



*building communities together*

## **2025 Business Plan North Cariboo Economic Development (1026)**

*Darron Campbell, Manager of Community Services*

***Working in partnership with communities large and small to offer local, sub-regional, and regional services to ensure that the Cariboo Chilcotin is a socially, economically, and environmentally desirable region.***

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### **Department/Function Services**

The North Cariboo Economic Development function was established through Bylaw No. 2586 in 1992. The purpose of the service is to provide funding support through contributions for economic development activities in the service area, including Electoral Areas A, B, C and I.

This service supports tourism infrastructure, including public outhouses at Bouchie Lake and Milburn Lake west of Quesnel. It also supports a tourism and project-based agreement with the City of Quesnel for the Quesnel Visitor Information Centre (2021-2023) and provides support to the Cariboo Agricultural Development Advisory Committee.

Currently, there is a contribution to the McLeese Lake Farmers Market Association (2025-2027) to support the promotion and operation of the Farmers Market at Alexandria. This contribution is shared between the Central and North Cariboo Economic Development functions.

This function also leads Regional Economic Development Roundtables to share resources, initiatives, strategies, challenges, and best practices.

Electoral Areas A, B, C and I participate in the service and taxation is based on the assessed value of land and improvements. The maximum requisition is the greater of \$10,000 or \$0.0257/\$1,000 of assessment.

The Directors of Electoral Areas A, B, C and I are responsible for the governance of this service.

## Business Plan Goals, Rationale & Strategies

### 2025 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Host a North Cariboo Tourism Forum in partnership with the City of Quesnel.

**Rational:** Tourism is the economic driver that steadily supports the Region while resource-based industries fluctuate. Building and maintaining a strong tourism industry will contribute to the long-term health and economic wellness of the region.

**Strategy:** Work with the City of Quesnel to host a North Cariboo Tourism Forum focused on connecting and strengthening the tourism sector.
- 2. Goal:** Encourage the development of a cross-country ski the Cariboo brand and marketing.

**Rational:** The 100 Mile Nordic Centre, Bull Mountain, and Hallis Lake have worked hard to build and maintain cross country ski facilities. Developing a regional brand and marketing campaign will showcase the area and encourage winter tourism.

**Strategy:** Work with the regional cross-country ski organizations to develop and execute a brand and marketing project.
- 3. Goal:** Measure the economic impact of events held in the North Cariboo.

**Rational:** Although it is clear event hosting bolsters the local economy, it is beneficial to calculate the actual impact of events. These numbers can be useful for grant applications.

**Strategy:** Invest in a Canadian Sports Tourism Alliance membership to access the Sports Tourism Economic Impact Assessment Tool. By entering event stats, the tool calculates local and provincial impact.
- 3. Goal:** Investigate the development of a circular economy in the Cariboo.

**Rational:** A circular economy conserves resources, creates jobs, and reduces waste, fostering local resilience while minimizing environmental harm.

**Strategy:** Research circular economy practices and strategies and identify businesses and organizations in the Cariboo that are already implementing them. This will enable the CRD to access provincial and federal funding to develop a comprehensive strategy for growing the regional circular economy.
- 4. Goal:** Investigate the idea of a pilot project heritage tour.

**Rationale:** Heritage societies and community groups identify, maintain and develop heritage sites which attract tourists. Linking heritage sites within a small area (i.e. Likely area, 108 Mile Heritage Site) may offer increased tourism and business opportunities for rural areas.

**Strategy:** Engage with community groups to determine if there is sufficient interest in undergoing a pilot project. Continue working with the Heritage Steering Committee. Further develop the Cariboo Chilcotin Historic Driving Tour Guide & Map.
- 5. Goal:** Support the delivery of an agricultural producers needs assessment.

**Rationale:** The agriculture sector has historically been and continues to be a key economic driver in the region and assessing the needs and challenges faced by producers as the business evolves and modernizes will inform ways to maintain and grow this important industry.

**Strategy:** Financial support for direct costs to engage agriculture producers will be provided to a post-secondary student conducting the assessment as supplemental to his educational curriculum.

6. **Goal:** Market the economic development landing pages 'Make the Move' to attract new residents in key labour sectors.

**Rationale:** To help fill labour gaps in key sectors the Cariboo Regional District has developed webpages to provide regional information including resources, education, lifestyle, and opportunities. A marketing campaign is necessary to engage and drive potential new residents to the site.

**Strategy:** Work with regional stakeholders to allocate funding and execute a unique marketing campaign.

7. **Goal:** Support the Explore Cariboo marketing tactics and explore developing a multi-year contribution agreement.

