

# BVI Community Handbook



[www.theCIEL.com](http://www.theCIEL.com)  
[www.BusinessVitalityIndex.com](http://www.BusinessVitalityIndex.com)

Contact: Mike Stolte  
mstolte@futures.bc.ca  
201 – 514 Vernon Street  
Nelson, BC CANADA V1L 4E7  
T 250.352.1933  
Toll-free 1.800.661.1395  
F 250.352.5926



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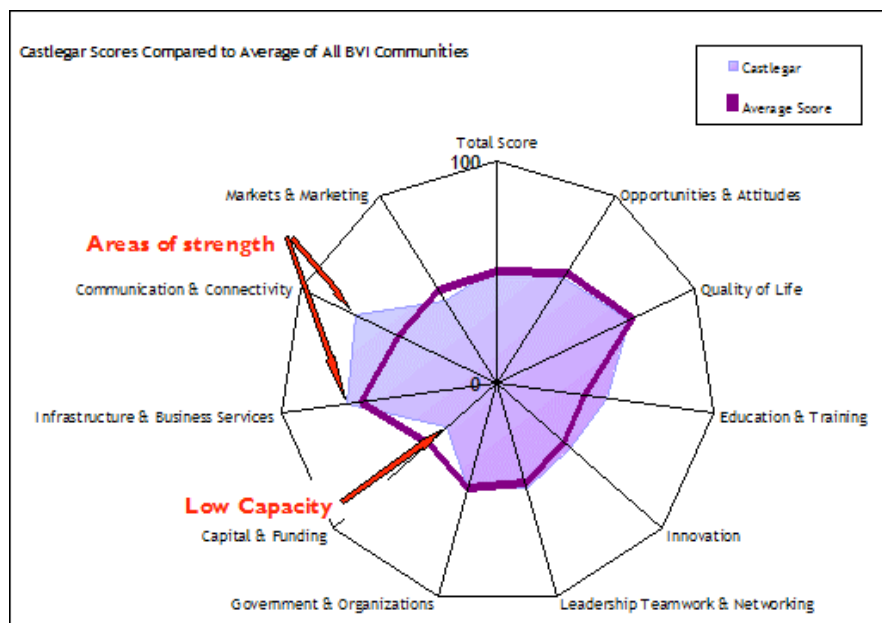


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## BVI Overview

*Do young adults (25-34) find this community attractive? Do we have a business-friendly council?  
Do business & education communities work together to provide timely, convenient training?*

“If you're not asking these questions, it's unlikely you're maximizing the potential of your community,” explains Mike Stolte, co-creator of the [Business Vitality Initiative \(BVI\)](#). Stolte asserts that communities must identify their strengths, their gaps and their unexplored opportunities. This is what's behind the BVI, a measurement and action process that helps communities harness their business potential. It has been designed to help communities assess their capacity to work with and support entrepreneurs, and to foster business growth. The BVI has been employed in nine communities across BC since its introduction in 2001, by a Team based in Nelson, BC. In 2003, the BVI Team was nominated for BC's top award in community economic development. The BVI measures the perceptions of community leaders, business people and citizens about the current business environment in the community and compares the scores to those from other communities using a [unique graphical index](#) (the Business Vitality Index).



### Benefits of the BVI

- Diagnoses community's business vitality in a visual way
- Find gaps and strengths in 10 key areas with an easy-to-read graphical design
- Quantifies 99 indicators important for entrepreneurial stimulation
- Allows community to build common understanding and set priorities for action
- Brings business people, leaders and citizens together to build capacity
- Helps move a community from indecisiveness to action
- Improves a community's business vitality allowing it to maximize business start-up, expansion and attraction



## What is the process?

The Business Vitality Index (BVI) is a dynamic tool designed to assess a community's business friendliness, coupled with a component focused on jumpstarting communities with courses of action. The two-phased process begins with an assessment session involving 25-30 invitees, representing the business sector (50%), community leaders (25%), and a cross-section of citizens (25%). This session consists of a questionnaire administered by the BVI Team, followed by a focus group session discussion on community readiness and responsiveness to entrepreneurs and small business.

Phase 2 is a focus and action session involving the entire community. This session is scheduled within four to eight weeks of the initial meeting, where results are presented to the community. At this meeting, the community is asked to set priority actions – either strengths the community wishes to build on, or weaknesses the community wishes to address – based on the results of the questionnaires and the discussion groups. Following the priority-setting exercise, a “reality check” is performed in small groups in order to determine if current resources, energy and circumstances are in place to move forward with determined actions.

In each community, a steering committee will work as the community sponsor (City Hall, Chamber, CFDC, EDC, etc.) assisting in the coordination, organization and invitation of the sample survey group (made up of community leaders, business people and citizens). In addition, the community sponsor will be responsible for assisting the community in realized identified courses of action. It is expected the steering committee will have representatives from the local Community Futures, municipality, business and other community organizations.

Ultimately, a written report is produced documenting entrepreneurial strengths and areas in which a community could improve. Communities are also considered in relation to other communities that have undertaken the BVI (9 to date). The BVI is a good starting tool to show communities how business/entrepreneur friendly they are relative to other communities, and to position communities to take action to enhance their business vitality.

