



**2013 COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS
Category Worksheet**

PARTNERSHIPS

Name of Local Government: Submitted by City of Pitt Meadows in partnership with the District of Maple Ridge and the District of Mission

Project/Program Title: Invest North Fraser

Project Summary Paragraph

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

The Invest North Fraser Partnership started in 2010. The economic development offices in Maple Ridge, Mission and Pitt Meadows wanted to learn from each other and promote the region. The general public did not know where our communities were on the map. Discussions around this quickly grew into an opportunity to partner on key sectors that we had in common. This collaboration grew to include partnership on key sectors that had regional significance for investment and job creation.

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.

Remember to include measurable results whenever possible.

1. OBJECTIVE

Please explain the decision-making and thought process behind your decision to take on this initiative.

The Invest North Fraser regional partnership was created with the intention of combining our natural and built assets to make the North Fraser region more marketable.

A 'think regional' approach to our messaging strengthens our position and opens up more opportunities for our three communities. Many of our community assets cross borders with respect to job creation and spin-off investment. By combining our efforts, creating a larger pool of talent and skills, we knew we could leverage our budgets and resources to better market our region. Together, we all win.

2. CHALLENGES

Please provide examples of challenges you faced in taking on this program/project and how you overcame them.

Some challenges faced by this partnership have been related to program facilitation, regional program roll-out and funding.

Program facilitation is challenging when there are three organizations, with their own procedures and structures in place. This has been managed with clear communication and documentation, which is important for overall program consistency.

The regional program roll-outs require strategic planning and organization, as each community has its own processes and bylaws. This has meant flexibility in our roll-out approach as some programs have been able to launch region-wide, while others have had to launch one community at a time.

There have been some minor funding challenges. Depending on the size of the municipality, economic development budgets vary. What one partner may be able to contribute to an advertising campaign may not always be what another partner can. Contributions of service are highly appreciated in this partnership (i.e. refreshing content on website, managing social media profiles, prepping media releases, etc.) A long term funding program is in the works.

3. BENEFITS

Please provide examples of how this program/project benefited the community.

Main benefits of the Invest North Fraser partnership include:

- Increased knowledge & collaboration. By working together, we have a better understanding of what each community has in regard to its natural and built assets, its strengths as well as its unique challenges as a place to do business and invest. Having this knowledge results in powerful and productive conversations and strategies.
- Increased efficiency, cooperation & opportunity. With small economic development teams, the partnership has allowed us to be in more places at a single time. In the past, we may all have been going to the same event representing our single communities. Now we are able to schedule which event which economic development officer is going to and build relations and represent all three Invest North Fraser communities.
- Increased access to expertise and resources. Partners are much more amiable to offer their expertise and resources to a region rather than a single community. It simply provides greater profile and value for the partner. The BCTIA recognized this when they launched their CEO-In-Residence program in Maple Ridge. They knew the Invest North Fraser partners had the ability to bring greater awareness and mentees to the program than a single community could on its own.
- Increased awareness of the North Fraser region. Three years ago, prior to the formation of this partnership, people didn't know where Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows or Mission were located. Now they know either through word of mouth or media attention.
- Increase synergies & opportunities for businesses in the region. A number of our initiatives have required us to bring stakeholders together across the region (i.e. visioning sessions). This has provided opportunities for business owners to build relationships they may have never had the opportunity to build on their own.

4. INNOVATION

Tell us why you consider this project/program to be an innovative and/or creative initiative.

Invest North Fraser is unique in that it was organically created, rather than legislated. Our partnership is supported at the political level, but is sustained by the benefits of the common day to day working relationship.

Our three communities have used the natural geography of the region, as well as the associated development, infrastructure and growth patterns to determine the need for this partnership. We all view this partnership as leveraging assets, removing perceptions of City to City competition.

The partnership has caught the attention of other levels of government, agencies and investors because we are able to discuss larger interrelated opportunities.

5. GOALS

What did you set out to accomplish with the program/project? How effectively did you meet your goals?

Invest North Fraser was formed to build awareness of the opportunities in the region, to attract investment and strengthen the region's economy.

With this partnership we are able to provide greater opportunity for investors, and collectively support the range of assets that are available in the North Fraser region.

On December 1, 2011 The Province of British Columbia announced its partnership with Invest North Fraser as the first of three regional economic development pilot projects as part of *Canada Starts Here: The BC Jobs Plan*.

The Regional Economic Investment Pilot is aimed at attracting investment, identifying opportunities, economic diversification and job creation in areas consistent with the BC Jobs Plan.

Through this partnership with the province, five projects have been identified for the region and work is underway in each one. The projects include:

- Centre of Excellence & Innovation
 - Working Farm School
 - Business Innovation Accelerator
 - Green Building Technology Centre of Excellence
- Mission Interpretive Forest
- Tourism Recreation Corridor
- YPK International Education & Business Park
- Agri-food Distribution Hub

6. SUSTAINABILITY

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

Sustainability is becoming increasingly important as we are realizing the success of this partnership. From the start we have allocated a portion of our respective budgets to Invest North Fraser initiatives. While we agree we need to jointly fund initiatives, we do not want to mandate funding thresholds as the partnership has always operated so successfully due to mutual agreement and interest, rather than by financial pressure.

We now need to look at allocating specific staff to projects (i.e. maintenance of websites, social media networks, etc.).

We are in the process of creating a memorandum of understanding which will more clearly define the partnership.

7. TRANSFERABILITY

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

The Invest North Fraser partnership structure is extremely transferable.

A partnership is about continuous relationship building and looking at opportunity from a regional perspective instead of a community perspective. Although it is important to think locally, it is even more important to act regionally. If a significant investment comes to a single community, the neighbouring communities will also benefit.

Invest North Fraser is happy to share best practices with interested parties. Together, we all win.

8. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

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

Invest energy in the partnerships that naturally emerge or make sense due to some common ground/a common need. Trust that common interest in the beginning and let trust develop naturally rather than jumping to agreements and rigid mandates. It is a good idea to find a common project to partner on at first so you can test the partnership waters and learn each partner's strengths.

Go through the process of creating a partnership agreement to establish roles and responsibilities once you start to co-fund projects. This will help work through opportunities and challenges.

9. TELL US MORE

Please share any other information you think may help us better understand your submission.

The partnership is something all three political bodies proudly discuss, creating more common ground between Mayor and Council. Please see letters of support attached.

In our experience, gaining the audience of other agencies/institutions/investors has been easier when working together in this regional partnership.

10. PARTNERS

a.) Please list all the partners involved in this initiative. (no word limit)

Invest North Fraser founding partners:

- City of Pitt Meadows
- District of Maple Ridge
- District of Mission

The following organizations are partners* of Invest North Fraser and its projects.

- Province of British Columbia (Ministry of Jobs, Tourism & Skills Training)
- Government of Canada (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade & Development)
- Maple Ridge Agriculture Advisory Committee (regional agriculture branding initiative)
- Pitt Meadows Regional Airport (YPK)
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- British Columbia Technology Industry Association (BCTIA)
- British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT)

**Partnership may be in the form of financial, resource, technical or expertise support*

b.) Why did you choose to work with this/these particular partner(s)?

We found that the three founding communities were participating in and bidding on similar opportunities and at times approaching the same partners. With the integration of our natural and built assets, combining efforts and budgets, and our collaborative approach, we have been able to increase our overall success and achieve our goals.

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