This often combines both economic development and tourism marketing. Providing economic development is consistent with both the RDN Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS).

Economic Development Models

There are four general models that are used for economic development. For all of these models, both economic development and tourism promotion can be included, or just economic development. Each model has its advantages and disadvantages. The first model is as a department or agency of the local government. In this model, the local government provides the majority of funding for the service. This is the model used by the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CowVRD), the City of Campbell River and City of Port Alberni. The CowVRD provides both economic development and tourism promotion while the Cities of Port Alberni and Campbell River focus on economic development.

A second model is as a semi-independent economic development commission mandated by the local government. The majority of funding usually is provided by the local government. The society or local government owned corporation are two forms of this “arms-length” delivery model. This was the model used by the City of Nanaimo with the Nanaimo Economic Development Commission (NEDC) and is

currently being used in the Comox Valley Regional District with the Comox Valley Economic Development Society.

A third model is for a Chamber of Commerce or other local organization to assume responsibility for economic development. This may or may not be with funding from the local government. An example is the Nelson and Area Economic Development Partnership in the West Kootenay. To a certain extent this is the model currently in use in District 69, where Oceanside Initiatives, which is led by the Parksville Chamber of Commerce, has taken the lead on economic development.

A fourth model is for a private agency or corporation to be contracted on a fee-for-service basis. This model is currently being used on Gabriola Island where the Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce is providing economic development services for the RDN on a contract basis.

In some cases, providing grants is part of an economic development service. The economic development service will provide funding to projects that further the goals of the service. While it is not part of a broader economic development service, the Northern Community Economic Development (NCED) program is an example of an economic development activity which has been established as a grant program. Another example of a grant program is the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET).

Economic Development Services

An economic development service, regardless of the delivery model, can provide a wide variety of services depending on the goals and objectives of the service. Some of the more common activities are: business investment and attraction; business retention and expansion; economic profile and market research statistics; small business support; education and training; and specific programs for certain industries such as agriculture or technology.

In British Columbia, the most common services provided by local and regional economic development organizations are business retention and expansion, promotion of tourism and cultural activities, and attracting external industry, businesses and resources. These are findings of a province wide survey conducted by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) in 2009 and 2016¹.

The services provided will depend on what is needed for the region and what is already being provided by other economic development organizations. The activities of the organization and the services provided are usually guided by a strategic plan. Also important for determining the effectiveness of the activities are a monitoring program and an evaluation.

Economic Development Initiatives in the RDN

A significant number of economic development initiatives are currently underway in the RDN, with some being led by local government and others by the private sector. There is no one body that provides coordination, and each initiative is generally being undertaken independently of the others. In some cases, different agencies/organizations do participate in other initiatives.

¹ Local Economic Development in BC 2016 Survey. UBCM

Local Government Led Initiatives

Regional District of Nanaimo

The RDN has two economic development services, the Southern Communities Economic Development (SCED) service and the Northern Communities Economic Development (NCED) service. These services include all of the electoral areas and municipalities except for the City of Nanaimo and the District of Lantzville.

Southern Communities Economic Development (SCED)

The SCED service is an economic development service of the RDN comprised of Electoral Areas A, B and C and was initially set up to contribute funding to the NEDC. With the closing of the NEDC, delivery of the service had to be reconsidered. The service is currently providing funding to the Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce to undertake economic development and tourism promotion on Gabriola Island under contract and will run until March 31, 2020. A review of the service to the other two electoral areas is scheduled to take place in 2018. The service is entirely funded through a tax requisition and has a maximum requisition of \$191,000.

Northern Communities Economic Development (NCED)

The NCED service includes the City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach and Electoral Areas E, F, G and H. The service operates as a grant program and provides funding to projects that will provide economic benefits to the service area. The NCED has provided \$257,000 to 35 projects since its inception in 2012. The quantitative value of the benefits from all of the funded projects is not known. A recent review of the service by the members confirmed that the service will continue to operate as a grant program and will not be offering other types of economic development services. The annual requisition for the service is \$50,000.

