

Community Excellence Awards

2018 Application Form

Please complete and return the application form by Friday, May 25, 2018. All questions are required to be answered by typing directly in this form. If you have any questions, contact awards@ubcm.ca or (250) 356-5193.

SECTION 1: Applicant Information

Local Government: City of Coquitlam

Complete Mailing Address: 3000 Guildford Way, Coquitlam, BC, V3B 7N2

Contact Person: Graham Stuart

Position: Manager, Corporate Planning

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SECTION 2: Category

- Excellence in Governance.** *Governance processes or policies that are outcomes-based and consensus oriented; support and encourage citizen participation in civic decision-making; are efficient, equitable and inclusive, open and transparent; and exemplify best practices in accountability, effectiveness, and long term thinking.*
- Excellence in Service Delivery.** *Projects/programs that provide effective services in a proactive manner, demonstrate benefit to the community, and utilize performance measures, benchmarks and standards to ensure sustainable service delivery.*
- Excellence in Asset Management.** *Projects/programs that demonstrate a comprehensive system of asset management policies and practices, meeting and/or exceeding accepted best practices.*
- Excellence in Sustainability.** *Projects/programs that incorporate a long-term sustainability lens by considering cultural, social, economic and environmental issues in planning, policy and practice.*

SECTION 3: Project/Program Details

1. Name of the Project/Program:

Coquitlam Business LinQ

2. Project/Program Summary. Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less.

Coquitlam's Business LinQ is a one-stop shop for businesses who wish to receive tailored, one-on-one assistance with City permitting and regulatory requirements. Situated as a unique physical space within City Hall, Coquitlam's Business LinQ is a customer service initiative that puts business clients in direct contact with staff experts who can provide a wide array of information on establishing and maintaining a business in Coquitlam. Since opening in January 2018, client demand has remained steady, and, coupled with a high satisfaction rate, offers excellent return on investment for the minimal capital and labour costs required to establish the space.

3. Demonstrating Excellence. Please describe how your project/program demonstrates excellence in meeting the purposes of local government in BC and provides promising practices for others to follow.

Working closely with Economic Development staff, the Business Licensing group at the City of Coquitlam has taken an innovative approach to leveraging its role administering business licences and as the first point of contact for many existing and prospective businesses to better serve their needs. Business LinQ is a physical centre at Coquitlam City Hall from which businesses can receive one-on-one assistance navigating the permitting and regulatory processes. This facility has enhanced customer service, supporting existing business retention and expansion and attraction initiatives. It is the extension of other Business Licensing policy and procedure improvements designed to provide a one-stop point of contact at City Hall for all business-related permitting and regulatory questions. Business LinQ makes things easier for businesses by providing information, assistance and guidance for all types of businesses, in one centralized location.

Since opening in January 2018, Business LinQ has assisted more than 180 businesses. Furthermore, customer satisfaction rates are overwhelmingly positive; results from an ongoing survey involving the service show that 95% of respondents say the advice received was "absolutely" helpful. Survey results and statistics about the type of businesses using the service and the nature of their questions are being tracked to support data-informed policy decision-making.

4. Category Criteria.

A. Please describe how your project/program meets the objectives of the category you have applied under. Refer to S. 3 of the Program & Application Guide.

Coquitlam has a vibrant local economy comprising many different business models, ranging from home-based businesses to major international corporations, which represent a diverse cross-section of industries and sectors. While their needs are complex, unique, and change over time, each business operating in Coquitlam must apply for and obtain a City business licence upon start-up, and renew that licence each year. In 2017, 6,736 business licences were issued, of which 1,448 were new licences. Over the last five years, the total number of business licences issued grew by 8%, with 18% growth in new business licences issued.

Business licensing and permitting functions are performed by the Business Licensing group within the Legal and Bylaw Enforcement Division. Business Licensing is responsible for all front-line queries regarding licensing requirements in the City. Licensing staff serves as the file managers from application to issuance. This group works closely with staff in Economic Development to support the Economic Development Program's attraction, retention and expansion goals. The Business Licensing group also works with staff in the Development Planning and Building Permit Divisions to ensure businesses are located in the appropriate zones and commercial spaces are constructed safely in compliance with applicable Building Codes and other organizations' public health and safety requirements.

Starting in 2016 the Business Licensing group undertook an informal core service review to identify opportunities to improve customer service and update internal processes and procedures to develop an outward 'one-stop' experience for businesses in Coquitlam. The Division has a number of on-going projects and projects planned for 2018 that involve business-oriented process improvements to achieve a net decrease in processing times across all applicable City groups. These projects, such as the establishment of an internal service level standard to streamline and monitor the timelines for referrals between Business Licensing, Development Planning and Building Permits, are coordinated through a new interdepartmental staff working group dedicated to ensuring efficiencies for the business community.

Establishing Business LinQ in a designated, visible and accessible area at City Hall has had the added benefit of advertising the advisory services and one-stop philosophy to people who may find themselves at City Hall for other reasons. This supports the Division's objective of providing proactive services to the business community—assisting before potentially problematic situations (e.g. signing a lease for space in an inappropriate zone) might otherwise arise. It has also increased and facilitated referrals to the Economic Development Division.

