

Northern Community Economic Development

Program Guide

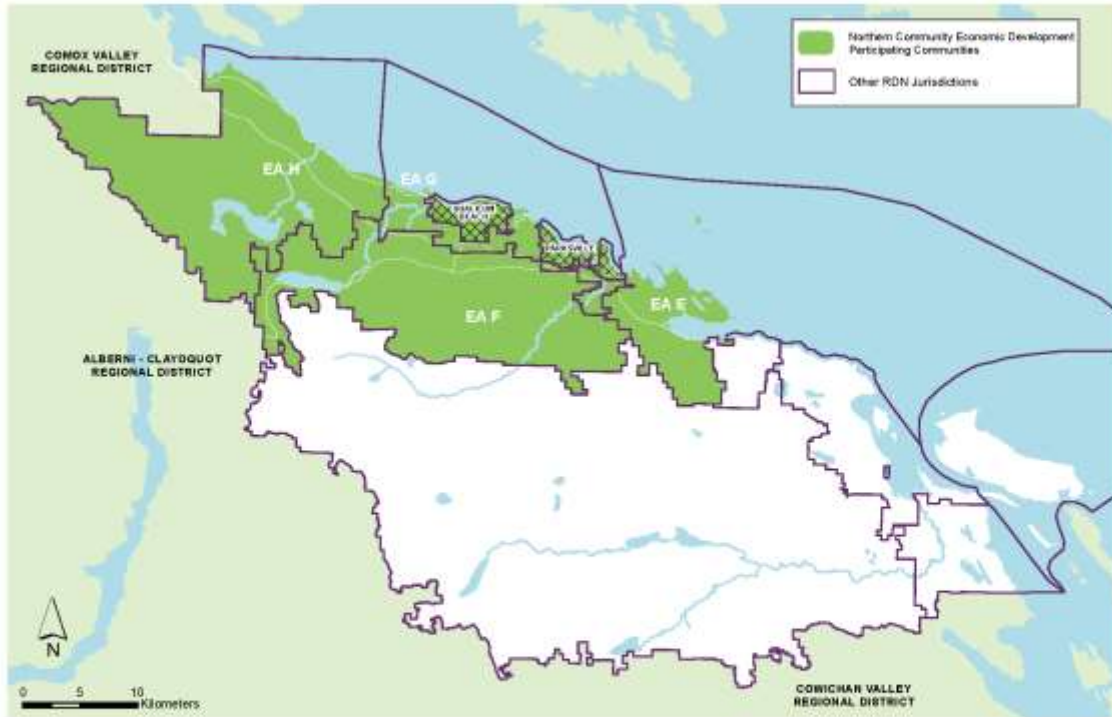
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Purpose

The Northern Community Economic Development Program provides the RDN Board of Directors with a tool to activate projects that advance the Board’s vision for a strong local economy and support the Board Strategic Plan and Regional Growth Strategy through economic development initiatives that benefit the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach, and Electoral Areas E, F, G, and H.



Board Vision: Our Economy

The RDN Board’s vision for a strong, thriving and creative local economy is as follows:

Residents in the Region are employed in a wide variety of interesting and rewarding occupations. Our downtowns are vibrant places, and there is a wide variety of different sizes and types of businesses in the Region. The economy of the Region is healthy and continues to diversify and grow. Businesses in the Region are environmentally responsible, and there are systems in place to favour these businesses. It is economically viable to produce goods and services in the Region that are environmentally friendly, and residents favour these goods and services over those made available from outside the Region.

This vision will guide decision makers when considering funding for economic development proposals.

Goal: Enhanced Economic Resilience

A resilient regional economy can withstand instability originating from outside our borders and adapt to change when necessary. This relies on industries built around the efficient use of local natural resources, developing regional expertise in emerging sectors, retaining youth and young professionals, attracting investment from abroad, and using shifting community demographics to our best advantage.

