



Business Recruitment and Retention  
Service Agreement Proposal  
**2024 - 2026**

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## INTRODUCTION

*The following proposal outlines a comprehensive three-year plan for the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce to develop and implement a Business Recruitment and Retention Program in collaboration with municipalities of Courtenay and Comox.*

*This program aims to foster economic growth and vitality in the region by acting on the current needs of the business community. To gain insight, we will be seeking a snapshot of current business conditions and identifying challenges and opportunities.*

*We will do so by consulting with business leaders, community, arts and service groups and form a comprehensive poll to gather data. Then, analyzing this data on current business conditions and making recommendations for action. The action plan will respond to stated needs of our business community and continue until 2026, with regular reporting to you, our funding partners.*



# PROJECT PHASES

## Phase 1: Engagement and Consultation (Month 1)

Goal: Build strong community support for the Business Recruitment and Retention Program.

### 1. Consulting with Business Leaders and Stakeholders:

- Identify key business leaders, stakeholders, and partners.
- Schedule meetings and workshops to gather insights and input.

Discuss program objectives and benefits with participants.

### 2. Engage Arts and Service Groups:

- Meet with local arts and service groups to discuss potential collaboration.
- Seek endorsement and support for the program.
- Develop partnerships to amplify program reach.
- Follow-up to report near project completion

## Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis (Months 2-4)

Goal: Collect relevant data to understand the current business environment in Courtenay and Comox.

### 1. Polling Business Owners:

- Design and administer surveys to business owners in the region.
- Gather data on challenges, opportunities, and business needs.
- Ensure a representative sample is surveyed.

### 2. Data Analysis and Theme Exploration:

- Analyze collected data to identify key themes and trends.
- Categorize business concerns and needs.
- Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to validate findings.

## Phase 3: Recommendations and Reporting (Month 5)

Goal: Translate gathered data into actionable recommendations for the program.

### 1. Identifying Needs and Opportunities:

- Collaborate with a team of experts to analyze data and identify business needs and opportunities.

- Develop a comprehensive list of recommendations.

### 2. Distillation into Actionable Recommendations:

- Organize findings into a concise, clear, and actionable report.
- Develop a prioritized list of recommendations and strategies.
- Ensure recommendations align with the needs and desires of the local business community.

## PROJECT PHASES

### 3. Reporting to Participants:

- Organize a meeting to present the findings and recommendations to business owners, municipal leaders, and community members.
- Gather feedback and input to fine-tune the recommendations.

### Phase 4: Action - Implementation Plan (Month 6-36)

Goal: The second segment of the Business Recruitment and Retention Program involves putting the insights gained from the data collection and analysis into action. This 2.75-year plan is designed to address key themes identified in polling and aligns with both the Comox Valley Chamber's Strategic Plan and the Municipalities' Official Community Plan. The plan includes various components to support and grow the local business community. This phase contains expected components and will be updated based on data analysis.

### Phase 4: Implementation (Expected Components)

#### Component 1: Online Resources Library (Months 6-8)

Goal: Create a comprehensive online resource library on the Comox Valley Chamber's website.

1. Content Development:
  - o Develop a collection of resources, guides, and tools for businesses.
  - o Cover topics related to business operations, financing, marketing, and more.
2. Website Integration:
  - o Create a dedicated section on the Chamber's website.
  - o Ensure easy navigation and user-friendly design.
3. Regular Updates:
  - o Commit to regular updates and additions to keep content relevant.

#### Component 2: Entrepreneurial Support (Months 8-36)

Goal: Provide support for entrepreneurs, fostering their growth and success.

1. One-on-One Mentoring and Coaching Groups:
  - o Pair experienced mentors with entrepreneurs seeking guidance.
  - o Organize coaching groups to facilitate peer learning and support.
2. Specialty Workshops with Expert Speakers:
  - o Schedule workshops on various business topics.
  - o Invite experts as guest speakers to share insights and knowledge.

