



**2012 COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS  
Category Worksheet**

**BEST PRACTICES, General**

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**Name of Local Government: District of Elkford**

**Project/Program Title: District of Elkford Branding**

**Project Summary Paragraph**

Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less.

In 2006, the District of Elkford completed a branding initiative that provided Elkford with a new brand and an innovative marketing campaign. Over the past 6 years, the Elkford brand has flourished and has been implemented into almost all aspects of the District's operations. Descriptors used to describe Elkford and the community brand are primarily physical and revolve around the geography of place. Elkford is an outdoor place...where the active adventure and passive pursuit of serenity are as big as the mountains. Visitors and investors come to the community and the area to "escape" from the pressures of urban environments.

The Elkford brand has evolved significantly in recent years and has been widely recognized on a regional, provincial and international level for being an exemplary example of community branding.

**Project Analysis**

Please answer the question in 300 words or less in 11 pt Arial font (our judges value directness and brevity). If you experience difficulty answering a particular question, consider the aspects of your program that may relate to the question and show us how they are linked.

**1. SERVICES**

How has the implementation of this program/project improved services in your community?

The implementation of the Elkford brand has helped to provide the community with a unified and cohesive image that truly represents what Elkford is to its citizens and what it has to offer visitors and investors. The Elkford brand received some criticism and resistance in the earlier stages; however, it has come to be adored and embraced by both locals and tourists. It can be said that a clearer and unified identity has helped to increase community pride.

The Elkford brand has also aided in the growth and prosperity that is occurring within the community. The community relies heavily on the local coal mining industry, as Teck Coal is the main employer in the Elk Valley, and Teck's ongoing success has helped Elkford continue to prosper; however, our branding has also helped Elkford to attract investors and

residents to the community. We have used the brand as yet another way to promote the community and attract more services to our town. The construction of the new Elkford Community Conference Centre, a new post office, extensive residential construction and much more are all signs that Elkford is continuing to grow. The recent success of our community is multifaceted and our branding is definitely one of the entities that has, and will, contribute to our current and future success.

## 2. EFFECTIVENESS

How is the program/project more efficient and/or effective than it was before?

The Elkford brand has not necessarily become more effective that it has been in previous years, but rather, further developed and inclusive. The Elkford brand has grown from a series of advertisements and well developed brand standards to a full-fledge marketing campaign. The Elkford brand has been incorporated into our facilities, the entire District fleet of vehicles, the District of Elkford website ([www.elkford.ca](http://www.elkford.ca)), the Elkford winter and summer promotional videos (<http://www.youtube.com/user/DistrictofElkford>), our town flag and banners, our signage, social media, brochures and so much more. The wide-spread use and exposure of the brand has made it a more effective marketing tool, as we are reaching a much broader audience than was previously possible.

## 3. ECONOMIC IMPACT

How has the program/project saved the community money and/or resources or encouraged economic development?

Understanding the “customer” is critical to successful branding. The aspirations that drive existing residents, investors, and visitors to visit and/or live in a community must be reflected in the beating heart of the brand. The brand needs to work in conjunction with realistic market opportunities, identifying a “niche” image that feeds the nurturing of target markets.

By determining our tourism niche and our competitive advantage, our marketing campaign has continued to be successful. Elkford is currently booming and we are seeing a substantial amount of growth and development. We have used our marketing and branding as a way to attract investors and residents who may have otherwise chose neighbouring communities to do business in or live in.

## 4. ACCOUNTABILITY

How has this program/project improved upon accountability to the community's citizens?

The District of Elkford prides itself on providing its residents with accurate, current and useful information and the Elkford brand has allowed us to take this to the next level. The fun and vibrant appearance of the brand makes engaging with somewhat “boring” information a little more enjoyable and entertaining. The District of Elkford newsletter provides residents with important information about the activities of local government in a fun and innovative manner

(<http://elkford.fileprosite.com/contentengine/Link.aspx?ID=670&Direct=1>). The District of Elkford's social media platforms, such as Facebook, are another tool that the District uses to provide residents with information. Our Facebook page has been fully branded and exposes people to the brand (<http://www.facebook.com/elkfordwildatheart>).

Our brand is about making the activities of local government a little more fun and accessible to the average citizen.

## 5. AWARENESS

How has this program/project created more awareness in the community about local government actions?

Same as noted above.

## 6. TEAMWORK

Tell us about the teamwork involved in making this program/project possible.

Elkford's brand was developed by Twist Marketing from Calgary, Alberta and we still work with them quite closely to develop new marketing initiatives; however, we have taken on a lot more ownership and maintenance of the brand in-house.

## 7. INNOVATION

What makes this program/project innovative and creative?

The Elkford brand is a prime example of an innovate and creative project. Our branding is a witty and fun depiction of everything that Elkford is – “a place where nature prevails – and humanity borrows a bit of space.” Our tongue and cheek brand addresses that Elkford is ‘Wild at Heart’: those who appreciate Elkford come to the community and the area to escape the pressures of urban environments. These outdoor enthusiasts seek the serenity, solitude and active lifestyle that is afforded – and affordable – in Elkford. Blank spots on the map to explore, offer freedom that nurtures the human spirit. For those who are passionate about Elkford, the end of the road is the beginning of a spiritual awakening inspired by nature's cathedral.

Our brand does not try to establish Elkford as anything that it is not, but rather emphasizes the unique and beautiful wilderness that Elkford is. The brand has identified Elkford's niche and has been successful in attracting people, coal mine employees, and investment to a more remote location

## 8. SUSTAINABILITY

What measures have you put in place to ensure the continued operation of this initiative? (*e.g. staff time, resources, financial*)

In 2010, the District hired a Corporate Communications Clerk who is responsible for the implementation of the brand, overseeing that the brand standards are properly utilized in all

District publications and materials (internal and external), maintenance of the District of Elkford website and social media platforms, continuing to work on the development and design of the District's branding, assisting in the development of tourism development programs and marketing initiatives and promoting and facilitating civic engagement through web and print publications, as well as local events.

The District has also allocated money on an annual basis to fund new branding initiatives, such as ad development, a new tourism website, promotional materials and much more. The success of the brand depends on continuous maintenance and development.

## 9. BEST PRACTICES

What sets this program/project apart as a winning idea? Why should it be considered a best practice, in comparison to other similar programs?

The Elkford brand was recognized by the Economic Development Association of British Columbia as the 2010-2011 Marketing Project of the Year and recently was awarded three awards at the 18th Annual Summit International Awards for creative excellence. Twist Marketing, a Calgary based company that the District of Elkford works with to create our unique branding, was awarded a gold medal for the District of Elkford's Community Website, and two silver medals for Elkford's Summer and Winter Promotional Videos.

Elkford's branding has drawn a lot of attention to our small community and is being used by many other local governments across BC and Alberta as a model for community brand development. Our brand has helped increase community pride, attract tourists and investors.

## 10. TRANSFERABILITY

How is this program/project transferable to other local governments?

This project has already been transferred to other local governments. The District of Elkford receives, on average, roughly 1 to 3 requests a month for information on our branding process (these requests are most often from other local governments.) We are more than happy to share information about our brand, our experience and our belief in the importance of finding your community's niche.

## 11. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

What helpful advice would you share with other communities looking to embark on a similar project?

Remain true to what is special and unique about your community. Never try to depict something that your community is not – every community has a niche and the most successful way to market yourself is by identifying what that niche is and expanding on it as much as possible. Be fun, be loud and don't be afraid to stand out.