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*The 21st Century has been dubbed “The Entrepreneurial Century”.<sup>1</sup> There is a powerful link between entrepreneurship & economic performance.*

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*Research suggests that entrepreneurs and small business are creating 60-80% of new jobs, representing 99.7% of all employers<sup>2</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. [www.ruraleship.org](http://www.ruraleship.org)

<sup>2</sup> Hall, D. (2001). *Jump start your business plan: Win more, lose less and make more money with your new products, services, sales & advertising*. Cincinnati: Brain Brew Books; U.S. Bureau of the Census; SBA Office of Advocacy. (2003). *Small business by the numbers*. [www.sba.gov/advo](http://www.sba.gov/advo); A Report of the President. (2001) *The state of Small Business*. Washington: United States Government Printing Office. [www.sba.gov/advo/stts/stateofsb99\\_00.pdf](http://www.sba.gov/advo/stts/stateofsb99_00.pdf)

## Who's involved and how?

Community participation and continued commitment to identified courses of action is key to the success of the Business Vitality Initiative. Each member of the community has an important role to play, as does the Community Sponsor and the BVI Team. The following section outlines who is involved in the initiative, and how.

### ***Community Members***

**Community members will be asked to participate in the following ways:**

#### **Assessment Session (Session 1)**

Involves attending a 3-hour session designed to assess your community's business vitality through a questionnaire and focus group. Approximately 20-30 community members are asked to participate in Session 1.

#### **Focus Session (Session 2)**

Involves attending a 3-hour session where results are presented and community members are guided through a priority setting exercise designed to focus on specific short-term actions. A reality check exercise is then used to assure adequate resources (human & financial) exist for the successful completion of actions. The entire community is asked to participate in Session 2. The BVI Team provides informal coaching support to the community following the initial session.

#### **Moving Forward with Action**

Based on prioritized short-term actions and the findings from the reality check exercise, community members are asked to join working groups according to interest and related abilities. Continued commitment to on-going short term projects is key to improving the business health of your community.



*BC's rural communities often thought of as conservative and homogeneous, are anything but. They harbour an impressive display of talent, energy, community pride and an enormous "sense of community."<sup>3</sup>*





## **Community Sponsors**

**Community sponsors will be asked to participate in the following ways:**

### **Assessment Session**

Involves securing the facility, audio-visual equipment, and food / drink for the session. In addition, community sponsors are responsible for selecting and inviting Session 1 participants, as well as informing the larger community through advertising / press releases. Community sponsors are also responsible for taking attendance at the session.

### **Focus Session**

Involves securing the facility, audio-visual equipment, and food / drink for the session. In addition, community sponsors are responsible to distribute the findings from the assessment to Session 1 participants, as well as informing and inviting the larger community through advertising / press releases. Community sponsors will take attendance at Session 2.

### **Moving Forward with Action**

Based on prioritized short-term actions and the findings from the reality check exercise, community sponsors are asked to support working groups on an on-going basis. The sponsor will continue to liaise with working groups and to ensure communication to the larger community on progress through advertising / press releases. The community sponsor will continue correspondence with the BVI Team in order to report progress and identify additional resources where applicable.

**The Community sponsor is the group in the community who has agreed to organize the process, work with the BVI Team & facilitate the selected actions ensuring they are completed.**

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*It brought people together effectively to discuss the community candidly. It was an excellent tool for economic development planning and community to focus on what was most important. The community was pleased. (McBride Community Sponsor)*

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*It was a realistic process which was beneficial to the community, and as a result business vitality is continually getting better. (Harrop Procter participant)*

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*It brought the community together and pulled out priorities, allowed us to focus. It served as a catalyst for other initiatives. In addition it left the actions up to the community and allowed for whole community to focus. (Nakusp Community Sponsor)*

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## ***The BVI Team***

**The BVI Team will participate in the following ways:**

### **Assessment Session**

The BVI Team will facilitate the Assessment Session. This involves describing the initiative and its relevance, administering the BVI questionnaire, and facilitating focus groups. The BVI Team is also responsible for the analysis of findings and the production of an Assessment Report which the community sponsor will distribute.

### **Focus Session**

The BVI Team will facilitate the Focus Session. This involves reporting the findings from the assessment, guiding a priority setting exercise with the entire community, and facilitating a reality check exercise in focus groups. The BVI Team will prepare a Focus Report based on the activities and findings from this session which will be distributed by the community sponsor.

### **Moving Forward with Action**

The BVI Team will support community sponsors and working groups for 2 years following the initial sessions by plugging in financial and 'how to' resources where applicable. The BVI Team will also distribute a quarterly newsletter that highlights successes and lessons learned from other BVI communities.



Mike Stolte

*The BVI is a tool that helps to build prosperous entrepreneurial communities. There are two elements to entrepreneurial communities:*

*A community's ability to act collectively to take advantage of opportunities;*

*Presence of a supportive environment that allows entrepreneurs to flourish.*



Terri MacDonald

## How have other communities taken action?

### *Community 1*

- Marketing Coordinator for the whole valley (to find emphasis/ strengths, facilitate cooperation & networking)
- Make community “Horticultural Centre of BC”
- Clean up and develop the downtown area and community core!
- “Buy Local” program
- Develop recreational potential (facilities, bike paths)

### *Community 2*

- Formation of a community business group to look at possibilities
- Use community watershed story to create a community “brand”. (Market the story)
- Renovate community hall(s)
- Plan around ideal set-up of community art(isan’s) gallery (look to East Shore for ideas?)
- Accommodation and camping facility development (rooms in houses and a central booking/booker?)