City of Nanaimo

In 2017 the City of Nanaimo moved from an arms-length corporation to a government department model to deliver economic development services. The Nanaimo Economic Development (NED) office is a municipal function within the City of Nanaimo and has one full time employee. The services offered by NED include business investment and attraction; business retention and expansion; economic profile and market research statistics; and small business support. The economic development activities are focussed on the City of Nanaimo. The budget for economic development is \$946,722 for 2018 with a portion of that being transferred to Tourism Nanaimo.

Tourism Nanaimo

Tourism destination marketing for the Nanaimo region has been contracted to Tourism Vancouver Island. Destination marketing includes the promotion of attractions, activities and accommodations in Nanaimo and the surrounding region from Lantzville to Ladysmith and Gabriola Island. Currently, the City of Nanaimo is contributing the majority of funds for this service. The Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce has also recently agreed to contribute funds to Tourism Nanaimo to include Gabriola Island in tourism marketing.

District of Lantzville

The District of Lantzville has two economic development initiatives underway. The first is an economic action strategy and the second is a branding exercise. With funding assistance from ICET the economic action strategy will identify economic goals for the community and the associated short, medium and long term actions to achieve the goals. The branding exercise is being undertaken to identify what makes Lantzville unique and then use that for the purpose of marketing the District as a place to do business.

City of Parksville

The City of Parksville does not have a formal economic development service. The City participates in the NCED and Oceanside Initiatives.

Town of Qualicum Beach

The Town of Qualicum Beach does not have a formal economic development service. The Town participates in the NCED and Oceanside Initiatives.

Private Sector Led Initiatives

Oceanside Initiatives

Oceanside Initiatives (OI) is a partnership of local governments, First Nations and business leaders in the Parksville-Qualicum Beach region that is led by the Parksville and District Chamber of Commerce. Stakeholder partners include the City of Parksville, Regional District of Nanaimo, Town of Qualicum Beach, Qualicum Beach Chamber of Commerce, School District 69, Vancouver Island University, Parksville Downtown Business Association, Parksville-Qualicum Beach Tourism Association, Nanoose First Nation, and Qualicum First Nation. OI developed an economic development strategy for the Oceanside area in 2015. However, the strategy was not endorsed by the local governments in District 69, and no action was taken on a recommendation to form a regional economic development body to be funded by the RDN. OI is currently working on a labour market needs assessment.

Mid Island Business Initiative

The Mid Island Business Initiative was formed by a group of local businesses and organizations to promote the benefits of living and working in east central Vancouver Island. The purpose of the organization is to attract businesses to be established in the mid island region from Ladysmith to Deep Bay. There are no local government members nor financial support. Services include providing information, introductions to existing businesses, and assistance with visits to the region.

Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce

Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce (GICC) is providing economic development and tourism marketing services for the RDN on a contract basis. Funds come from the SCED service which includes Electoral Areas A, B and C. The GICC was also successful in obtaining a grant from the Rural Dividend Fund to support economic development activities. The GICC is now able to hire an economic

development coordinator. Economic development activities provided by GICC are focused on Gabriola Island.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association

The Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association (PQBTA) is the destination marketing organization (also known as a convention and visitors bureau) for the Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Nanoose Bay, French Creek, Lighthouse Country, and Arrowsmith Coombs Country region of Vancouver Island. Partial funding for the PQBTA comes from the Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT) tax on accommodation.

Community Futures Central Island

Community Futures Central Island specializes in providing business loans to small and medium sized businesses. The area served extends from Ladysmith to Deep Bay. They also provide other services for small businesses such as: assistance with business plans; small business training; start-up or expansion consulting; support in gaining access to other small business supports; information and access to capital.

Vancouver Island Economic Alliance

The Vancouver Island Economic Alliance (VIEA) is a collaborative partnership spearheading regional economic development for the Vancouver Island region. VIEA provides opportunities for communities, First Nations, businesses, and other key stakeholders to collaborate on broad-based economic development programs to improve the region's overall capacity for economic vitality. VIEA covers all of Vancouver Island from Victoria to Port Hardy as well as the Northern and Southern Gulf Islands. Membership is open to anyone. VIEA hosts a number of events each year, including the Vancouver Island Economic Summit, and produces information on economic development. The RDN, City of Nanaimo and Town of Qualicum Beach are members of VIEA.