Principles

Flexibility

Decision-makers will have the flexibility to support a wide range of project types that support local economic development and offer the greatest potential for sustained regional economic benefit.

Foster Diversification

Projects will encourage diversification in the local value-added economy, create opportunities for transition in traditional industrial sectors, or broaden the region's attractiveness as a tourism destination.

Cultivate the Entrepreneurial Spirit

Projects will build skills through training, education and professional development for small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs, particularly those seeking to develop markets for socially and environmentally responsible goods and services.

Support Innovation in Science and Technology

Science and technology are essential economic drivers, providing new solutions to environmental challenges and improving efficiencies in existing sectors. The program will support projects that generate economic opportunity through innovation in science and technology.

Facilitate Cooperation

Cooperative action and solid partnerships achieve real results. Initiatives that demonstrate partnerships between complementary organizations, leverage funding from multiple stakeholders, or establish enduring networks of communication offer economic potential for the region.

Create Regional Benefits

Ideal projects will be those that identify and address a regional economic development need, produce economic benefits that stay within the northern communities of the RDN, and result in a measurable economic impact in the region.

Priority Areas

Employment and Skills Training

Training to support:

- The development of a skilled workforce adapting to the emerging trends of the 21st Century;
- Transitional programs for the unemployed and under-employed, especially youth;
- HR programs for employers working to create the best possible working environments.

Assistance for Start-ups and Self Employment

Programs to assist small businesses with:

- Development of business plans and strategies, networking, and market research;
- Acquisition of information, business technology and communications systems.

Arts, Culture and Media

Building cultural institutions in the Region through:

- Community cultural events that support local businesses and attract visitors;
- Promotion of arts and cultural activities in non-urban areas to promote regional tourism.

Agriculture and Aquaculture

Strengthening the economic viability of agriculture and aquaculture by:

- Promoting and marketing regional food producers and the Vancouver Island diet;
- Supporting local farmers with business development and management training;
- Cultivating growth in agri-tourism.

Forestry and Fisheries

Advancing sustainable approaches to the resource sectors that built the Island economy by:

- Accelerating the transition toward value added products and processes for small businesses;
- Promoting adaptive management practices for small scale commercial operators;
- Supporting educational opportunities that benefit the forestry and fisheries sectors.

Renewable Energy and the Green Economy

Encourage investment and job creation in renewable energy, conservation and low carbon sectors with:

- Support for events, outreach and education programs that promote renewable energy systems;
- Support for business, school or community based organizations that actively promote renewable energy, carbon management, emission reductions or energy conservation initiatives.

High Tech Sector

Promote development within the high tech sector by:

- Identifying needs and opportunities to attract high tech businesses to the region;
- Supporting events and education, and establishing business networks within the sector.

Tourism and Recreation

Attracting more visitors with:

- Enhanced communications, advertising and outreach to draw people to the region;
- Support for innovative or unique events that showcase the region's recreational, environmental and tourism amenities.

Grant Amount

Total annual funding available to be shared across all projects is \$50,000. To maintain flexibility in approving project funding, no maximum dollar amount for an individual project will be set. However, it is the intent of the program to fund the broadest range of projects possible, providing the greatest net economic benefit to the region. Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact RDN staff to discuss project ideas and scope.

Eligibility

Eligible Projects

To be eligible for funding, projects must be located in or directly benefit one or more of the communities participating in the Northern Community Economic Development Service, and must clearly demonstrate economic benefits flowing to the general business community as well as the community as a whole.

Ineligible Projects

Ineligible projects are those located outside the Service area or that do not provide a direct economic benefit to one or more of the participating communities. In addition, projects that provide direct financial assistance to support business or commercial activities cannot be funded through this Program¹. To ensure eligibility for funding, businesses are encouraged to build partnerships with complementary businesses or organizations to develop eligible projects.

For previous NCED grant recipients, the RDN must be in receipt of any outstanding summary reports associated with previous eligible projects to be considered for any future grant funding.