### *Community 3*

- CFDC to offer more business courses in the area around needs of community business
- Opportunities for newcomers to meet old and bedroom commuters to become part of the community
- Opportunity identification session with young people (under 40)
- Customer service training

### *Community 4*

- Community Foundation
- Increase cooperation between business, government, and citizens by working together on a project
- Opportunity Identification Sessions (one for youth and one for broader community)
- Buy local campaign or program

### *Community 5*

- Buy local campaign
- Networking sessions more regularly among community groups and businesses
- “Did you know” citizen ambassador program
- Joint marketing session – best practices - with Chamber as catalyst

### ***Community 6***

- Improve cooperation and communication between stakeholders (business, council, residents)
- Promote tourism and cultural assets
- Buy local program

### ***Community 7***

- Joint marketing of products and services by business
- Education of community on benefits of new business
- Develop community brand / market the community
- Build community spirit through festivals / projects

### ***Community 8***

- Drafting some short-term tourism actions & striking a tourism action group specifically around addressing high quality recreational opportunities (i.e. inventory what's here, opportunities, capital needed, possible out-of-area tourism players to engage)
- Develop strategy to attract more capital / possibility of cooperative financing for services community identifies as needing / community identifies potential sources of equity in the community/ Meetings between area lenders and businesses to raise awareness of lending options
- Improve telecommunications / develop telecommunications plan (look at cooperative structure for bringing in high speed (fibre optics)) - i.e. split out from the school (Min. of Competition Science & Enterprise)
- Develop brand around beauty / work ethic / independent attitude / creativity / seclusion ('find us if you can' where arts & a pioneer spirit meet the mountains) (use amenities/high scores in K-12 education, health care, arts & culture as potential characteristics in branding campaign to differentiate McBride)
- Coordinated or cooperative marketing effort for local products or services (i.e. tourism operators, artisans)

### ***Community 9***

- Use landfill/methane/waste management as a catalyst for innovation, education & economic development
- Increase presence of night policing
- Work on a beautification/pride project that increases cooperation among business, residents and government
- Create volunteer attraction/retention/recognition and leadership identification program for community to combat burnout
- Improve customer service (training for front-line employees)

## What can I expect from the Business Vitality Initiative?

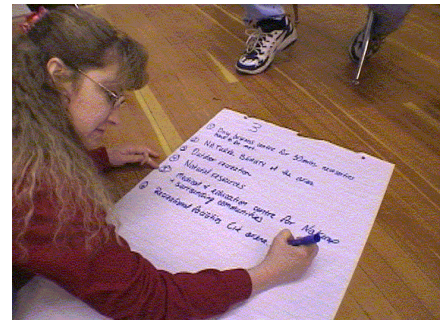
### Assess

The assessment of your community's business vitality is based on your perceptions on 99 indicators known to affect business health. The first session is 3 hours in length and involves the completion of an extensive questionnaire, coupled with focus groups. A cross-section of community members will be invited to this session. The assessment phase is an important part of the BVI process because it allows your community to benchmark its current vitality. The assessment is a necessary starting point for improvement efforts as it helps to identify your community's strengths and weaknesses.



### Focus

The focus component is also a key part of the BVI. This 3-hour session is open to the entire community where results from the assessment are presented, priorities are set, and a reality check focuses energy and expertise on prioritized actions. By the end of this session your community will have prioritized between 3-5 short-term, specific courses of action to get started on. Working groups will be formed and the community sponsor will be positioned to guide future efforts. You are now ready to move into action!



### Act

With working groups in place, the community sponsor will monitor progress and plug in necessary supports where necessary. In addition, the community sponsor will assure groups are on track with the larger community vision, and that successes are shared across groups and to the larger community. The BVI Team will also be available to assist sponsors in locating financial and 'how to' resources. Staying positive, conducting effective meetings, following a shared leadership model, and on-going collaboration with other community members will assist in the implementation of successful community-based projects.



## **Why would our community want to improve its business vitality?**

### ***Context of an Increasingly Competitive Global Economy***

A key feature of the new knowledge-based economy is the increased flow of information and goods on a global scale. This opening of markets has the potential to constrain or to enhance a local economy, depending on community vision & action. For example, if you spend your money at the big box store in the closest big city, your local economy loses (this is termed leakage). If on the other hand, you spend your money locally and at the same time export goods from your business to external markets, your economy benefits. The idea is to keep the pipe line open to exports while avoiding leakage. Increased competition is another feature of the new economy, along with a shift from resource-based to knowledge-based. More simply put, resource sectors, such as forestry and mining, are being replaced by knowledge-based industries, often utilizing new technology, coupled with innovative application. With adequate infrastructure to allow the flow of goods and information into and out of the area, the potential for the revitalization of rural Canada presents itself. In addition, a young skilled population looking to raise a family in a safe and beautiful place can be attracted to invigorate rural economies. With careful planning, a community can ensure that the economy works for them.

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*Studies show that 80-90% of jobs are generated from retaining and expanding business within a community.<sup>4</sup> Increasingly, research shows entrepreneurs fare better in supportive communities with dynamic business support organizations.<sup>5</sup>*

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*The BVI Team was nominated for the Don McMillan Award in 2003, BC's top community economic development award.*

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### ***What If We Don't Want Economic Growth?***

Some communities may like things just the way they are. Keeping things just the same also takes careful planning and maintenance. In the new economy, doing nothing will not allow you to stay right where you are in terms of economic vitality. In fact, doing nothing to maintain your economic health is much the same as doing nothing to maintain your physical health, eventually lack of care catches up to you. In terms of community business vitality, your local economy will suffer if you don't fertilize the soil.