There are numerous other organizations that are also involved in economic development in the RDN such as INfilm, Tourism Vancouver Island, Innovation Island and Island Coastal Economic Trust.

Economic Development Initiatives by BC local governments

Cowichan Valley Regional District

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CowVRD) has an economic development department with staff who work directly for the CVRD. Economic Development Cowichan is a part of the CowVRD's *Land Use Services Division*, and part of their mandate is to build connections between community, business, and local government. Working in collaboration with regional economic development partners, the focus is on: supporting and attracting businesses and sector development; engagement and support for community-based initiatives; and, communicating the advantages of living, working and investing in Cowichan. The entire program is funded by the CowVRD with supplemental funding from grants from other levels of government. Economic Development Cowichan includes Film Cowichan, the aim of which is to: attract film productions to the area; promote Cowichan film locations; prepare online location packages; assist with scouting and permitting; liaising with local municipalities and business organizations; and supporting local film initiatives. The 2018 budget for the economic development service is \$670,000 with about 79% coming from a tax requisition.

Comox Valley Regional District

The Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS) is the contractor for the delivery of economic development services in the Comox Valley. The Comox Valley Regional District (ComVRD) provides the majority of funding to the CVEDS. The services provided by CVEDS focus on assisting existing businesses to grow, while working with potential investors and entrepreneurs. The three focus areas of the office include: business retention and enhancement; investment attraction and promotion; and, economic development coordination, facilitation and communication. The CVEDS is also responsible for tourism marketing and promotion. The 2018 budget for the service is \$1.29 M with the majority of that funding coming from a tax requisition.

Strathcona Regional District

The Strathcona Regional District does not have an economic development service. However, Campbell River, the largest municipality, does have an economic development office that is staffed by the City of Campbell River employees. The services provide focus on business retention and expansion as well as supporting entrepreneurs looking at investment opportunities in Campbell River. Tourism marketing is provided by a separate organization, Destination Campbell River. The 2018 budget for economic development is \$923,000 with approximately two thirds coming from tax requisition and one third coming from the Municipal and Regional District Hotel Tax (MRDT).

Alberni Clayoquot Regional District

The Alberni Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) does not have an economic development service but Port Alberni, the largest city in the regional district, does have an economic development office. The department has two ACRD employees and focusses on diversification of the local economy, business retention, business attraction and marketing of key properties in the community.

Capital Regional District - South Island Prosperity Project

The Capital Regional District (CRD) does not have a regional economic development service. The South Island Prosperity Project (SIPP) is a private sector-driven economic development agency founded by (among others) seven businesses, twelve local governments, three post-secondary institutions, and five business and industry organizations in the Greater Victoria region. SIPP currently has 42 members including 10 of the 13 municipalities in the CRD and five First Nations. The 2018 budget for SIPP is \$960,047 with the 10 local governments providing roughly 63% of the funding. SIPP has five main activities: sector development, business growth and expansion; business investment and attraction; and First Nation economic development and collaboration.

The SIPP was a recent winner of \$250,000 as part of Infrastructure Canada's Smart Cities Challenge. The Greater Victoria based project is one of ten finalists and beat out other Vancouver Island cities such as Nanaimo, Langford and Campbell River. The SIPP will use the money to further develop their proposal on sustainable transportation in competition for a \$10,000,000 grand prize.

Regional District of Mt. Waddington

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) is a function of the Regional District of Mount Waddington (RDMW), and its membership is comprised of four municipalities and four participating

electoral areas. The RDMW Board approves policy, strategy and all associated project and engagement activity.

The manager of economic development is an integral member of the RDMW's staff and is secretary to the EDC. The role of the manager is to coordinate and execute core activities, provide advice, engage with stakeholders and prepare proposals in cases where the regional district is the lead agency. There are a number of committees and working groups linked to the economic development function. This includes the Mt. Waddington Workforce Planning and Action Committee (WPAC) and the Vancouver Island North Tourism Advisory Committee (VINTAC). The RDMW also employs a tourism coordinator who works with their Board and VINTAC. The RDMW has contracted out tourism marketing to Tourism Vancouver Island. The budget for the economic development service in 2017 was \$203,228 with about 87% funded from tax requisition.