Funding for the establishment of Business LinQ came from the Economic Development Reserve, which is used to fund projects and initiatives that would create value and positive economic impact for the business community. The ongoing costs associated with staffing the Business LinQ are part of the operating budget of the Business Licensing division within Legal and Bylaw Enforcement.

B. In many cases projects may meet the criteria of more than one category. If applicable, please describe how your project meets the criteria of one or more other categories.

SECTION 4: Program Criteria

5. Leadership. Describe the extent to which your local government acted as a local or regional leader in the development or implementation of the project/program.

Coquitlam's Business Licensing group's operating mandate is to help new and existing businesses thrive by offering efficient, relationship-based services that meet businesses' needs. Many businesses would like personalized assistance understanding and completing the various permitting and regulatory approval processes at City Hall. The creation of Business LinQ has showcased leadership in this regard by providing a convenient, physical space within City Hall where business owners can receive one-on-one staff support. At its core, Business LinQ is a customer service-related initiative; the goal is to ensure business owners/operators are not faced with undue red tape when trying to establish their business in Coquitlam.

One aspect of Business LinQ that differs from other traditional municipal business resource centres is that it is administered by staff who perform a regulatory function. That is, rather than using an economic development lens, Business LinQ provides tailored support to businesses, addressing specific permitting questions related to that particular client. Coquitlam has found this model to be effective; client feedback is overwhelmingly positive, and staff has been able to help business owners avoid costly mistakes.

6. Partnerships and collaboration. Describe the breadth and depth of community and/or regional partnerships that supported the project/program and the extent to which internal and/or external collaboration was evident.

Coquitlam's Business LinQ is a collaborative partnership between the Economic Development and Business Licensing groups. Roughly 25% of Coquitlam's business licence applications each year are new businesses, meaning there is a large segment of the business community who may not be aware of the regulations required to operate within the City. Furthermore, by linking client needs identified through the business attraction process in Economic Development with an internal referral process that provides one-on-one service to clients, Business LinQ enhances the customer experience and avoids a piecemeal service model. It has the added benefit of increasing regulatory compliance without added staff resources, and in a more positive, preventative manner.

7. Innovation and promising practices. Describe the degree to which the project/program demonstrated creativity and innovation, and contributed to increased efficiency or effectiveness.

An innovative feature of Business LinQ is its physical space, which has been specifically designed to be a welcoming and user-friendly resource room. The room is located on the main level of City Hall, near reception, offering an inviting place for people to drop in. A shared monitor mounted to the wall and a display of relevant resource materials are also important tools used to communicate effectively with clients. Services are available in many languages using Coquitlam's staff Language Bank when a translator is necessary.

Business LinQ is a space where individuals can share their personal experiences over a

coffee or tea while receiving a personalized approach to streamlining City services. In-person meetings are proving to be the preferred approach for many clients, with more than 86% of visits taking place in the centre. For those who don't have time to drop-in, Skype services are offered. Business LinQ was specially designed to ensure it looks and feels like a business resource centre rather than a typical municipal office or permit counter.

8. Public engagement and communications. Describe the extent to which public engagement was foundational to the success of the project/program, including the use of communication tools such as social media.

As Business LinQ is a collaborative initiative between Business Licensing and Economic Development staff, one of the benefits relates to connecting businesses with third-party services and resources that can also offer assistance. To that end, Business LinQ is not only a customer-service initiative, but also one that can help attract and retain businesses in the City of Coquitlam. As an example, since opening in January 2018, Business LinQ has held a number of events to raise awareness within the local business community. This has included a grand opening at City Hall, a public presentation to the Economic Development Advisory Committee, and business community engagement at Coquitlam Public Library. Upcoming events include an information session at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (Immigrant Settlement & Integration Program) on June 29 and a pop-up event with Small Business BC on July 10 at City Hall.

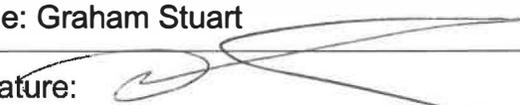
9. Transferability. Describe the degree to which the process or outcomes of the project, or other learnings, could be conveyed to other UBCM members.

Coquitlam's Business LinQ is an initiative that can be duplicated by any municipality, large or small, primarily as it provides advisory services related to municipalities' core business licensing functions. In their regulatory capacities, municipalities of all sizes are responsible for zoning and business licensing, ensuring that land use designations are properly adhered to and businesses are compliant. By leveraging knowledge and expertise from the staff responsible for those functions, Coquitlam's Business LinQ is a unique project that provides one-on-one support to businesses within the municipality. Moreover, from a staff resource perspective, because the function is already performed by the municipality, the project is less about adding additional resources to support the initiative than it is about aligning existing resources to the needs of clients; a large budget is not required to implement a project such as Business LinQ due to its minimal one-time capital cost and no net labour cost.

SECTION 5: Additional Information

10. Please share any other information you think may help support your submission.

SECTION 6: Signature

Applications are required to be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant.	
Name: Graham Stuart	Title: Manager Corporate Planning
Signature: 	Date: May 24, 2018

All applicants are required to submit:

- Signed application form. Applications should be submitted as Word or PDF files.
- Five representatives photos of the project. Photos should be submitted as JPEG files.

If you choose to submit your application by e-mail, hard copies do not need to follow.

Submit applications to Local Government Program Services, Union of BC Municipalities

E-mail: awards@ubcm.ca

Mail: 525 Government Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 0A8