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*The BVI Team is accredited by the Canadian Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP) as a CED technical assistance provider.*

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## What influences the business health of a community?

The Assessment Questionnaire (a.k.a. The Index) gathers perceptions on 99 indicators known to affect business health. The indicators are based on an extensive literature review, coupled with expertise gained from years of practice in the field of Community Economic Development. The indicators are broken down into 10 sections, including:

<b>Section</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Key Elements</b>
<b><i>Opportunities &amp; Attitudes</i></b>	The ability of the community and its citizens to recognize, take action, and follow through on available opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Entrepreneurial Mindset</li> <li>✓ Embracing Opportunity</li> <li>✓ Motivated Workforce</li> </ul>
<b><i>Quality of Life</i></b>	The ability of the community to attract & retain businesses & citizens, especially those who are young, skilled workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Health &amp; Education</li> <li>✓ Arts &amp; Culture</li> <li>✓ Lifestyle Opportunities</li> <li>✓ Commitment to Business</li> <li>✓ Daily Services</li> </ul>
<b><i>Education &amp; Training</i></b>	The ability of the community to develop entrepreneurial skills & attitudes in the non-business population, and to upgrade skills in the business community in order to remain competitive in larger markets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ongoing Skills &amp; Personal Development</li> <li>✓ Entrepreneurial Development</li> <li>✓ Access to Business Training</li> <li>✓ Effectiveness &amp; Quality of Training</li> </ul>
<b><i>Innovation</i></b>	The ability of the community to innovate, that is, think of and develop new ideas. Consideration of new ideas increases the ability of the community to adapt to changes, recognize unusual and new opportunities and technologies, and share ideas with like-minded people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Information Access</li> <li>✓ Attitude toward Innovation</li> <li>✓ Innovation in the Community</li> <li>✓ Application of Innovation</li> </ul>

<p><b>Leadership, Teamwork &amp; Networking</b></p>	<p>The ability of the community to take action on an idea or opportunity as a whole group, with good leadership, effective teamwork, and clear communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Community Leadership &amp; Teamwork</li> <li>✓ Networking &amp; Communication</li> <li>✓ Leadership Development Opportunities</li> <li>✓ Attitudes toward Community Cooperation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Government &amp; Organizations</b></p>	<p>The ability of local governments and other organizations to work with business to design processes and programs that make it as easy as possible to start or expand a business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Governing Body's Attitude Toward Business</li> <li>✓ Government Assistance &amp; Processes</li> <li>✓ Availability of Business Support &amp; Programs</li> <li>✓ Delivery of Business Development Support &amp; Programs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Capital &amp; Funding</b></p>	<p>The ability of the community to financially support entrepreneurs through ensuring access to capital, and educating businesses about financial management and supports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Lenders' Ability to Understand &amp; Work with Entrepreneurs</li> <li>✓ Businesses' Access to &amp; Management of Capital</li> <li>✓ Types of Capital</li> </ul>
<p><b>Infrastructure &amp; Business Services</b></p>	<p>The ability of the community to provide necessary and high quality support services and infrastructure to business at reasonable costs, allowing businesses to be as competitive as possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Presence of a Business Core (cluster)</li> <li>✓ Existence of Business Services</li> <li>✓ Adequacy of Utilities for Business</li> <li>✓ Availability of Business Space</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communications &amp; Connectivity</b></p>	<p>The ability of businesses to connect with each other and with outside markets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Methods of Communication</li> <li>✓ Transportation Services within Community</li> <li>✓ Inter-community Transportation</li> <li>✓ Shipping &amp; Freighting</li> </ul>
<p><b>Markets &amp; Marketing</b></p>	<p>The ability of businesses to capture and expand markets, both locally, regionally, and outside the region, thus sustaining and building local wealth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Market Savvy</li> <li>✓ Market Reputation</li> <li>✓ Local Marketing</li> <li>✓ Regional Marketing</li> </ul>

## How can we improve our community's business health?

The BVI Team recently completed a report comparing the business vitality of 9 rural BC communities. A number of common strengths and challenges emerged across communities. Based on these commonalities, as well as unique assets, the BVI Team believes the following recommendations, put forward in broad themes, will serve to build prosperous entrepreneurial communities throughout rural Canada.

### ***Opportunities***

Community entrepreneurship rests on the ability of a community to be able to identify and act on opportunities in a strategic manner. Capital & funding, education, and innovation each offer avenues ripe for improvement.

***Capital & Funding*** – Access to funding has historically been an issue in rural communities. However, issues around capital (i.e. the ability of business to understand and utilize capital, looking at alternative capitalization methods) must be addressed in a meaningful way through education, utilizing mentors experienced in finance, encouraging investors / angels, promoting forums which allow specific knowledge around capital to be shared and networks to be built, etc..

***Education*** - Future education and training efforts should make use of existing community-based organizations (i.e. colleges, Community Futures, youth centres, etc.), assure connection to closest college / university, be responsive to local needs, and reflect a diversity of learning and training opportunities & methods. In addition, efforts should be placed on improving attitudes toward continuous skill development and training and lifelong learning recognizing that the provision of opportunities for learning alone will not be sufficient.

