



Briefing Note

To: Council
From: Jon Wilsgard, Chief Administrative Officer
Date: November 6th, 2018
File: 2240-20-Invest Kootenay

RE: Imagine Kootenay Renewal

SUMMARY OF ISSUE

Council and Area 'A' subscribed to the regionally oriented *Imagine Kootenay* website platform and associated services in 2016 for a three year period. Council must now determine whether to continue this contractual engagement and funding model.

BACKGROUND

Following a one-year trial period, at its regular meeting held November 17th, 2015 the Town of Golden Council passed the following resolution:

THAT Council SUPPORTS the renewal of agreements for a regional membership subscription with Community Futures of Central Kootenay and first contact representation by the Kicking Horse Country Chamber of Commerce associated with the Invest Kootenay Program for a period of three years beginning January 1st, 2016;

The intent was to enter into both a regional and local contractual arrangement to subscribe from a community context to a regionally branded initiative to promote life, investment, and business opportunity in the Kootenay region. *Imagine Kootenay* is the trade name for a member driven website and associated services website platform which is currently subscribed to by 12 communities between the West and East Kootenay sub-regions.

The platform has been in place for over a decade and provides a medium for each community to post actual business sale opportunities as well as general information. It has been a proven success in many communities and is managed centrally by the Community Futures of Central Kootenay (CFCK) corporation. It is funded by member subscriptions and governed by a 'board' which includes Golden's mayor and Area 'A' Director.

A more in depth look at the platform can be found at <https://imaginekootenay.com/>

The two administrative mechanisms for the program include signing on to a regional MOU between the partner communities and the CFCK, the annual fee for which is \$7,500 for Golden. The current MOU has been signed by the Mayor and Area Director and is effective to 2022.

The second mechanism is a Local Partner Agreement for the front counter presence and local manager of the platform – in our case the Chamber of Commerce, the annual fee for which has been \$5,500. This agreement expires December 31st, 2018 and the Chamber has expressed an interest to renew.

The entire initiative has been funded locally by the Economic Opportunity Fund to date.

DISCUSSION

The renewal proposal by the Chamber of Commerce is attached including a request to remove two deliverables. Under revised local partner requirements stated within the latest MOU, these deliverables are no longer specifically listed anyway, but there are also other changes to the list and the Chamber will be required to uphold them in order to remain a local partner. There has been no request for a change in the delivery fee. The Chamber's required annual report for 2018 is attached.

Notwithstanding the re-signing of an MOU that ostensibly binds the two local governments till March 31st, 2022, any party may withdraw from the partnership providing written notice prior to October 1st. This would technically bind our region for another 12 months, but given that it is an MOU this is likely more of a courtesy provision. Should Council and the Area Director favour a renewal of the program, staff suggest timing the next local delivery partner contract to expire December 1st, 2021.

Should Council favour a renewal of this agreement, staff would then make application to regional district staff under Policy F-29 EOF with pre-approval unless Council feels this to be better financially sourced through local taxation.

IMPLICATIONS

Strategic

(Guiding Documents Relevancy -Strategic Plan, OCP)

Relevant OCP excerpts:

Community Economic Development Objectives

2. *to ensure collaboration with all stakeholders including Columbia Shuswap regional District (CSRD) Area 'A', Kicking Horse Mountain Resort (KHMR), Kicking Horse Country Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Golden in economic development initiatives.*

8. *To explore partnership opportunities with local private and public sector and other organizations to achieve community improvements, local business support, external investment, joint marketing initiatives and to position Golden to support economic growth.*

Financial

(Corporate Budget Impact)

Total cost of the program in 2015 was \$14,500 which included:

Membership fee (based on population): \$7,500

Chamber of Commerce Local Fee \$5,500

\$13,000 per annum

Administrative

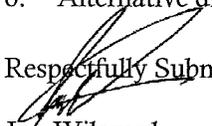
(Policy/Procedure Relevancy, Workload Impact and Consequences)

This was a new work plan item for administration in 2016 requiring approximately 8 hours of staff time to implement, monitor, and report upon. Renewal will approximate this.

