



building communities together

2025 Business Plan Central Cariboo and Chilcotin Economic Development (1025)

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.

Department/Function Services

The Central Cariboo and Chilcotin Economic Development function was established through Bylaw No. 5244 in 2019. The purpose of the service is to provide funding support through contributions for economic development activities in the service area, including Electoral Areas D, E, F, J and K.

Prior to the establishment of the Central Cariboo and Chilcotin Economic Development service, there were five separate functions in the Central Cariboo. Each of these functions was created through Electoral Area bylaws as follows: Area D (No. 3855, 2003), Area E (No. 5235, 2019), Area F (No. 3706, 2002), Area J (No. 5016, 2016) and Area K (No. 5017, 2016). The budgets and business plan goals for these functions have been merged into this plan to encourage cooperation and efficiency.

The new service was created to support and promote economic development in the Central Cariboo and Chilcotin and work in important sectors such as tourism, agriculture, natural resources development and the retention and attraction of businesses and residents. This service is provided through contracts for various economic development initiatives, which currently include Visitor Information Services support agreements with the Williams Lake and District Chamber of Commerce, the Horsefly Board of Trade, the Likely Chamber of Commerce and the 150 Mile Greenbelt, Trail and Heritage Society (2024-2026) and the Community Services and Development Society of Alexis Creek (2024-2026).

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.

In 2024, after a considerable refurbishment of the Big Lake Heritage Site, a contribution agreement with the Big Lake Heritage Society (2024 – 2026) was established.

This function also leads Regional Economic Development Roundtables to share resources, initiatives, strategies, challenges, and best practices and supports the Cariboo Agricultural Development Advisory Committee.

Electoral Areas D, E, F, J and K participate in the service and taxation is based on the assessed value of land and improvements. There is no requisition limit for this service.

The Directors of Electoral Areas D, E, F, J and K are responsible for the governance of this service.

Business Plan Goals, Rationale & Strategies

2025 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Measure the economic impact of events held in the Central 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.
- 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:** Support the Cariboo Wood Innovation Training Hub (CWITH) initiative.
Rationale: In 2024, the Fraser Basin Council secured a REDIP-FIT grant to hire a project manager to develop structure and programming for CWITH. This project is an ongoing partnership between the City of Williams Lake, UBC's Alex Fraser Research Forest, and local value-added wood manufacturers. With changes in the forest industry, a provincial appetite for sustainable harvest and value-added wood products, the Province of BC has been in strong support of this project. This initiative will support regional small and medium sized businesses by building a skilled employment base, and drawing regional, national, and international participants to the region.

- Strategy:** Work with Fraser Basin Council, the City of Williams Lake, the Alex Fraser Research Forest and the advisor's group to support the CWITH Project Manager and build a sustainable Hub.
- 4. Goal:** Develop landing supports to assist new workers and their families integrate into the community.

Rational: Successful recruitment efforts have been executed by various sectors throughout the Cariboo, yet retention is weak. The Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the City of Williams Lake and Central Cariboo employers, have created a Recruitment & Retention working group that have identified key actions that may increase retention.

Strategy: Work with the Recruitment & Retention Working Group to implement key actions to keep new recruits in the area.
 - 5. 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.
 - 6. 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.
 - 7. Goal:** Support obtaining grant funding to reinvigorate Penstocks at the Bullion Pit historic site near Likely.

Rationale: Building heritage tourism assets has proved to attract regional, national, and international tourists. The Bullion Pit site is popular with cultural explorers.

Strategy: The Bullion Pit site is operated by the Likely Xat'sull Community Forest, which will submit grant applications with support from the Regional District.
 - 8. Goal:** Develop new relationships with organizations in the Chilcotin to support tourism opportunities.

Rationale: In 2023 the West Chilcotin Tourism Association folded. The CRD worked with this organization to support infrastructure and maintenance crucial to tourism development. By reaching out and meeting with community groups we can build

relationships with community champions and support community driven projects to build the tourism economy.

Strategy: Staff will engage with west Chilcotin communities to build relationships and identify productive project partners.

9. **Goal:** Work with rural communities to develop, maintain and improve trails and sites for tourism activity.

Rationale: Rural communities continue to implement tourism strategies, including the development of infrastructure to continue a long-range plan to promote tourism and local economic development. Trails are proving to be a very important natural asset to rural areas that can be developed and promoted.

Strategy: Trail projects will be led by various partner groups including but not limited to the Horsefly Board of Trade, Likely Chamber of Commerce and Big Lake Community Association, with updates to and advice from Regional District staff.