***Innovation*** - Promote attitudes that encourage and acknowledge the importance of innovation within the new knowledge-based economy. Communities should be encouraged to identify and utilize key assets as catalysts (i.e. community forests or existing innovative businesses within the community) for innovation, education and economic development. More attention needs to be paid to the importance of innovation as a key priority area in all communities.

## ***Attitudes***

Believe it or not, attitudes do make a big difference! Youth inclusion, change-readiness, culture & attitudes, and vision each offer possible broad directions for future community-based efforts.

***Youth Inclusion*** - Efforts should be made to include and engage youth in a meaningful way to identify youth opportunities in entrepreneurship, education, and recreation. Entrepreneurial support in rural communities is viewed as an effective way of not only retaining youth, but attracting them.<sup>6</sup>

***Change-readiness*** - A switch in thinking is necessary from ‘what’s been lost’ to ‘how can we use our assets for future growth?’ to address burnout and negativity, & to build community spirit. This could be accomplished by profiling successful community initiatives, highlighting success stories of residents, or by using other similar communities as role models.

***Entrepreneurial Culture*** - Efforts should be made to create or enhance a culture that encourages entrepreneurs; specifically recognizing and rewarding entrepreneurs, K-12 entrepreneurial programs, accessing mentors from the community to share valuable experiences for ‘would be’ and existing entrepreneurs, etc.. The importance of entrepreneurs and small businesses needs to be recognized within the community as necessary for community and economic growth.<sup>7</sup> It should be made clear that this is a long-term approach to building sustainable and prosperous communities and that quick economic fixes are unlikely to be found or solve community problems and build capacity.

***Access – Focus - Act*** - More communities should be encouraged to objectively assess their entrepreneurial capacity through instruments like the Business Vitality Initiative in order to build self-sustaining, prosperous entrepreneurial communities. Ideally, communities should aim to effectively self-assess, lay out plans, visions & targeted measures, and take action.

## ***Networking***

Having a good attitude and being able to identify opportunity may not be enough to stimulate economic growth. The ability to network, cooperate, and operate under a shared-leadership model are also key to improving your community's business health.

***Networking*** - Encourage the formation of formal and informal networks / networking opportunities through forums, community events, and breakfast meetings, etc. between and among businesses, business support organizations, community organizations, government and citizens.

***Cooperation*** - Encourage more cooperation within communities and especially regionally, possibly starting through small trust building projects with little political risk. More incentives should be made available for efforts aimed at creating regional collaboration and co-operation, looking to case studies of regions that have benefited economically through a regional approach.

***Shared Leadership*** - Efforts should be made at renewing leadership in the community through rewards, success stories, mentoring opportunities, tapping into the talent / expertise of new residents and others traditionally not involved. A specific program recognizing and rewarding community entrepreneurs – those people who use entrepreneurial skills to build communities – should be initiated at the national, provincial and/or local level.

## 11 Tips to BVI Success

### **A comprehensive and accurate assessment is crucial.**

*Because the assessment is based on perceptions, it is important that you take the time to complete each section of the questionnaire carefully and honestly. An accurate assessment is a necessary starting point for community action.*

### **Stay positive and committed to working together.**

*Because working together as a community is a necessary component to the improvement of business health, staying positive and committed to working together will assure success. Be advised that some compromise may be required and baggage is best left at the door.*

### **Recruit your friends, neighbours and new members of the community.**

*Session 1 participants play a key role in assuring a good turn out at Session 2. A good turn out at Session 2 is key to community ownership, which is necessary for collective action. BVI participants can help by recruiting other community members, especially those not traditionally involved in community initiatives (it is a good way to get some fresh energy and perspective).*

### **Bite off small pieces – keep actions short term and specific.**

*As previous BVI communities assert – keep initial projects small in order to build capacity for the next series of longer-term courses of action. Past participants report that even though they felt invigorated following initial sessions, the reality of already hectic work days dampened projected successes. Starting out with short term specific actions is an excellent starting point.*

### **Stay focused and organized in your working groups.**

*Make sure you identify a working group member that will communicate group activities to the community sponsor. This will help the community sponsor to assure projects are moving in complimentary fashion and overlap is avoided.*

*In addition, open communication encourages collaboration across working groups.*

### **Be open and envision the possibilities.**

*New ideas are a good thing. Working collectively as a community is a powerful process, one which will allow your community to succeed at projects that once seemed out of reach. The consideration of new ideas is key to an innovative future vision.*

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*It developed capacity building in the community at a time when the community realized it needed to be more independent and less reliant on government. (Naksup Community Sponsor)*

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*There was much enthusiasm following the BVI sessions and the community was somewhat overly optimistic. We're realized the need to focus on one thing at a time in order to avoid burnout. Also, the process is ongoing and has proved to take longer than we thought. (Harrop Procter Participant)*

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### **Stay committed to shared leadership.**

*Previous participants noted the problem of volunteer burnout. Frustration was expressed over the fact that the same people seem to be the ones at all the meetings. The responsibility here rests on those citizens currently active AND those currently inactive in community life. Those currently active could recruit other citizens, assuring their input would be valued and beneficial to the community. Active citizens could also share leadership positions in order to encourage increased involvement by others. Inactive citizens could rise to the challenge and volunteer their time to a joint community project.*

