

Strategic Planning
Session- April 1st, 2022
Report



1. Overview

The Economic Action Partnership strategic planning session was held on April 1st, 2022. During this session, the committee reaffirmed its commitment to the following five economic action pillars:

- Tourism & Recreation Development
- Local Business Matters
- Agriculture (henceforth to be referred to as “Natural Resources” to allow for broader scope and the inclusion of the forestry sector)
- Quality of Life & Resident Attraction
- Sector Development (New Directions)

Further outcomes of the session were clarification of the governance and operational structure of the committee; an exploration of current challenges and opportunities for Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake; and the identification of action items for each pillar.

2. Governance and Operational Structure

Following consultation with the committee, it was decided that the committee would function in an advisory capacity, i.e. to inform policy and provide direction to the CV-KL Economic Action Partnership; and to identify key areas of economic development. The structure of a coordinating committee would be abolished. In its place, the execution of action items will be delegated to Kootenay Employment Services as the CV-KL EAP contract holder.

3. Challenges & Opportunities

The following challenges and opportunities were identified for the Creston Valley and Kootenay Lake communities:

Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address housing needs<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Workforce housing○ Take advantage of financial and other resources• Utilize a remote workforce and enhance connectivity• Demographic shift: more opportunities for youth to stay/come home• Remote learning: resources and programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing cost and lack of housing availability• Workforce: attracting workers, skills match, retention/ adapting to remote work• Child care shortages• Destination development and developing attractions for winter/shoulder seasons

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment readiness: focus on housing • Explore opportunities in forestry sector • Digital adoption in tourism, business, and agriculture • New tourism attractions/amenities • Attraction of residents & promoting values of Kootenay Lake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply chain issues
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4. Action Items

During the strategic planning session, attendees were divided into three working groups and each group was tasked with compiling a list of priority items for each pillar. The list of action items below were informed by the items identified by the three working groups. Priority was given to action items noted by all three groups. Further refinement of the list took place in a follow-up consultation with Gerri Brightwell from the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery, and Innovation. Appendix A provides a list of action items that were proposed at the strategic planning session, but not selected for continued action for the time being.

4.1. Tourism & Recreation Development

a. Wayfinding

Wayfinding remains a critical component of developing Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake as a prominent tourist destination. Initial work has already been done under the Economic Action Partnership to assess and document the current state of wayfinding systems and signage in the area. This work will serve as the foundation for phases 2 and 3 of the project. Phase 2 will consist of consultation with relevant community stakeholders and the Ministry of Transportation of the Interior. The expected outcome of Phase 2 will be designing a wayfinding strategy and concept for signage that aligns with community values and Ministry guidelines. For Phase 3 of the project, funding opportunities will be pursued to have new signage printed and installed.

b. Events coordination

The three working groups at the planning session were unanimous in their support of securing the services of an events coordinator to bolster the current offer of events in Creston Valley and Kootenay Lake, and to develop new events for the area. Community events are economically significant to attract tourists to our area and to prevent economic leakage.

This action item ties in with opportunities that were identified surrounding developing new tourist attractions and exploring digital adoption in the tourist section. It also addresses the challenge of increasing the number of visitors in the off seasons.

In order to take advantage of a funding opportunity from ETSI-BC, work on this action item has already commenced. On behalf of the CV-KL EAP, Kootenay Employment Services applied for a grant to fund the training and wages of an events coordinator. The results of this round of grant applications are expected to be announced in June 2022.

c. Support destination development

The CV-KL EAP will also provide support to other organizations who are involved in destination development. Support will be provided on an ongoing basis and as needed. Possible opportunities for collaboration with other organizations and stakeholders exist around water access and trails.

4.2. Local Business Matters

a. Business Recovery Advisors

Kootenay Employment Services has submitted a funding application to ETSI-BC to continue providing the services of a recovery advisor to the business community of Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake. Business Recovery Advisors have played a critical part in helping local businesses keep their doors open during the pandemic. Now that pandemic restrictions have eased, they continue to help businesses navigate available resources, forms of support and funding opportunities for continued financial recovery and growth.

b. Point of contact for Imagine Kootenay

The CV-KL EAP Manager, Leah Kleinhans, will serve as the first point of contact for inquiries submitted through Imagine Kootenay about investment in Creston and Kootenay Lake.

c. Photo Bank

Maintaining the photo bank was identified as a foundational action in Stronger Together (2018). This continues to be a priority as a collection of images of the area are needed for marketing and economic development activities carried out by the EAP and partner organizations. In its current state, the photo bank is in need of oversight, renewal and enhancement.

d. Support businesses with supply chain issues

With the COVID-19 pandemic and recent geopolitical tensions in Europe, many Canadian retailers and manufacturers have reported difficulty in procuring goods and materials. Local businesses in Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake have faced similar challenges. To help ease the effects of supply chain disruptions, the CV-KL EAP can support businesses by helping them leverage bulk purchasing.

e. Support local chambers

The Kootenay Lake and Creston Valley Chambers of Commerce are existing structures that lend support to the local business community. The CV-KL EAP will seek out opportunities for connection and collaboration with these organizations. For instance, the EAP will participate in the Kootenay Lake Chamber's "business after business" sessions and will be co-hosting a community housing discussion with this Chamber in June.