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### Component 3: Networking Events (Months 6-36)

Goal: Strengthen connections within the local business community.

1. Networking Events:
  - Organize regular networking events, both in-person and virtually.
  - Facilitate opportunities for businesses to connect, collaborate, and learn from each other.

### Component 4: Small Business Training and Start-up Advice (Months 8-36)

Goal: Offer training and advice to small businesses and startups.

1. Training Workshops:
  - Conduct workshops on essential business skills.
  - Cover topics such as business planning, marketing, staff retention, management skills, and financial management.

### Component 5: Recruitment and Awareness Campaign (Months 8-36)

Goal: Promote the Comox Valley as an ideal location for new businesses, staff, and remote workers.

1. Consult with supporting organizations such as Experience Comox Valley, BDC, CFIB, Provincial Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation, Real Estate organizations and others
  - Develop an understanding of local business leakage and opportunities.
  - Launch a marketing campaign to highlight the region's benefits.
  - Partner when possible to amplify our message.

### Component 6: Wellness Events (Months 6-36)

Goal: Enhance work-life balance and well-being for business professionals.

1. Business Walk-n-Talk or Business Yoga:
  - Organize weekly unique wellness events combining physical activity with topical business information and coaching.

### Component 7: Workforce Support (Months 8-36)

Goal: Support the local workforce by collaborating with the Immigration Welcome Centre and North Island College.

- Newcomers in the Workforce:
  - Collaborate with the local Immigrant Welcome group to provide support integrating newcomers into the workforce.
- Support for NIC Students upon entering the workforce:
  - Work with NIC to strengthen the connection between the business community.

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGY (Throughout)

1. Utilize the Comox Valley Chamber's information channels (newsletter, website, social media) to regularly update the community on program developments.
2. Collaborate with the Municipalities' communication channels to reach a wider audience and engage residents.
3. Utilize local news agencies, both using press releases and purchased ads according to the Chamber of Commerce Bylaws to ensure a fair and equitable allocation of resources.
4. Conduct Business Walks throughout the municipalities that engage both Chamber staff and City/Town Council. These walks will happen during the initial engagement and polling phase as well as annually throughout the project.

## CONSULTANT CONTRACTING STRATEGY (Throughout)

Through a transparent Request For Proposals process in accordance with the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce Bylaws, we will seek consultants to carry out the data collection, analysis and reporting work (phase 1-3) as well as the awareness and recruitment campaign (phase 4).

## STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT & KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS

### Alignment with the Chamber:

By implementing this plan, the Business Recruitment and Retention Program will take a proactive approach in addressing the needs and concerns of the local business community. It aligns with the Chamber's and Municipalities' long-term goals and aims to foster a thriving, inclusive, and vibrant business environment in Courtenay and Comox.

To align the proposed Business Recruitment and Retention Program with the Comox Valley Chamber's Strategic Plan for 2023-2026, we can highlight how the program supports the Chamber's vision, mission, core values, and key performance areas:

### Vision:

The Business Recruitment and Retention Program directly aligns with the Chamber's vision of being an innovative and trusted business organization that contributes to the Comox Valley's diverse economic strength. By fostering economic growth and offering support to local businesses, the program serves to influence decision-makers and engage the community positively.



**Mission:**

The program directly fulfills the Chamber's mission of fostering a positive and welcoming business environment. It provides leadership, connections, advocacy, and valuable services that create a prosperous economy by addressing the needs and concerns of local businesses.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the Chamber is to lead, connect, and champion business to ensure the Comox Valley is thriving. The Business Recruitment and Retention Program contributes to this.

**The Chamber's Core Values:**

1. **Community:** The program celebrates and amplifies members' success by addressing the challenges faced by the business community.
2. **Member Focus:** We are committed to providing optimal value to its members through various components of the program, ensuring quality, addressing diverse needs, and empowering members with resources.
3. **Leadership:** The program's advocacy for business retention and expansion aligns with the Chamber's role as a policy leader and voice of business in the region.
4. **Inclusivity:** The program represents diverse businesses and treats all fairly, equally, and without bias, contributing to a thriving and inclusive business environment.