Central Okanagan Regional District

The Regional District of Central Okanagan's Economic Development Commission (COEDC) is a service provided by the Regional District of Central Okanagan, providing economic development services to the District of Lake Country, RDCO Electoral Area East, City of Kelowna, City of West Kelowna, Westbank First Nation, District of Peachland and RDCO Electoral Areas East and West. The main activities of the COEDC are business retention and enhancement, investment and attraction and coordination and connection.

The COEDC reports on its activities to the Regional District of Central Okanagan Board of Directors through quarterly reporting and annual reporting mechanisms. The COEDC is guided by a 45 member advisory committee with representatives of business associations, local government, and key industry leaders of Agriculture, Advanced Manufacturing, Professional Services, Construction & Development, Technology and Tourism. The 2018 Budget for the COEDC is \$897,000 which is almost entirely funded from a tax requisition. Four full time staff work for the COEDC.

Regional Economic Development Service Discussion

The trend in general in British Columbia is for economic development to take a regional approach, recognizing that when it comes to economic development there are significant benefits for communities to work together that are part of the same economic unit. For this reason, many local governments in BC are involved in regional economic development entities. Three examples are the two regional districts to the north and south of the RDN and CORD. The regional district economic development service provides coordination for various economic development initiatives in those regions. The two CVRD's and the CORD play a leadership and coordinating role and are also involved in local economic development activities. Each of those services is guided by a strategic plan which identifies the partners involved and who takes the lead on various actions. Each also has a committee comprised of the various economic development organizations in the region.

Sharing of costs and leveraging of additional resources are the primary arguments in favour of a regional approach. The resources of a combined regional entity are often greater than any of the individual entities could fund on their own. This is particularly true of small communities that can deliver a far more substantial economic development program by partnering with other communities in their region.

Businesses looking to invest in an area are interested in the size of the market, regardless of boundaries, so it often makes better sense for multiple jurisdictions to have a unified economic development organization or approach. Regions are also large enough to offer a critical mass of companies, institutions, infrastructure and talent, while small enough to enable close interactions among people, firms and organizations – factors that contribute to regional innovation.

Collaboration at the regional level allows local governments to work together to achieve common goals or address common needs, and potential partners include local governments, First Nations, community groups and private sector organizations. Taking a regional approach also offers the opportunity to access additional sources of funding that would otherwise be unavailable. Regional coordination can also ensure that efforts are linked to, and support, other strategies such as the Regional Growth Strategy, Official Community Plans and Board/Council Strategic Plans.

The general trend in BC is in contrast to what has happened in the RDN over the past few years where there has been a move away from regional economic development to a local and/or a sector specific focus. Numerous initiatives are currently underway in the RDN but there is no one body that serves to coordinate the activities of the different initiatives.

In recent years economic development has gone from a sub-regional approach centered around Greater Nanaimo and the Oceanside areas to focusing on local areas. In the southern part of the RDN there are three separate local government initiatives focused on Nanaimo, Lantzville and Gabriola Island. In the northern part of the RDN Oceanside Initiatives has attempted to play a coordinating role, but insufficient commitment from the local governments and a lack of resources has hampered its effectiveness. A recent attempt by the RDN to create a regional economic development service did not receive support from two of the four member municipalities.

The possible budgets for the established services operated by the RDN and the City of Nanaimo are approximately \$1.2M (includes funding for Tourism Nanaimo). This amount does not include funding provided to other organizations involved in economic development or other sources of funding such as the MRDT. The budget amount for economic development is comparable to the Comox Valley Regional District and significantly greater than the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

There is no one “right” model for economic development and there are many variations within an in-house and an arms-length model to choose from. There are a number of factors to consider when determining which model may be suitable and it may take time to find the structure that best fits the circumstances for this region. A process is needed to investigate the benefits of having a regional economic development service or a way to coordinate the different economic development services in the region. Prior to proposing a service, an opportunity to examine the need for such a service and how it might operate is needed. With support to proceed, the details of the service can be worked out. Alternatively, as the RDN already has two economic development functions, revisions to those functions could be made to include the City of Nanaimo and District of Lantzville and then the role and services delivered could be reviewed.

