Local Economic Development in B.C.  
TOP 12 FINDINGS
Introduction & Background

This summary presents the top findings selected from the 2018 B.C. Local Economic Development Survey results and analysis. The goal of the survey is to get a sense of where communities throughout B.C. are in their planning process, what some of the differences can tell us about economic development, and what is important to the people we work with. Through this, and the more detailed complete results, our hope is that people throughout B.C. will use these results to make informed decisions about their communities and the direction of their economic development. Additionally, government will use the findings to help inform our tools, resources and program planning.

Where relevant, we have highlighted differences across community size and geography so that everyone reading this can see some of their own story in the numbers.

The 2018 B.C. Local Economic Development survey is a follow-up to the 2016 survey, conducted by the B.C. Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training, the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) and the BC Economic Development Association, as well as a 2009 survey conducted by UBCM. For 2018, a partnership was established between the Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology and the Union of BC Municipalities, to take advantage of expertise within each organization throughout the question development, survey delivery, and presentation of results.

The data were gathered through an online survey, sent by e-mail and offered as a URL on Twitter and LinkedIn to economic development practitioners, local elected officials, chief administrative officers and city managers, tourism and destination management officers, and other individuals involved in economic development work throughout B.C. The full contact list contained 3,415 unique e-mail addresses from lists maintained by the Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology, the BC Economic Development Association, and the CivicInfo BC directories maintained by the Union of BC Municipalities. Respondents were also encouraged to forward the survey to their own contacts.

The survey was launched at the annual Union of BC Municipalities Convention in Whistler on September 10, 2018. The initial collection period ran until October 5, 2018 and was extended until October 19, 2018.

In the end, 232 people completed the core questions in the survey. These responses represented 111 of B.C.'s 189 municipalities, and were dispersed through 26 of the province's 28 regional districts and all eight economic development regions.

If you have any questions about the 2018 B.C. Local Economic Development Survey, or if you are interested in further analysis of the data, please e-mail us at economicdevelopment@gov.bc.ca.
Most respondents in the survey have an economic development plan. However, plans only improve economic development effectiveness when they’re good enough that people no longer feel planning or mandates are a barrier. **Having a poorly designed plan is similar to having no plan** at all.

**WELL-DESIGNED PLAN**

80% effective

**POORLY DESIGNED PLAN**

33% effective

**PUT IT INTO ACTION:**

Do you believe in your economic development plan? Is it time to revisit it?
Among people’s top three long-term economic development goals, the two most common are **creating jobs** and improving residents’ **quality of life**.

Around **30%** of communities see **sustainability** as a central economic development goal, but **more than 60%** include **sustainability considerations** in their strategic plans.

This shows how more holistic approaches to economic development are starting to complement traditional focuses.
Approaches

OVERALL:

42% of local governments do economic development themselves
24% do it externally

KOOTENAY:

41% do it externally
12% do it themselves

Economic development services are delivered by local governments more often than by external groups.

The exception is the Kootenay region, which is the only part of the B.C. where external approaches are more common.

PUT IT INTO ACTION:
Who does the bulk of economic development in your community? Why is it set up this way?
The median number of priority sectors for economic development was three in most of B.C., jumping to six in the northern regions. Tourism was a top priority sector in every region, and is included in most economic development plans.
People in the **Thompson Okanagan** and **Lower Mainland/Southwest** regions see land availability as an economic development challenge more often than an asset.

This may be driven by **land and affordability pressures** in the Lower Mainland pushing more people and investment towards the Southern Interior.

**PUT IT INTO ACTION:**

How do these **land use pressured** affect economic development in your community?
Community culture is seen more often as an asset than a challenge in the Lower Mainland/Southwest, Vancouver Island/Coast, and Thompson Okanagan regions.

The northern regions, by contrast, see community culture as less of an asset than the Island, and as more of a challenge than the Lower Mainland.
Communities were more likely to see skills and workforce as a challenge than an asset everywhere except the Lower Mainland/Southwest.

However, natural setting was almost universally seen as an asset in B.C., which can help with workforce attraction.

PUT IT INTO ACTION:
What types of workers do you need to attract to your community? How can your natural setting help?
The Kootenay region, Vancouver Island/Coast region, and northern regions are significantly more likely to see transportation connections as a challenge rather than an asset.

PUT IT INTO ACTION:
What could you be doing to improve transportation in your region?
Are you partnering with other communities on this?
Throughout the province, the two most common barriers to economic development are **lacks of human and financial resources**.

Over a quarter of respondents also mentioned **lack of leadership** or **priority** given to economic development as one of their top three barriers.

**PUT IT INTO ACTION:**

How do your strategies or collaborations account for the **capacity constraints** of your partners?
Over 30% of community priorities have no partnership to address them. This means huge potential for new partnerships.

When creating new partnerships, most people prefer informal channels like collaborative projects or personal connections.
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Diverse Partnerships

People with *more diverse partnerships* feel their economic development is *more effective*.

Those with 10 or more types of partners were *34 percentage points* more likely to feel effective than those with fewer than four types.

PUT IT INTO ACTION:
Are there **new groups** you could be reaching out to and partnering with?
**Look outside** your usual network!
Regional Collaborations

The strong collaboration culture in the Thompson Okanagan and Cariboo regions shows up in the survey data.

The median number of types of partners in most of B.C. is 4, but jumps to 6 in the Cariboo and 7 in the Thompson Okanagan region.

PUT IT INTO ACTION:
Would your economic development be more effective if you diversified your partnerships?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Partnerships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARIBOO</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOOTENAY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOWER MAINLAND/ SOUTHWEST</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NECHAKO, NORTH COAST, NORTHEAST</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THOMPSON OKANAGAN</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VANCOUVER ISLAND/COAST</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Thank you

Our sincere thanks to everybody, throughout this great province, who took the time to complete the survey. Your input is critical to supporting evidence-based economic development in British Columbia.

Looking for more tools and resources to help reach your economic development potential?

Visit:
www.gov.bc.ca/economicdevelopment

Have questions?
ecologicdevelopment@gov.bc.ca

Produced by the B.C. Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology in partnership with the Union of BC Municipalities.
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