**Key Performance Areas (Goals):**

The program directly supports several of the Chamber's key performance areas:

**Goal 1: Grow and Sustain Membership:** By enhancing the value proposition and member services, the program helps retain existing members and attract new ones.

**Goal 2: Advocate for an Improved Economic Environment:** The program's advocacy efforts align with elevating the Chamber's position as the voice of business in the Comox Valley.

**Goal 4: Establish the Chamber as an Agile and Progressive Organization:** The program's digital components, such as the online resources library and digital marketing strategy, contribute to operational excellence.

By incorporating these points into the program's documentation, it will be evident that the Business Recruitment and Retention Program is not only a standalone initiative but an integral part of the Chamber's strategic approach to fostering economic growth in the Comox Valley.



## ALIGNMENT WITH COURTENAY'S OCP:

The proposed Business Recruitment and Retention Program can be closely aligned with the City of Courtenay Official Community Plan (OCP) for 2023-2026. This alignment is critical to ensure the program supports the long-term vision, environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and regional coordination outlined in the OCP. Here's how the program aligns with the OCP objectives and policies:

### Objective 1: Business Retention, Development, and Investment

LE 1: The program looks for ways to support the expansion of green, low-carbon economic development by fostering sustainable business practices, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting climate resilience.

LE 2: The program aligns with the concept of "buy-local" by connecting businesses in Courtenay and Comox, promoting local products, and fostering community support for local businesses.

LE 4: The program actively promotes arts and culture, local food processing, and other value-added businesses, enhancing the community's economic diversity.

LE 5: The program encourages the collaboration of businesses to utilize resources more efficiently, fostering eco-industrial networks and sustainable industrial land development.

### Objective 2: Local Economic Development Opportunities

LE 7: The program collaborates with the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce, business organizations, and neighboring jurisdictions, ensuring that the program is regionally coordinated and supports broader economic development strategies.

LE 8: The program identifies and acknowledges its role in the delivery of economic development services in the region.

### Objective 3: Municipal Regulations and Services

LE 11: The program supports non-traditional light industrial and service commercial land uses that accommodate emerging business trends, thus being responsive to evolving business needs.

LE 12: The program encourages investment and business development in Town and Neighbourhood Centres, aligning with the OCP's focus on intensification and mixed-use development.

LE 14: The program liaises with senior governments and the business community to identify barriers, streamline application processes, and improve business infrastructure.

LE 15: The program works toward consistent regulatory standards and encourages data sharing and best practices within the local business community.

#### Objective 4: People-Centered Economic Development

LE 17: The program recognizes the importance of affordable housing and childcare in supporting people-centered economic development, ensuring that social policies are integrated with economic policies.

LE 18: The program emphasizes data-driven and performance-based planning, aligning with the OCP's focus on workforce planning and labor market forecasting.

LE 19: The program aligns with the exploration of holistic economic development frameworks, integrating ecological, social, and economic outcomes in its strategies.

By aligning with the City of Courtenay OCP, the Business Recruitment and Retention Program not only addresses the immediate needs of the business community but also contributes to the long-term economic, environmental, and social well-being of Courtenay and the Comox Valley.

## CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

#### Possible challenges and strategies for Program delivery:

1. Data Collection: Ensuring a high response rate from business owners during the polling phase may be challenging. Strategies such as incentives and community engagement will be crucial.
2. Community Buy-In: Gaining support from arts and service groups and ensuring they actively contribute to the program may require dedicated effort in relationship building and communication, although our current community connections in these areas are strong.
3. Resource Allocation: Managing the budget and ensuring that expenses are effectively utilized is a key challenge. Our organization has a monthly budget-to-actuals check-in, and our financials are overseen by a bookkeeper, treasurer and Board of Directors to ensure we stay on track. We will make a financial reporting plan with the municipalities that meets your needs.
4. Changing Business Environment: External factors, such as economic conditions and policy changes, may impact the program's recommendations and the local business landscape. Flexibility will be necessary to adapt to changing circumstances.