**Rationale:** Now entering its fifth year, the Explore Cariboo marketing campaign has built momentum and proved to be a strong marketing tactic. It includes a website, social media posts, media influencers, published content, and advertising. Developing a multi-year agreement provides ongoing support and allows for long term planning.

**Strategy:** Provide both financial and strategic support to the project ensuring communities, attractions, and businesses from throughout the region are included resulting in enhanced increased tourism. Work with stakeholders to develop a multi year agreement.

8. **Goal:** Continue to encourage partnerships for economic development projects and activities.

**Rational:** Maintaining existing and creating new partnerships is an efficient and cost-effective way to deliver economic development services.

**Strategy:** As projects and strategies are brought forward, appropriate partners, such as senior governments, municipalities, non-profit groups, and First Nations, will be identified.

9. **Goal:** Sponsor conferences and events in the service area.

**Rationale:** Conferences and events draw visitors to the North Cariboo and encourage economic development in the area.

**Strategy:** The resources necessary to provide limited sponsorship to conferences and events are included in the function financial plan.

10. **Goal:** Support the North Cariboo Agriculture Marketing Association's FARMED initiatives.

**Rationale:** Initiatives include both a printed and online map and inventory encouraging tourism and supporting local businesses.

**Strategy:** Continue to support the group financially as directed by the board.

### **Overall Financial Impact**

The 2025 requisition remains unchanged from the 2024 requisition of \$40,000 and this level is maintained through a five-year financial plan.

### **Significant Issues & Trends**

In 2024, the Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) adjusted its Community Development programs, including the Northern Housing Incentive, to a tri-annual intake schedule. The new deadlines are January 31, April 30, and July 31. This shift reduced the previous quarterly system to three annual intakes, with intake one and two capped to ensure funding is available for all three cycles.

There has been strong demand for funding, with grant requests consistently exceeding available resources, making the process competitive. Most infrastructure project applications were submitted in the first two intakes, likely influenced by construction season timelines. Overall, the new structure has been positively received, although adjustments will be monitored over the next three years.

2025 will see minor changes to NDIT grant intakes including an online portal for Community Development Grants and a slight change to intake dates for Capacity Building Grants.

Low volunteerism continues to impact organizations and projects throughout the Cariboo, especially in rural areas.

The Cariboo Regional District is a signatory on the Province of BC/UBCM Climate Action Charter and has committed to continuing work towards carbon neutrality in respect of corporate operations.

### **Measuring Previous Years Performance**

**Goal:** Investigate the development of a circular economy in the Cariboo.

- Ongoing. Research has been initiated.

**Goal:** Investigate the idea of a pilot project heritage tour.

- Not Completed.

- Goal:** Market the economic development landing pages 'Make the Move' to attract new residents in key labour sectors.
- Completed. Hosted a Ng Media Campaign.
- Goal:** Support the Explore Cariboo marketing tactics and explore developing a multi-year contribution agreement.
- Completed. Supported the 2024 Explore Cariboo marketing tactics. Suggested and shared a multi-year agreement but it has not been implemented at this time.
- Goal:** Continue to encourage partnerships for economic development projects and activities.
- Completed. Hosted semiannual Economic Development Roundtable in Quesnel and 100 Mile House.
- Goal:** Sponsor conferences and events in the service area.
- Completed. Sponsored resident attraction materials for the Lhtako Quesnel BC Winter Games.
- Goal:** Monitor and support agritourism.
- Completed. Continued to distribute the Agritourism Guide in the Cariboo-Chilcotin 2023 document with agriculture groups and individuals.
- Goal:** Review the McLeese Lake Farmers' Market Agreement.
- Completed. Renewed the agreement with no material changes to the terms and conditions.
- Goal:** Support the North Cariboo Agriculture Marketing Association's FARMED initiatives.
- Completed. Supported marketing efforts.

### **Other Accomplishments**

In 2023, due to oversubscription of the NDIT Cariboo-Chilcotin/Lillooet Regional Development account, the Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) temporarily suspended their Business Façade Improvement Program. They reinstated the program in 2024. Our region received and distributed \$13,744 of the available \$20,000 funds to support projects at three businesses.

The Lhtako Quesnel 2024 BC Winter Games had a significant economic impact on the region and provided opportunities to promote tourism and recruit new residents. Staff worked closely with the City of Quesnel and the business community to build campaigns to encourage visitors to shop. This group also prepared and distributed material to encourage living and working in the North Cariboo. This working group has continued to meet every two months to work collectively to improve economic conditions in the North Cariboo.