10. **Goal:** Support development of promotional materials for tourism activities in the Central Cariboo.

Rationale: Promotional materials such as brochures, website, maps, and videos are important tools to reach potential visitors and promote tourism opportunities in the area.

Strategy: Promotional projects will be led by various partner groups including but not limited to the Horsefly Board of Trade and the Likely Chamber of Commerce, with updates to and advice from Regional District staff.

11. **Goal:** Contribute to site improvements, marketing, and promotions for the Xat'sull Heritage Village.

Rationale: The Xat'sull Heritage Village is an award-winning tourism attraction which provides educational and recreational opportunities for visitors, centered around the culture and heritage of the Xat'sull First Nation. This tourism attraction contributes positively to the local economy by encouraging travelers to visit our region and by providing employment to area First Nations.

Strategy: Projects and initiatives will be led by the Xat'sull First Nation with updates to and advice from Regional District staff.

12. **Goal:** Sponsor conferences and events in the Central Cariboo.

Rationale: Conferences and events draw visitors to the Central Cariboo and encourage economic development in the electoral areas.

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

13. **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 the regional stakeholders to allocate funding and execute a unique marketing campaign.

- 14. 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.

Overall Financial Impact

The 2025 requisition remains unchanged from the 2024 requisition of \$100,000 and this level is maintained in the 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: Support the Regional Wood Innovation Training Hub initiative.

- Completed. Worked with Fraser Basin Council, the City of Williams Lake, and the Alex Fraser Research Forest to secure funding.

Goal: Support tourism infrastructure at Quesnel Forks.

- Completed. Self-guided tour signage was installed as well as displays at Cedar Point Park.

Goal: Support tourism infrastructure on the Goldrush Trail.

- Completed. A parking lot and outhouse have been developed to service the Goldrush Trail.

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

- Ongoing. Research has been initiated.

Goal: Work with the Big Lake Community Association to develop a three-year contribution agreement to support maintenance of the Big Lake heritage site.

- Completed. A three-year agreement is in place.

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

- Not Completed.

Goal: Support the development of disc golf course at the spawning channel in Horsefly.

- Not completed. Change of DFO management at the spawning channel forbade the disc golf project. Horsefly Board of Trade, after discussion with the Manager of Community Services, updated the Story Walk instead.

Goal: Support obtaining grant funding to reinvigorate Penstocks at the Bullion Pit historic site near Likely.

- Not completed. No funding identified.

Goal: Support tourism opportunities in the Chilcotin.

- Not completed. No organizations or projects came forward.

Goal: Work with rural communities to develop, maintain and improve trails and sites for tourism activity.

- Completed. Trail work in Likely includes Quesnel Forks and access to the Chinese oven and in Horsefly included the Duck Pond Trail and trails at the spawning channel.

- Goal:** Support development of promotional materials for tourism activities in the Central Cariboo.
- Completed. Website and brochure updates were executed.
- Goal:** Contribute to site improvements, marketing, and promotions for the Xat'sull Heritage Village.
- Not completed. No projects were brought forward.
- Goal:** Invest in capital improvements or marketing and promotional activities at the Bull Mountain Cross Country Ski Area.
- Completed. Bull Mountain is adding solar lights to their highway sign making it more visible to highway traffic.
- Goal:** Sponsor conferences and events in the Central Cariboo.
- Completed. Worked with the City of Williams Lake, the Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce, and sub-regional employers to host a recruitment & retention event.
- Goal:** Market the economic development landing pages 'Make the Move' to attract new residents in key labour sectors.
- Completed. 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 no traction.
- 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:** Consider disposition of the heritage property at 150 Mile House.
- Completed. Discussion of maintaining the regional designation for the property was undertaken by the Regional District Heritage Committee. Fencing at the property was upgraded to enable cattle grazing to reduce vegetation. Potential fire hazard mitigation was also undertaken by a landscape contractor and the neighbouring property owner.

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 \$14,810.50 of the available \$20,000 funds to support projects at four businesses, two are located in the Central Cariboo.

A \$500,000 REDIP-FIT grant was rewarded in 2024 to hire a project manager, for two years, to develop the Cariboo Wood innovation Training Hub. Year one of this project will include in depth engagement with regional value-added wood producers focusing on the tree to product opportunities. Networking events and training programs will follow.

The Williams Lake & District Chamber of Commerce has spearheaded an action group focused on retaining new workers making the Central Cariboo their home. This group is unique because actions are driven by the business community. This group will meet on a regular basis to continue to work on tools to increase long-term retention.