



Community Futures

Growing communities one idea at a time.

2013 - 2014 Annual Report

Community Futures Central Kootenay
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Letter from the Chair

Community Futures continues to find new ways to support businesses owners and the economy in Central Kootenay.

We started delivering Columbia Basin Trust's Basin Business Advisors Program this past year, in partnership with other CF's in the region. The BBA program has been a great complement to our existing business support programs and we are happy that we are able to provide additional support to entrepreneurs.

Our business loans and self-employment programs continue to be important tools that provide support to start-up and existing businesses. Through our work with these two programs CF was able to create or maintain over 175 jobs in Central Kootenay.



This year we saw some changes on our Board and I'd like to recognize the work of our past Board Chair, Doreen Smecher who after 25 years of being actively involved with CFDC of Central Kootenay retired from our Board. Her input to our organization, in terms of teamwork, enthusiasm, direction, and overall commitment, was truly respected and appreciated by all.

We recently hosted the 2014 Community Futures Community Economic Development Forum where we brought together community partners to learn about how we can collaborate to use technology and broadband to support our communities to be competitive in the future.

I'd like to thank the staff, my fellow Board members, volunteer committee members and our community partners for their efforts and enthusiasm to support Community Futures in fulfilling its mandate.

Bob Wright,
Board Chair

Our Mission:

Our mission is to facilitate and/or promote activities which will enhance the economic environment of our communities through entrepreneurial development and the creation of small business initiatives.

Letter from the Executive Director

The fiscal year of 2013/14 was a year of growth for Community Futures Central Kootenay. We saw our team of staff grow from 15 to 21 which increased our capacity to support entrepreneurial development and the rural economy of Central Kootenay.

In partnership with Basin Community Futures, we took on the delivery of the Basin Business Advisors program funded by Columbia Basin Trust. Through this program 146 small business owners and social enterprises were supported to address business issues and opportunities



between September 2013 and March 2014. We also launched *Me Inc.*, a pre-start up entrepreneurial workshop that highlights things to consider when exploring entrepreneurship as a career option.

The Self-Employment (SE) program continues to support start-up businesses in our region. Over 2013/14 we supported 47 clients to launch businesses. Program funding has increased over the past year which has enhanced our ability to provide support to our clients. A one-day business planning workshop has been re-introduced for both SE clients as well as the general public and has been a resounding success.

Our Business Loans program continues to be very strong and we were able to support 27 entrepreneurs invest over \$1.2 million to help maintain, grow or expand their Central Kootenay-based business. During this past year our ability to partner with other Community Futures offices on larger loans resulted in the authorization of 3 partnered loans totalling \$765,000.

Our community economic development activities leveraged partnerships in the region. Efforts included piloting new business development tools such as community economic gardening which brings Fortune 500 marketing research tools to small and medium enterprises, inspiring entrepreneurship in youth through Junior Dragons Den and strengthening our digital economy by working with communities to bring in and leverage broadband infrastructure. Invest Kootenay has seen new communities join the partnership and continues to attract investment to the region.

We'd like to thank our volunteer Board members, our staff and community partners for their commitment to supporting entrepreneurs to be successful and their collaborative approach to supporting community economic development in Central Kootenay and the Basin Boundary.

We look forward to continuing our efforts to support new and existing entrepreneurs to start-up and grow and to strengthen our rural economy in 2014/15.

Andrea Wilkey,
Executive Director

Business Loans Program

The small business loan fund continues to be a core service of Community Futures Central Kootenay. The purpose of the fund is to assist Central Kootenay entrepreneurs to start, expand and, most importantly, succeed in business.

As well as providing access to financing, we assist entrepreneurs to prepare business plans, cash flow forecasts and management strategies.

This past fiscal year, April 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014, our office approved 27 loans totaling \$1,248,848, disbursing \$1,073,844 during that period. These loans enabled businesses to create or maintain 130 jobs in the Central Kootenay region. Our loans portfolio was at \$5.4 million as of March 31, 2013.

Our office has been instrumental in the expansion of partnered loans with other Community Futures (CF) offices in the region. This has resulted in 10 loan participation agreements, with our office as lead lender in 9 of those loans. Since 2008 our office has sourced \$2.1 million in partnered loan dollars with 5 other CF offices.

We continue to focus on providing small business owners and new entrepreneurs with a reasonable source of funding for all of their financial needs. One of our best sources of new business is through our existing clients. Word of mouth is also an effective tool in increasing local awareness of our services.