### **Keep everyone informed and encourage a cross-section of community involvement.**

*Momentum is built from the initial sessions, but this momentum needs to be nurtured. Formal and informal communication is key to keeping this momentum going. Involved citizens can spread the word on the assessment and working group progress in their everyday interactions, while community sponsors can use advertisements and press releases to assure the community is informed.*

### **Celebrate success and build incentives into meetings.**

*It is amazing how much community work builds up one's appetite, especially when meetings are held around dinner time. Make sure there is plenty of food, drink, and praise to keep energy and spirits replenished. The community sponsor will assure ample food and drink at the first 2 sessions, the working groups are responsible for food and drink after that.*

### **Change is slow, so reflexivity is necessary.**

*Remember that change at the community level is often much slower than expected. Recognize change as slow-moving and don't get discouraged. Be ready to re-visit action plans as sometimes things change and with that that change comes a shuffling of priorities. This is why keeping lines of communication open with other working groups is key.*

### **Set reasonable expectations**

*The success of the BVI depends on the energy and commitment of the community, especially following through on identified actions. The BVI is a tool specifically designed to assess business friendliness and to identify short-term courses of action. As such, the tool is not a substitute for comprehensive community planning. (See Evolution of Communities Matrix)*

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*An unexpected result was getting a few businesses that would normally not participate involved in the process. The BVI had an impact in that we were pushed to take a look – and we have people talking about our community. There are always people out there questioning our methods and goals, but it gives us the opportunity to move forward. In terms of advise for other communities, always remain positive even in the face of adversity – don't let the negative people 'get to you', nothing ventured, nothing gained.  
(Castlegar  
Community Sponsor)*

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*The process was very beneficial. The research document has served as a helpful planning and funding tool. It provides a current assessment. Moving on action is slower than expected.  
(McBride  
Participant)*

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# Community Sponsor Resources

## Sponsor Responsibilities

<b>Week 1</b>	
<p><b>1. Pre-Assessment Meeting</b> After the contact has been signed with the community sponsor, there will be a meeting with the BVI Team to review the process, provide orientation to sponsors, review responsibilities, timeline, and plan Session 1 including the identification of participants (see <i>Participant Selection and Invitation Process</i>).</p>	
<b>Weeks 2-3</b>	
<b>Preparation for Assessment Session (Session 1)</b>	
Distribute <i>Participant Invitation Letter</i> (sample letter in community manual) to identified Session 1 participants (as determined at Pre-Assessment Meeting). It is recommended that identified Session 1 participants are invited in person or by phone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hall / Meeting room rental	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catering – recommend simply snacks such as sandwiches, veggie & dip tray, coffee, tea and juice – budgeting for \$5 / person)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advertising in local media to inform community of initiative (sample press releases provided in community manual)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrange for audio-visual materials - including LCD projector, screen, flip chart with paper and markers, masking tape, extension chord, attendance sheet, name tags	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow-up with invited Session 1 participants to confirm attendance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Produce community manuals for Session 1 participants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invite local media to Session 1 in order to interview community sponsors / BVI Team (invite approximately 45 minutes prior to start of Session 1)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Week 4</b>	
<p><b>2. Assessment Session (Session 1)</b> This 3-hour session will bring 20-30 community members together in order to assess business vitality through a comprehensive questionnaire and focus groups.</p>	
Assure food and audio-visual requirements are met	<input type="checkbox"/>
Introduce the BVI Team and Community Sponsors	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assure attendance sheets are completed by all participants (including preferred method of communication / distribution of findings)	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Week 5-7</b>	
<b>Preparation for Focus Session (Session 2)</b>	
Hall / Meeting room rental	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catering – same as Session 1 (budgeting \$5 / person)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advertising in local media to inform community of initiative, to report findings from the Assessment Session, and to invite the entire community to the Focus Session (Session 2) (sample press releases provided in community manual)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personally invite as many community members as possible to Session 2. Confirm attendance if possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrange for audio-visual materials - including LCD projector, screen, flip chart with paper and markers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow-up with Session 1 participants to confirm attendance at Session 2 (ask participants to bring at least one other community member with them).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distribute findings to Session 1 participants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make community manuals available to citizens interested in attending the Focus Session	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invite local media to Session 1 in order to interview community sponsors / BVI Team (invite approximately 45 minutes prior to start of Session 1)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Week 8</b>	
<b>3. Focus Session (Session 2)</b> This 3-hour session will bring the entire community together in order to review assessment findings, prioritize short-term courses of action, to assess feasibility of prioritized projects, and to form working groups for moving forward on identified courses of action.	
Assure food and audio-visual requirements are met	<input type="checkbox"/>
Introduce the BVI Team and Community Sponsors	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assure attendance sheets are completed by all participants (including preferred method of communication / distribution of findings)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assist in the formation of working groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Week 9-12 (and beyond)</b>	
<b>4. Follow-up with Action</b> The community sponsor is responsible for assuring the formation of working groups, assuring communication within and across working groups, and providing on-going support.	
Continue to assist in the formation of working groups (connect talent and expertise with related projects). Coach groups on effective meeting strategies / shared leadership in order to avoid volunteer burnout.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure a communication plan is developed and followed between working groups, the community sponsor, and the BVI Team on an on-going basis. Ideally, working groups will remain informed on the progress of other groups (helps to sustain momentum).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distribute BVI quarterly newsletter to BVI participants.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reassess prioritized courses of action where / when necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>

## ***Participant Selection and Invitation Process***

A key benefit to this process is bringing together people who may have not had the opportunity to network. Communities had an opportunity to bring new people into the fold, especially people that are relatively new to the community (they may be new leaders).