## PROJECT BUDGET

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>
Phase 1 consulting	1000		500
Data Collection, analysis and reporting	25,000		
Online Resources Library	2500	1500	1500
Mentor Relationship Building	2000	5600	5600
Workshops	7500	7500	7500
Networking Events	1000	2500	2500
Recruitment Awareness Campaign	10,000	2,500	2,500
Wellness Events	3000	3500	3500
Workforce Support	900	1500	1500
Communication expenses	1000	2500	2500
Administration	5000	9000	9000
	<b>58900</b>	<b>36100</b>	<b>36600</b>

## ADVOCACY & FUNDING INDEPENDENCE

The Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce acknowledges that its mission involves both advancing the interests of our members and the business community, as well as executing the Business Recruitment and Retention Program in collaboration with the municipalities of Courtenay and Comox. The Chamber is committed to maintaining the highest standards of independence and integrity in carrying out both functions.

To ensure transparency and accountability, the Chamber seeks to separate its advocacy role from the funding request associated with the Business Recruitment and Retention Program. Specifically:

1. Funding Request Independence: The funding request to the municipalities for the Business Recruitment and Retention Program shall be tied solely to the work and activities defined within the scope of the program, as outlined in this proposal. Funding shall not be contingent upon or affected by the Chamber's advocacy efforts on any challenging or controversial issues.
2. Advocacy Freedom: The Chamber reserves the right to advocate on behalf of its members and the local business community when it deems necessary. This includes addressing challenging or controversial issues that may arise in the best interest of our constituents. The Chamber's advocacy efforts will remain separate and independent from the funding request for the Business Recruitment and Retention Program.

By separating the funding request for the program from the Chamber's advocacy activities, we aim to ensure that the program's objectives are met while allowing the Chamber to fulfill its broader mission of advocating for the business community without the risk of losing funding for this specific project. This separation reinforces our commitment to transparency, accountability, and the best interests of our members and the broader community.



## MONITORING PROGRESS AND FUNDING AGILITY

1. Monitoring Progress: In the spirit of transparency and accountability, the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce commits to conducting bi-annual check-ins with the municipalities. These check-ins will provide a detailed overview of the Business Recruitment and Retention Program's progress, sharing achieved milestones, addressing challenges, and discussing any necessary adjustments to the plan based on emerging insights or unforeseen circumstances.

2. Adaptive Approach: Recognizing the dynamic nature of economic landscapes and the potential for unforeseen developments, the Chamber reserves the right to adapt the Business Recruitment and Retention Program during its execution. Should new information arise or circumstances change, adjustments may be proposed to ensure the program remains responsive to the evolving needs of the business community.

3. Funding Agility: In the event that program modifications require additional financial resources, the Chamber commits to approaching the municipalities for budget adjustments. The Chamber will work collaboratively with program funders, ensuring that any proposed budget increases align with their protocols, checks, and balances. This collaborative approach aims to secure consensus and support, acknowledging the importance of proper financial oversight and decision-making processes within the funding framework. This commitment to regular check-ins and funding adaptability reinforces the Chamber's dedication to achieving the program's objectives while maintaining open communication and collaboration with program funders throughout the project's lifecycle.

## CONCLUSION

*In conclusion, this proposal outlines a structured three-year plan to develop a Business Recruitment and Retention Program. Based on polling data received in Phase 1, the expected components in Phase 4 may change. We will complete an action plan that responds to the stated needs of the business community, and will do so in consultation with our funding partners. By following the outlined phases, timeline, budget, and addressing potential challenges, the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce can work collaboratively with municipal leaders to enhance economic prosperity in Courtenay and Comox. We are happy to discuss the proposal with you directly.*

