



STAFF REPORT TO COMMITTEE

DATE OF REPORT May 17, 2021

MEETING TYPE & DATE Regional Services Committee Meeting of May 26, 2021

FROM: Economic Development Division
Land Use Services Department

SUBJECT: Cowichan Connectivity Strategy Funding Opportunity

FILE: 1855-40 ICET & NDIT Tech Reg Connectivity Strat

PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of an opportunity for the CVRD to submit proposals to Island Coastal Economic Trust and Northern Development Initiative Trust to support the development of a Cowichan Connectivity Strategy.

RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION

That it be recommended to the Board that funding applications be submitted to: Island Coastal Economic Trust's Economic Development Readiness Program; and Northern Development Initiative Trust's Connecting British Columbia Program, to support the development of a Cowichan Connectivity Strategy.

BACKGROUND

On January 27, 2021, the Board approved a budget supplemental of \$15,000 for the development of a Cowichan Connectivity Strategy. Staff are seeking to leverage these funds to obtain up to \$45,000 in grant funding from Island Coastal Economic Trust's (ICET) Economic Development Readiness Program (\$30,000), and Northern Development Initiative Trust's (NDIT) Connecting British Columbia Program (\$15,000).

Economic Development Cowichan (EDC) staff have had discussions with staff at ICET and NDIT, who have confirmed that the CVRD may apply for funding to support this project.

If approved by the Board, staff intend to apply to the ICET's Economic Development Readiness Program in June 2021. The NDIT Connecting British Columbia Program has a more onerous application process. In this case, staff are preparing additional background materials to meet the funding application requirements, and intend to apply to the program in June or July 2021.

ANALYSIS

If approved for funding, the CVRD will issue a request for proposals (RFP) for qualified consultants to support the development of the Cowichan Connectivity Strategy.

In preparation for undertaking a connectivity strategy, staff have already engaged with several Internet Service Providers (ISPs), non-profits, consultants, and local governments, and have joined the provincial Regional Connectivity Knowledge Network. This research has reinforced the understanding that connectivity is a complex issue that needs to be addressed at the federal, provincial as well as regional levels.

Embarking on a connectivity strategy will provide an opportunity for the CVRD to better understand the connectivity landscape in Cowichan, define regional connectivity goals, and develop a prioritized roadmap on how we may strategically realize these goals. Some CVRD communities are already eligible for connectivity funding. It is hoped that engaging in a connectivity strategy

will both unlock additional funding opportunities, and identify potential partnerships for the CVRD and communities to address connectivity challenges.

Should the CVRD be unsuccessful in securing the necessary funding through these programs to undertake a connectivity strategy, staff will report back to Committee with options to move this project forward.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The 2021 Function 121 – Economic Development Cowichan budget includes \$15,000 for the completion of this project. In the budget, these funds are intended to be leveraged to secure the grants of up to \$45,000 from ICET and NDIT.

COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

Staff would issue a news release should the funding be secured to move forward with the project.

STRATEGIC/BUSINESS PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

This recommendation supports Action 6.4 of the CVRD Strategic Plan 2020-2022: to develop a regional connectivity strategy.

GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

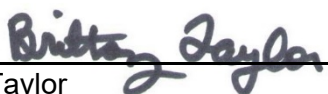
☐ Not Applicable

Referred to (upon completion):

- ☐ Communications & Engagement
- ☐ Community Services (*Cowichan Community Centre, Cowichan Lake Recreation, South Cowichan Recreation, Arts & Culture, Emergency Management, Facilities & Transit*)
- ☒ Corporate Services (*Finance, Human Resources, Legislative Services, Information Technology, Procurement*)
- ☐ Engineering Services (*Environmental Services, Recycling & Waste Management, Water Management*)
- ☒ Land Use Services (*Community Planning, Development Services, Inspection & Enforcement, Economic Development, Parks & Trails*)

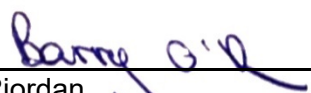
Prepared by:

Reviewed by:



Brittany Taylor
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Not Applicable
Not Applicable



Barry O'Riordan
A/General Manager

Reviewed for form and content and approved for submission to the Committee:

Resolution:

☒ Manager, Legislative Services

Financial Considerations:

☒ Manager, Finance