### Invitation Process:

- Review *Community Sponsors Responsibilities*.
- The ideal sample size is 30 individuals. The ideal composition is 50% business owners, 25% community leaders, and 25% citizens (see examples below).
- Contact local media 2 weeks prior to session – provide information on the up-coming sessions (creating a buzz in the community will encourage a solid turnout); invite media to conduct interviews prior to session (at least 30 minutes prior to start)
- Select approximately 40-50 potential participants according to ideal composition, aiming for a sample size of 30.
- Format *Participant Introduction Letter* (insert sponsor's logo, insert community-specific information in highlighted sections)
- Send out invitations approximately 2 weeks in advance via letter, email, or fax
- Follow-up on invitations by contacting individuals approximately 1 week prior to session (via phone or in person); identify individual as a key stakeholder, provide additional information (if necessary), and request RSVP (try to solidify numbers prior to session).

This is an opportunity to recruit new leaders and to introduce sectors of the economy that rarely meet. The ideal composition is:

- **50% Business Owners**, including: 5 top employers, downtown businesses, tourism businesses, Chamber staff &/or directors, tourism association, other local business associations, economic development office, service businesses, retail businesses, manufacturing businesses, knowledge-based businesses, Community Futures staff &/or board, other key businesses in community, small businesses.
- **25% Community Leaders**, including: municipal politicians & staff (responsible for development), MLA & MP, school district / school representatives, local college / university, principals & other educational leaders, business leaders, culture leaders, recreation leaders, environmental leaders, social service leaders).
- **25% Citizens** representing a cross-section of citizens, including: youth / youth association, seniors / seniors groups, museums / art gallery, new arrivals in town, service groups.



## **Sample Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# **Is Nelson Business Friendly? The Business Vitality Initiative (BVI) is Coming**

Nelson, BC

*Do young adults (25-34) find this community attractive? Do we have a business-friendly council?  
Do business & education communities work together to provide timely, convenient training?*

“If you're not asking these questions, it's unlikely you are maximizing the potential of your community,” explains Mike Stolte, co-creator of the **Business Vitality Initiative (BVI)**. Stolte asserts that communities must identify their strengths, their gaps and their unexplored opportunities. This is what's behind the BVI, a measurement and action process that helps communities harness their business potential. It has been designed to help communities assess their capacity to work with and support entrepreneurs, and to foster business growth. The assessment measures the perceptions of community leaders, business people and citizens about the current business environment in the community. It has been employed in communities across BC since its introduction in 2001 by a Team based here in Nelson.

The City of Nelson, The Nelson & District Chamber of Commerce and Community Futures of Central Kootenay are jointly sponsoring the BVI. Two invite-only **Assessment** sessions will happen on January 29<sup>th</sup> and February 3<sup>rd</sup>. A sampling of local businesses, community leaders and others representative of the community will participate in a 3-hour questionnaire and focus group session. A follow-up **Focus & Action** session, open to all community members will be held 4 to 8 weeks later. At this session results will be shared with the community and possible actions for improving business vitality will be decided upon.

### **Benefits of the BVI**

- Diagnoses community's entrepreneurial capacity in a visual way
- Find gaps and strengths in 10 key areas with an easy-to-read graphical design
- Quantifies over 100 indicators important for entrepreneurial stimulation
- Allows community to build common understanding and move forward and set priorities for action
- Brings business people, leaders and citizens together to build capacity
- Allows comparison to other communities
- Marries perceptions with hard data to get an accurate reading of community
- Process uses the best features of quantitative, qualitative and focus group research
- Recruits new volunteers
- Helps move a community from indecisiveness to action
- Gets community talking
- Improves a community's business vitality allowing it to maximize business start-up, expansion and attraction



### **Contact Information:**

For further information on the BVI please contact:

Mike Stolte, BVI Director  
Ph: (250) 352-1933 (x106)  
F: (250) 352-5926  
[mstolte@futures.bc.ca](mailto:mstolte@futures.bc.ca)

Terri MacDonald, BVI Coordinator  
Ph: (250) 352-1933 (x105)  
F: (250) 352-5926  
[tmacdonald@futures.bc.ca](mailto:tmacdonald@futures.bc.ca)

Contact the BVI Team Toll-Free @ 1-800-661-1395

Additional information is also available online at: [www.BusinessVitalityIndex.com](http://www.BusinessVitalityIndex.com)

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## **Sample Letter of Invitation**

[INSERT SPONSOR and BVI LOGOS]

[insert date]

Dear [insert name],

[insert names of sponsor organizations] invite you to participate in *The Business Vitality Initiative (BVI)* on either [insert date, time and location]

Do young adults (25-34) find this community attractive? Do we have a business-friendly council? Do business & education communities work together to provide timely, convenient training?

“If you're not asking these questions, it's unlikely you are maximizing the potential of your community,” explains Mike Stolte, co-creator of the Business Vitality Initiative (BVI). Stolte asserts that communities must identify their strengths, their gaps and their unexplored opportunities. This is what's behind the BVI, a measurement and action process that helps communities harness their business potential, that will soon be coming to Nelson. It has been designed to help communities assess their capacity to work with and support entrepreneurs, and to foster business growth. The assessment measures the perceptions of community leaders, business people and citizens about the current business environment in the community and compares the results to those of similar communities. It has been employed in communities across BC and Alberta since its introduction in 2001 by a team based in Nelson, BC.