f. Think/Buy Local Campaign

The EAP will continue to promote a culture of support for local businesses by building on, and renewing, the current Creston Buy Local campaign and supporting the Kootenay Lake Chamber's Think Local initiative. Other opportunities to be explored are local procurement by private and public sector institutions.

g. Support businesses with staff attraction/retention

Employers across the Creston Valley and Kootenay Lake have reported struggles with attracting and retaining not only a sufficient number of staff, but also staff with the appropriate skill sets and experience required to meet operational needs. Kootenay Employment Services, in its role as WorkBC contractor, will support businesses in staff attraction and retention. This support consists of *inter alia* maintaining a comprehensive regional job board, providing employment counselling services to jobseekers, assisting jobseekers in accessing skills training opportunities, and administering a wage subsidy program that helps to offset the costs of training new employees.

h. Support downtown revitalization project

The EAP will partner with the Town of Creston and provide support with their plans for downtown revitalization. Enhancement of the downtown area, which serves as the core of commercial activity in the Creston Valley, is projected to have far-reaching socio-economic benefits.

4.3. Agriculture and Natural Resources

a. CanadaGAP certification

Producers of fruit and vegetables who are CanadaGAP certified are eligible to provide products to institutions and bulk purchasers. CanadaGAP certification is awarded to growers who have successfully passed an audit, ensuring that they comply with set industry benchmarks. There is an opportunity for the EAP to support local farmers in attaining this certification by delivering information sessions and information resources throughout the application stage. This action item ties in with campaigns to promote local products, identified under “Local Business Matters”.

b. Agri-tourism

The work done under “events coordination”, as part of the tourism pillar, will likewise support the development of Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake as a prime destination for agri-tourism.

c. Engagement with forestry sector

The EAP will create opportunities for engagement and consultation with the forestry sector, with the goal of identifying areas for connection and collaboration.

d. Engagement with agricultural sector

Further engagement with the agricultural sector will take place in order to arrive at a better understanding of the needs of the industry, and to determine what opportunities exist for the EAP to lend support to this sector.

e. “Kootenay” brand marketing

Establishment of a shared “Kootenay” brand for food producers in the Creston Valley could offer substantial benefits in terms of securing new markets while reducing overall marketing costs, and consolidating distribution efforts. The EAP will work with local producers to explore the feasibility of shared and centralized marketing.

f. Secondary food production

The Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake area is already well established as a primary food producer. The addition of secondary food production processes and packaging could deliver a host of economic benefits such as job creation, a reduction in resources utilized to transport products from producer to processor, and the opportunity for local businesses to participate in the food and

beverage processing sector, which constitutes the largest manufacturing sector in Canada¹. The EAP will explore possibilities within this potentially lucrative sector.

g. Support Food Hub

The EAP will connect with the Food Hub and offer support as needed. Potential areas for support could include writing and submitting funding proposals.

4.4. Quality of Life & Resident Attraction

a. Housing

During the strategic planning session, the shortage and high cost of housing was identified as a significant barrier to the economic vitality of the Creston Valley and Kootenay Lake. Without a sufficient supply of adequate and affordable housing, it becomes difficult for employers to recruit and retain employees, and Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake becomes a less viable candidate for investment. Addressing the current housing crisis is therefore of strategic importance to the EAP and partnerships with both public and public sector entities will be pursued in order to find housing solutions.

b. Child care

As is the case with the housing problem, the lack of available child care spaces in our area impedes efforts to attract workers and investors. A child care working group has been formed to identify and address the numerous challenges that have resulted in the current child care shortage.

c. Imagine Kootenay

As mentioned under the “Local Business Matters” pillar, the EAP Manager will serve as first point of contact for inquiries received through Imagine Kootenay.

¹ <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/canadas-agriculture-sectors/overview-canadas-agriculture-and-agri-food-sector#s3> (Date of access: May 30th 2022)

4.5. Sector Development

a. Support establishment of co-working spaces

The EAP will partner with relevant community stakeholders to explore the possibility of establishing a co-working space in the Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake area, and to provide support to such an initiative.

b. Support business incubators

By supporting early-stage entrepreneurs and start-ups in launching their businesses, the EAP could help facilitate economic growth. This support could take the form of arranging mentorship opportunities; or helping to secure investment or working space.

c. Cannabis sector development

Opportunities will be explored to support cannabis producers in transitioning to legalized production.

d. Technological advancement for local businesses

The EAP will seek to support local businesses with digital adoption and technological advancement through collaboration with KAST and other community partners.

Appendix A

Tourism and Recreation Development

- Support with “Market Park” project
- Water access for Goat River and Kootenay Lake
 - To include boat access (slips/ boat launches / best practices)
 - Brochure and online info
- Expanded hours for Visitor’s Centre – only open Saturdays/Sundays in summer, but needs to be open weekends year-round
- Trail Maintenance
- Evaluate transportation challenges and identify potential solutions
- Research opportunities to develop recreation trails along East Shore

Local Business Matters

- Updating Google profiles
- Increasing supports to Local Business Association (Advocacy)

Agriculture & Natural Resources

- Education surrounding protection of water habitat
- Private Land Fibre Access (coordination)
- Food security / sustainability

Quality of Life & Resident Attraction

- Amenity Development
- Supporting green space development when new housing is developed: benches/ trails/ connectivity/ water access

Sector Development

- Farm gate sales & direct distribution