OPTIONS

1. THAT Council **COMMITTS** to maintain requisite funding under the Imagine Kootenay Memorandum of Understanding between Partner Communities and the Community Futures of Central Kootenay to March 31st, 2022;
AND THAT Council **SUPPORTS** the renewal of a three year Local Partner Agreement with the Kicking Horse Country Chamber of Commerce under the Imagine Kootenay initiative subject to administrative approval in the amount of \$5,500 per annum to December 31st, 2021;
AND FURTHER THAT the monies for both be sourced from the Economic Opportunity Fund.
2. Maintain MOU commitment; implement a procurement process for the Local Partner.
3. Maintain MOU commitment; stipulate negotiation terms with the current Local Partner.
4. Maintain all commitments; resolve to fund through taxation.
5. Resolve to terminate the program.
6. Alternative direction deemed appropriate by Council.

Respectfully Submitted,


Jon Wilsgard

Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments- Chamber of Commerce 2018 Report, MOU, Current Local Partner Agreement

Imagine Kootenay Annual Report - Golden, BC
November, 2018



Prepared by:

Shelly Wadden | Executive Director
Kicking Horse Country Chamber of Commerce

Prepared for:

Columbia Shuswap Regional District
Town of Golden



Imagine Kootenay Annual Report - Golden, BC

Background

Imagine Kootenay has a 12-year history of connecting investment opportunity holders (e.g. businesses) with investors from within the region, nationally and internationally. As the first of its kind in rural BC, this successful model of regional collaboration has been recognized by the provincial government, economic development professionals, and been replicated across the province.

Twelve Partner Communities are now involved in Imagine Kootenay (IK). The 'First Points of Contact' in each community promotes IK within their community and liaise with opportunity holders, help promote them with IK and to support these opportunities to be investor ready.

Lessions Learned (2017)

1. Marketing too many things to too many people too fast.
2. Still a role for print media that is strategically placed (Western Investor Magazine featuring the Kootenays next month).
3. Destination BC study among others indicate that not a lot of people are aware of the Kootenays.
4. Importance of role models (Kootenay Rockies Tourism). What are they doing well? How can we replicate it?
5. Tourism is a gateway drug to bring people to the Kootenay's.
6. Boomerangs: The easiest people to attract are the ones that have been here before.
 - Retention strategy: B2B collaboration to convert PT's into FT's.
7. People coming to the IK platform are those that are interested in moving to the Kootenay's.
8. Complicating factors: Affordable housing; Transportation. Prospects want the rural lifestyle but they also want to keep their urban amenities (transportation, internet, green-tech, movie theatres, etc.)
 - Highlight/market ALL the things Golden has to offer, while being honest and transparent about what we do not offer.
9. Recruiting workers is tied with recruiting investors. How long is the new business owner going to be able to keep the business operating without employees?

Marketing Plan (2018-2019)

Under the Sun Consulting Corp. was hired to develop new marketing plan. The marketing plan aims to seven step marketing strategy that drives the 2018 - 2019 marketing plan will aid in achieving the following goals:

1. Attract a diverse workforce to the region.
2. Connect investors to Kootenay opportunities.
3. Stimulate Expanded Kootenay investment.
4. Achieve long term sustainability: CBT not providing funding after 2020.

The go-forward external and internal target audiences are data driven and have been defined for each of the above priorities.

Imagine Kootenay (2020)

- Sell the region versus community partners / Regional messaging versus community specific messaging.
- Cooperate where we would normally compete.
- Message content: complimentary messaging (i.e, Kootenay communities are all working together to be stronger together and sustainable.)
- Highlighting IK's value proposition and FPC's.
- Create awareness of the IK platform. The whole community needs to have knowledge of the IK platform and tools - "Hey, here's a really great resource that you could be using..." "We have these tools, here is how you can use them to your advantage."

2017 - 2018 Website Indicators for Golden

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Page views	3,011	2,651	2,212	2,749	10,623
Click-throughs	31	35	21	20	107
Prospect Inquiries	6	12	5	7	30
Job Searches	84	86	140	116	426
New Listings	2	1	2	4	9

2018 - 2019 Website Indicators for Golden

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Page views	2,898	2,464			5,362
Click-throughs	46	43			89
Prospect Inquires	11	12			23
Job Searches	116	31			147
New Listings	2	1			3

2018 - 2019 Website Indicators for Golden - Summary

As you can see, Golden's web traffic in Q1 (2018) was about 5% higher than in the previous quarter. The click-through rates and number of prospect inquiries on the listings are also higher. The number of job searchers remained constant. Golden's Investment/Opportunities Page remains a top performer.