Should there be support to have an economic development discussion, background information will be compiled including consultation with the existing providers. The discussion, to take place at a facilitated workshop, will take a closer look at how economic development is delivered in the region. With input from those who are currently providing the service, the RDN can examine how economic development

at the regional level can be improved and whether there is a role for the RDN. A proposed outline for the discussion is provided as Appendix 1. A list of proposed participants in the workshop is provided in Appendix 2.

The primary purpose of the workshop is to determine if there is support for establishing a regional economic development service to be funded through an RDN function.

In support of the Board's strategic plan, what role will the RDN play in economic development? A first step would be to host a workshop to look at the benefits of a regional approach to economic development and the role for the RDN in collaboration with the other organizations already engaged in economic development activities. Should the RDN be taking on a leadership role to coordinate economic development activities in the region? With all the disparate initiatives currently underway the RDN may be the best placed organization to take the lead and organize a discussion to consider how the region may benefit from collaboration.

Should there be support to establish the regional service, then the next step is to look at the delivery model, the possible services to be offered and source of funding, budget and staffing.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Receive this report for information only
2. Receive this report for information and provide direction to organize discussions about a revised role for the RDN in regional economic development.

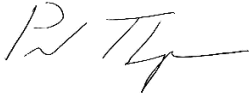
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications at this time are the costs to fund for a facilitator for the meeting. A small amount will also have to be budgeted for professional services. Staff will investigate the opportunity of applying for a grant to pursue funding with a possibility to apply to ICET, as they have a funding program for communities who want to examine the need for an economic development strategy. Funds have been established to conduct service reviews for RDN functions. These funds have not been allocated to any one service and, with the Board's approval, could be used for a review of the economic development services.

Following the initial meeting, should a decision be made to proceed with establishing a new economic development service, then a financial analysis will be conducted.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The Board 2016-2020 Strategic Plan includes a strategic focus on economic health with a priority to foster economic development. The Board identified in the 2018 Strategic Plan review that promoting economic growth, diversification and resiliency was a continuing priority and that efforts in the area of economic development should be pursued in an effective manner. The Board supported economic development as a regional service that should be explored. Discussions on updates to the Strategic Plan are scheduled for January of 2019. The recommendation is to include regional economic development as a priority discussion area in the review of the Board Strategic Plan following the 2018 civic election.



Paul Thompson
pthompson@rdn.bc.ca
May 28, 2018

Reviewed by:

- G. Garbutt, General Manager, Strategic and Community Development
- P. Carlyle, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments

1. Proposed Agenda Outline for Economic Development Discussion
2. Proposed Participants in Economic Development Discussion

Appendix 1
Proposed Agenda for Economic Development Discussion

Facilitation: Economic Development Professional

Purpose: To determine if there is support to proceed with the establishment of a regional economic development service.

Materials in support of the discussion:

- Background on each of the economic development providers including:
 - Services provided
 - Budgets and staffing
 - Governance structure
 - Guiding documents (e.g. strategic plan)
 - Networking
- Economic Development Models
- Economic Development Services
- Sources of funding for economic development

Discussion items

- What is missing in terms of regional collaboration?
- Is a regional economic development service needed in the RDN?
- Is a new local government service needed?
- What is the role of the RDN?
- What is the best delivery model?
- What is the best governance model?
- What services should be provided?
- What are sources of funding?

Appendix 2
Proposed Participants in Economic Development Discussion

- City of Nanaimo
- District of Lantzville
- City of Parksville
- Town of Qualicum Beach
- Regional District of Nanaimo
 - Northern Communities Economic Development
 - Southern Communities Economic Development

- Mid Island Business Initiative
- Oceanside Initiatives
- Community Futures Central Island

- Island Coastal Economic Trust
- Vancouver Island Economic Alliance
- Island North Film Commission

- Greater Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce
- Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce
- Parksville and District Chamber of Commerce
- Qualicum Beach Chamber of Commerce

- Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association
- Tourism Nanaimo
- Tourism Vancouver Island