Eligible Costs

Funds awarded through this program can be used for the following purposes:

1. **Plans and Studies:** Expenditures by project proponents, including consultant fees, to undertake economic development related research projects, plans and feasibility studies.
2. **Minor Capital and Information Technology:** Investment in minor capital and information technology for eligible projects in support of local business development.
3. **Events:** Costs associated with coordinating and hosting conferences, trade shows, community cultural and other events that provide measurable economic development opportunities.
4. **Targeted Operating Costs:** Any operating costs that are temporary in nature, and incurred through the delivery of a project that promotes or results in direct economic benefits for the community.

¹ Section 273 of the *Local Government Act* prohibits a Regional Board from providing assistance, including grants, to business, commercial or industrial undertakings.

Ineligible Costs

Funds awarded through this program cannot be used for the following purposes:

1. **Ongoing Operating Costs:** Any operating costs that are permanent in nature, including but not limited to energy bills, tax, rent or lease payments and wages for permanent employees.
2. **Land Acquisition:** Funding from this program cannot be used for the purchase of land or buildings.
3. **Major Capital:** Due to limited funding availability, this program will not provide support for investment in major capital works or infrastructure projects.

Evaluation Criteria

Projects will be evaluated against the following criteria:

Project Viability

- Clear and well-defined project;
- Strong potential for success;
- Realistic goals;
- Sufficient information provided.

Financial and Administrative Feasibility

- Realistic budget with clearly identified capacity to undertake work;
- Evidence that the funds will be well managed;
- Demonstration of other funding sources.

Economic Benefit

- Demonstrates quantifiable economic benefits to the Northern Communities of the RDN;
- Leads to increased economic activity or employment in the Northern Communities of the RDN;
- Will attract business and investment to the Northern Communities of the RDN.

New and Unique

- Unique component is evident in the project – the work is not already being attempted;
- The proposal does not replicate an existing event, program or project;
- Support will not compete with existing businesses or generate unfair competition for small or local businesses.

Community Support

- Well-articulated community benefit;
- Demonstrates partnership with the community or other organizations;
- Addresses priorities identified in the context of a community vision (Official Community Plan, Regional Growth Strategy or Board Strategic Plan).

Approval and Payment of Grant

Application Deadline

There is no application deadline. Applications will be received at any time during the year, and reviewed a minimum of twice annually by the Northern Community Economic Development Select Committee. Hard copies are to be sent to the following address:

Northern Community Economic Development Program
Regional District of Nanaimo
6300 Hammond Bay Road
Nanaimo, BC, V9T 6N2

Digital copies in pdf format can be sent to nced@rdn.bc.ca.

Application Package

Applicants must submit a completed Application Form, as well as any supporting material deemed necessary to communicate the project idea to the Select Committee.

Awarding of Projects

The Northern Community Economic Development Select Committee will recommend projects to receive funding to the RDN Board. This committee is comprised of elected representatives from each of the communities participating in the program: the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach, and Electoral Areas E, F, G, and H. While the committee will strive for consensus in awarding projects, final recommendations will be made by vote.

The committee will meet at least twice annually, once in the spring and once in the fall, to recommend projects to receive funding to the Board of Directors and to review Project Summary Reports. Final authorization of funding will be subject to the approval of the Regional District of Nanaimo Board.

Payment of Grant

Once successful projects have been approved, a one-time payment in the total grant amount will be made to the applicant identified on the Application Form.

Reporting Outcomes

Recipients of funding are required to complete and submit a Summary Report and present project results to the Northern Community Economic Development Select Committee at the conclusion of the project, or 12 months after receiving funding. The Summary Report will be made available to the public via the RDN website, and will identify how program funding was ultimately used, whether the objectives of the project were met, and will include attachments of reports, brochures, or other documents produced as a result of the project. A Summary Report template is included in this Guide.