For Golden, page views in Q2 were down 16% from Q1. However click throughs and prospects are steady, therefore we do not believe there's any reason to worry about the dip in page views. It should be noted that Imagine Kootenay page views were down about 10% site-wide in Q2

because they have paused their paid ads on Google, while they review their SEO strategy and keyword targeting with an online marketing consultant. The numbers will come back up when Imagine Kootenay gets their Google ads running again.

To help increase web traffic the Chamber included a “Your Better Life”, “You Can Do That Here”, “Investment Opportunities” and “Job Opportunities” link within the top header on the new website. In addition to this, new opportunity listings within the community continue to be contacted and encouraged to post on our IK page, as these always bring in additional traffic.

As of November 2018 we have 55 job opportunities and 22 investment opportunity listings on our site, 12 of which are turn-key businesses. To date, two businesses listed on the site have sold and one signed a lease deal, for a combined total of \$1,145,000. Investors have all confirmed that the IK platform played a role in the purchase of their new business.



Restaurant for Lease



Kicking Horse Janitorial



Dreamcatcher Hostel

Imagine Kootenay Capacity Funds Project

In December 2017, Chamber staff obtained funds in the amount of \$3,000 to complete a capacity building project for Golden and Area A. Elora Braden Creative Studios was hired to create a series of videos that highlighted an investment opportunity, showcased business success stories and promoted why people love living and working in Golden.

The videos were launched in sequence over a period of four weeks. During this time they reached a combined 7000 viewers and were shared 110 times. In addition to this, and while the videos were being rolled out, the Chamber saw an increase in followers on social media at a rate of 1.5 likes per day. When compared to the daily average of 0.1 likes per day, we can conclude that the new and engaging content helped raise the profile of the local business community as well as the Chamber of Commerce.

Summary

To further stimulate and expand Kootenay investment, Imagine Kootenay continues to create strategies to increase communication of opportunities and social media sharing. Aware that the capacity of FPC's is often limited, Imagine Kootenay staff will continue to support FPC's in



Attn: Honourable Mayor and Members of Council
Town of Golden

Attn: Karen Cathcart, Area A Director
Columbia Shuswap Regional District Area A

September 28th, 2018

RE: Imagine Kootenay Local Partner Contract Renewal

Dear Honorable Mayor, Members of Council and Karen,

On behalf of the Kicking Horse Country Chamber of Commerce please accept this letter of intent to renew the Imagine Kootenay Local Partner Contract.

Given the labour shortages that many local businesses are challenged with, thus the need to attract a diverse workforce to Golden and Area A, the Imagine Kootenay partnership will continue to be an invaluable one. Through their shareable content, web platform, social media initiatives, and sector partnerships, Imagine Kootenay is able to promote the unique advantages of working and living in our community.

In addition to workforce attraction, Imagine Kootenay has also identified Connecting Investors to Kootenay Opportunities and Stimulating Expanded Kootenay Investments as priorities.

By renewing the Imagine Kootenay Local Partnership Agreement, our community will continue to be resourced with a First Point of Contact (the Chamber) for those seeking entrepreneurship or investment in Golden and Area A via the Imagine Kootenay Platform. As the First Point of Contact, the Chamber plays a vital role by providing knowledgeable insight and information about local opportunities, thereby supporting incoming entrepreneurs and investors.

Last year the Chamber responded to a total of 30 prospect inquiries and supported 9 entrepreneurs in setting up and/or modifying a new/existing listing on the Imagine Kootenay site. The partnership also enabled the Chamber to create a video series highlighting why those exploring Golden as a potential place to work and live would love it here. Four local business success stories were also filmed. One of which was listed on the Imagine Kootenay Platform and sold just months after the video launch.

Kicking Horse Country Chamber of Commerce

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outreach to local investor networks and real estate agents. In addition to this, Imagine Kootenay plans to provide Imagine Kootenay partners with community investor-readiness tools and strategies under Imagine Kootenay branding.



If the Town of Golden and Columbia Shuswap Regional District, Area A chooses to renew the Local Partnership Contact, the Chamber would like to continue with all previous contract terms and conditions, removing only those items listed below:

1. Under Schedule A Responsibilities and Services
 - Remove item g. *Recruit Ambassadors and manage the Ambassador Program.*
 - Remove item h. *Identify and coordinate 3 facilitated local partner sessions.*

Sincerely,

Shelly Wadden

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