



Media Release

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For immediate release

RDCK wins two BC Economic Development Awards

Nelson, BC: The Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) was recognized for achieving excellence in economic development, winning two [British Columbia Economic Development Association \(BCEDA\)](#) awards for its community economic development strategy ***Coordinated Leadership: Community Led Economies of Scale***. The strategy was developed for North Kootenay Lake by the Kaslo and Area D Economic Development Commission with funding support from the Government of BC and Columbia Basin Trust.

The BCEDA and FortisBC present the annual awards to BCEDA members who are doing outstanding work in supporting local economies and making a meaningful difference in their communities. The RDCK won the ***Community Project Award***, recognizing an organization that has implemented various economic development initiatives that provide economic benefits to a community or region, and the ***Economic Recovery and Resiliency Award*** for projects that represent a successful recovery initiative from natural and man-made disasters, including COVID-19. Both awards were for a community with less than 20,000 population.

“As Mayor of the Village of Kaslo and Chair for the Kaslo & Area D Economic Development Commission, I am so proud of this project which is a great example of collaboration in our sub-region,” said Suzan Hewat, Mayor of Kaslo and RDCK Board Director. “The work being done by Factor 5 is helping to build much needed capacity and economic resilience in our area in partnership with local organizations in Kaslo and Area D.”

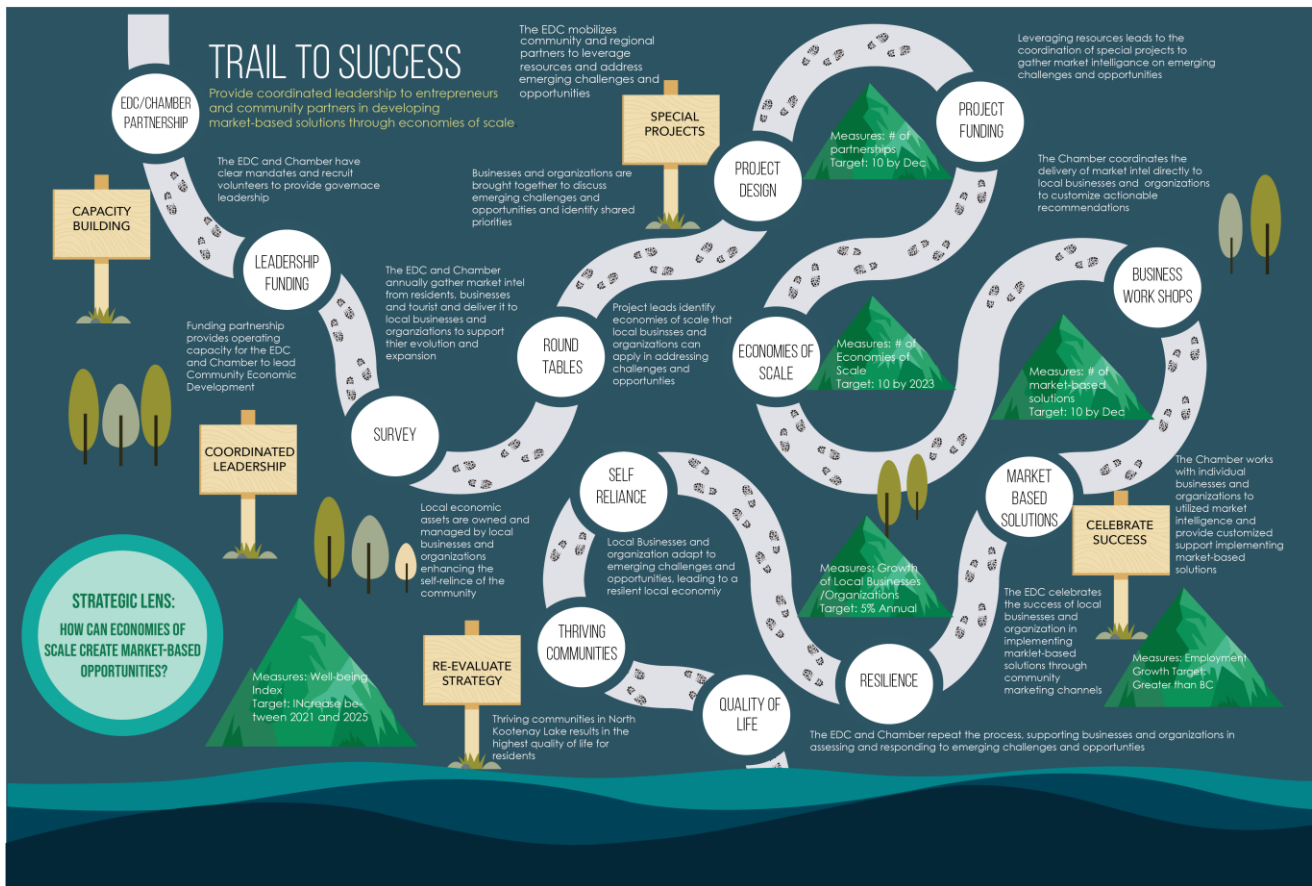
“Rural economic development is the baseline to a sustainable future,” said Aimee Watson, RDCK Board Chair and Electoral Area D Director. “Supporting the residents to ensure a healthy and accessible lifestyle requires thinking and acting outside of the box. From food security to supply chain innovations, this project and all of its endeavours not only brought many stakeholders together but achieved unique solutions and most importantly – a hopeful future that those here now and all those coming can succeed within our vast and rural landscape.”

In 2019 the Kaslo and Area D Economic Development Commission contracted the services of [Factor 5 Group](#), a national social enterprise co-creating strong communities through excellence in economic development. Factor 5 worked closely with elected leaders, community volunteers and staff to co-create the unique community economic development strategy.

A few months into the process, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and business as usual came to halt. However, instead of putting the project on pause, the Commission worked with Factor 5 to kick in into high gear, mobilizing community leaders around response and recovery efforts, while maintaining the momentum of building a long term economic strategy for North Kootenay Lake communities. Hands on support was provided to the business community and an e-commerce platform (www.northkootenaylake.ca) was created to showcase local

restaurants, grocers, retailers, as well as 40+ local service providers and local made products, heightening local spending. The result was immediate support for local businesses and a dedicated local community economic development coordinator who now leads ongoing projects in coordination with community partners.

“The key lesson to be learned from these awards is that villages and surrounding rural communities can pursue excellence in economic development with the limited resources they have available by coordinating leadership and activating the private sector,” said Eric Burton, President and CEO of Factor 5 Group.



Since adopting the Community Leadership Strategy, the Kaslo and Area D Economic Development Commission has partnered with the Kaslo and Area Chamber of Commerce and other community partners to advance economic priorities, including buy local campaigns, business services, e-commerce support, agriculture incubation and supply chain management.

“This a boots on the ground approach to bringing together business sectors, resources and organizations, working to find solutions and being the solution when necessary,” said Pat Desmeules, Kaslo & Area Chamber of Commerce Administrator. “The Kaslo & Area Chamber of Commerce is very pleased to be part of the great initiative and look forward to continuing to achieve the goals along the way of the Trail to Success!”

Incorporated in 1965, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) is a local government that serves 60,000 residents in 11 electoral areas and nine member municipalities. The RDCK provides more than 160 services, including community facilities, fire protection and emergency services, grants, planning and land use, regional parks, resource recovery and handling, transit, water services and much more. For more information about the RDCK, visit www.rdck.ca.

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