Community Futures Central Kootenay encompasses a large territory and as such we invest time to visit areas throughout our region. The level of service and knowledge that we are able to provide to our clients result in increased lending activities, both in terms of the total number of loans and the amount of capital that we lend.

As a result of its work in the region, Community Futures Central Kootenay has gained credibility and trust with the businesses in the region.

For more information regarding our loans program, contact Don McCulloch, Business Loans Manager or Val Radcliffe, Business Loans Analyst.

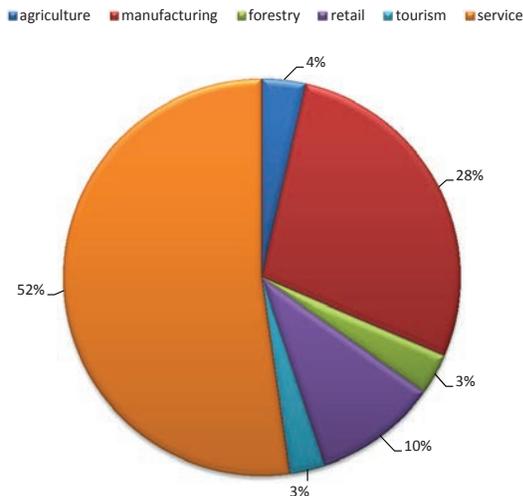


Self-Employment Program

Community Futures' Self-Employment Program has helped almost 1,600 small and home based businesses start up and run successfully in the Central Kootenay region – businesses that play a vital part in our rural economy.

The Self-Employment program is a strategic combination of one-on-one assistance, workshops, mentoring, and specialty counselling. The primary objective is to help people make a well thought out, lasting transition from unemployment or under-employment to self-employment. Through the 48 week program new entrepreneurs receive instruction and support while developing their business plan. They also receive ongoing training, support and business coaching while they start and run their business. If eligible, clients will receive financial support for the duration of the program. Businesses started through the Self Employment Program have a higher success rate than the national average.

Businesses by Sector - Since Inception



In 2013/14, we assisted 47 clients, and created or maintained 46 jobs. Since inception the program has created or maintained over 2,200 jobs.

Community Futures has been the delivery agent of the Self-Employment Program since its inception in 1988. In 2012/13 the Self-Employment Program transitioned to the Employment Program of BC and as a result underwent some significant changes.

The program's eligibility has expanded to include all of the following:

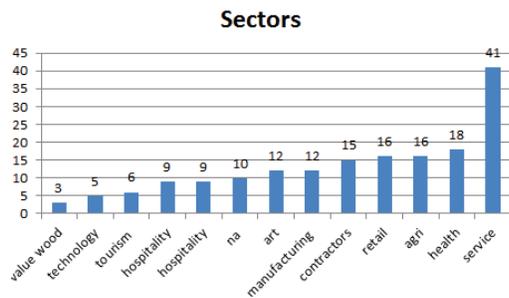
- Individuals currently receiving Employment Insurance (EI), or had an EI claim in the previous 3 years, or a maternity/parental claim in the past five years and have not re-entered the workforce;
- Individuals currently receiving BC Benefits with a Persons with Disabilities (PWD) status, or Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB) status; and
- Individuals with a disability who may or may not be receiving any other forms of support.

To determine eligibility for the Self-Employment Program, interested individuals must first contact one of the regional Work BC Service Centres.

Basin Business Advisors Program

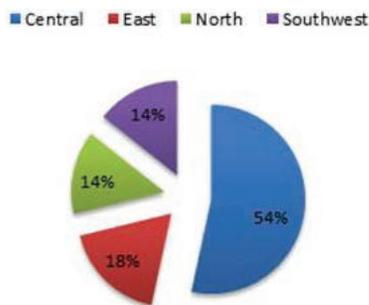
During the spring of 2013, Community Futures Central Kootenay in partnership with Basin CF's was engaged to deliver Columbia Basin Trust's Basin Business Advisors (BBA) Program.

The BBA program supports small- and medium-sized businesses in the Basin by providing free, one-to-one, confidential business counselling and assessment services, and by arranging and cost-sharing specialized consulting services. As of this year, these services are now available to all business models, including social enterprises.



Sector distribution: The sector with the highest demand for BBA services is the "Service" sector. Businesses in this sector provide services to the end consumers or business to business. e.g. accounting, clothing alterations, etc.

Data shown
July 2013 – March 31, 2014



Geographic distribution: The central Basin is the busiest region for business advisory services. It also has the highest number of business licenses per capita.

Since September 2013, the BBA program has provided advisory services to over 140 clients in the Basin. Advisory services range from brief counselling sessions, to full business assessments to in some cases referrals to specialized business consultants. Social enterprises also engaged the program and benefited from business advisory services. Business topics that were most frequently addressed included business planning and financial advice.

The BBA program also developed, branded and launched "Me Inc." a workshop providing pre-start-up entrepreneurial education to individuals or organizations exploring entrepreneurship or considering purchasing or starting a business. A total of 14 Me Inc sessions have been delivered to date around the Basin as well as online with over 50 attendees. Customized versions of the Me Inc session have also been delivered to youth.

The BBA program is also responsible for maintaining and publishing a Business Resource Directory which provides Basin businesses with a one-stop resource for business development service provider contact information. As well, BBA staff are working to build an interagency group to identify gaps and opportunity areas in support services provided to Basin businesses.

We look forward to continuing to support Basin businesses through this program in the upcoming year.

Mandate:

Community Futures Central Kootenay is committed to increasing community and regional capacity through community economic development. We aim to nurture partnerships, inspire innovative thinking, develop best practice initiatives and promote a healthy, vibrant economic future for our area.

Our CED Mandate:

- Increase capacity to the region;
- Foster CED partnerships;
- Provide leadership to our region;
- Provide programs including Business Loans, Self-Employment, Basin Business Advisor and Business Training; and
- Enable communities to act on CED opportunities.

Partnerships, initiatives and projects include:

Invest Kootenay

Invest Kootenay raises the profile of local businesses throughout the Kootenay region, with the aim of attracting, retaining and expanding investment. The website hosts an interactive database designed to connect investors with opportunity holders. The website also provides a one-stop shop for interested investors that includes community profiles, success stories, and local contact information. Currently Invest Kootenay has nine community partners which include: Castlegar, Nelson, Kootenay Lake, Lower Columbia (includes Trail, Rossland, Fruitvale, Montrose and RDKB Areas A & B), Revelstoke, Columbia Valley (includes Radium Hot Springs, Invermere, Canal Flats and RDEK Areas F&G), Kimberley, Sparwood and Fernie. Learn more about Invest Kootenay at www.investkootenay.com.

West Kootenay Economic Development Dialogue

The West Kootenay Economic Development Dialogues includes representatives of the communities of Castlegar, Nelson, Rossland, Trail and Kaslo from local government, Community Futures, Chambers of Commerce and other regional organizations including Columbia Basin Trust, Selkirk College, the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, Kootenay Association of Science & Technology and the Lower Columbia Initiative. This group provides collaborative leadership in:

- identifying initiatives that enhance regional economic development;
- creating a unified voice for improving regional economic development;
- collaborating on joint opportunities and solutions to common issues; and
- learning from shared experiences.

The Nelson and Area Economic Development Partnership

The NAEDP is a partnership between the City of Nelson, Community Futures Central Kootenay, the Nelson & District Chamber of Commerce and RDCK Areas E and F. The partnership's goal is to take a unified approach to community economic development initiatives for the city and region. The NAEDP's major project for 2013/14 has been to bring broadband infrastructure to Nelson businesses.

Junior Dragons' Den

The goals of Junior Dragons' Den are to promote entrepreneurship as a viable and exciting career choice amongst today's youth age 13-17 throughout the West Kootenay/Boundary region by supporting the development of: business skills in youth, a network of youth entrepreneurs, providing mentorship opportunities and increasing regional stakeholder involvement in developing the youth business community.

Community Economic Gardening Pilot Project

The Community Economic Gardening pilot aimed to demonstrate to businesses and business-related organizations throughout the Basin the value of Economic Gardening in growing the market and industry intelligence of local businesses. Economic Gardening takes a 'grow from within' approach to regional economic development, helping local businesses to grow, expand and develop new markets for products and services. Five businesses in the Basin worked with a community economic gardening consultant to pilot this tool. We look forward to hearing about pilot findings.

Kootenay Boundary Productivity Project

The Kootenay Boundary Productivity Project was designed to address businesses' productivity and innovation challenges. The project involved researching business productivity strategies from other jurisdictions, creation of a productivity assessment tool and delivery of productivity enhancement strategies for local businesses. The goal was to increase investment by small and medium enterprises in key productivity drivers such as physical capital, human capital and innovation. Four businesses in the Basin worked with a productivity consultant to pilot the productivity assessment tool and to implement outcomes.

Business Exchange

The Business Exchange assists local small business owners by providing a confidential environment for them to share ideas, give positive feedback and ongoing support for business issues. Members meet with each other once a month to act as one another's unofficial advisors with the goal of helping to solve each other's business problems. Business exchanges are in place in Castlegar and Nelson.

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