Your community's assessment session will consist of a one-hour questionnaire administered by the BVI Team, followed by a short networking and refreshment break. After the break, there will be a one-hour focus group session to discuss your community's readiness for and responsiveness to entrepreneurs and small business. The entire session will last approximately 3 hours.

A follow-up, or Focus session, will be scheduled approximately one to two months after the initial meeting. At this session, you along with the rest of the community, will be positioned to set priorities – either strengths the community wishes to build on, or weaknesses the community wishes to address – based on the results of the assessment. A “reality check” will be performed on the priorities at the second meeting to determine the community's ability to carry out priorities given the community's current resources, energy and circumstances. The Third, or Action Stage, will follow. This is where the community takes the reins to move forward on selected actions to improve business friendliness. Community commitment to the process is critical (see **Success Stories** at [www.BusinessVitalityIndex.com](http://www.BusinessVitalityIndex.com)).

Your participation will not only help your community now, but will also provide an important benchmark for the community to use in the future. Please confirm your attendance with Terri MacDonald (BVI Coordinator) at 352-1933 (x105) or [tmacdonald@futures.bc.ca](mailto:tmacdonald@futures.bc.ca) by [insert date].

Sincerely,

Community Futures Rep

City Council Rep

Chamber of Commerce Rep

## **BVI Team Bios**

### ***Mike Stolte – CED Manager and BVI co-creator***

Mike Stolte has been building businesses, organizations and communities for more than 15 years. Mike has been an economist for the Government of Canada, business analyst & lender, a social and community entrepreneur and has taught a range of courses at several colleges. He has done research and written on innovation, management, entrepreneurship, small business and community building and is currently writing a book on community entrepreneurship. Mike has an undergraduate degree from the University of Western Ontario in Economics, a Masters of Public Administration from Carleton University & is on the National Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI) Steering Committee. Mike and his wife Patti, son Connor, and daughter Katie, live in beautiful Nelson, BC where he is actively involved in kayaking, running, X-C skiing, hockey, producing documentary videos and photography. Mike was born and raised in Sudbury, Ontario.

Contact: [mstolte@futures.bc.ca](mailto:mstolte@futures.bc.ca)

250-352-1933 x 106 (also 1-800-661-1395 (toll free))

### ***Terri MacDonald – BVI Co-ordinator***

Terri is a community economic development (CED) practitioner with a background in educational theory and practice. She has taught in Canada and abroad and continues to conduct significant research in several public policy areas. Terri is currently finishing her Doctorate in Educational Studies through the University of British Columbia. She has a B.Sc. and B.Ed. from Lakehead University and an MA from the University of Calgary. Terri is working on a series of children's books and is an avid mountain biker, singer / songwriter, golfer, downhill skier and ultimate Frisbee player. She lives in the picturesque Slocan Valley and is dedicated to her Jack Russell Terrier, Fenris. Terri was raised in Sault Ste. Marie, in friendly Northern Ontario.

Contact: [tmacdonald@futures.bc.ca](mailto:tmacdonald@futures.bc.ca)

250-352-1933 x 108 (also 1-800-661-1395 (toll free))

### ***Anne Stacey - Community Economic Development Intern & BVI co-creator***

Anne helped to create the BVI while serving as Community Economic Development Intern at Community Futures of Central Kootenay. She has also co-ordinated and researched several projects including the Kokanee Glacier Alpine Campaign and Student Ventures, a program supporting entrepreneurship in schools. Anne has a BA in Geography from the University of Western Ontario. She was born and raised in Nelson, BC. Anne is currently studying chiropractic at the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in Toronto, Ontario.

## **Others Services**

The BVI Team and our qualified associates also offer an array of tailor-made programs, services & workshops in a variety of program areas. We also perform customized training, research, business and economic analysis. Please contact Mike Stolte ([mstolte@futures.bc.ca](mailto:mstolte@futures.bc.ca)) for more information.

### ***Customizable Programs Tailored for your Community***

- Incubation Programs (Youth, Innovation, Small Business) - Providing the Early Nourishment Businesses Need
- Identifying Clusters & Developing a Plan
- Branding Your Community - What Makes You Different - Exploiting Your Competitive Advantage?
- Opportunity Identification - Uncovering Unexploited Community & Business Opportunities
- Downtown Revitalization Strategies
- Buy Local Program
- Youth Entrepreneurship
- Creating an Entrepreneurial Program in your Schools
- Coaching - Creating a High Performance Community
- Youth Attraction Program

### ***Workshops & Seminars***

#### **Community & Building Community**

- 7 Habits of Highly Effective Communities
- Overcoming Apathy & Building Community Spirit
- 10 Tips to a Vibrant Community (originally published in Canadian Living)

- Evolution of Communities Matrix - Are you a Dinosaur or a Highly Developed Mammal? - How to Allow for Community Evolution
- Where Communities go Wrong - the Big Mistakes
- Learning Communities - The New Nirvana
- Community (Capacity) Building 101 - Intangibles that Build Thriving Communities
- Opportunity or Crisis? Creating a Catalyst for Community Change
- The Power of a Story - Telling Your Community's Past, Present & Future as a Mobilizing Tool
- Leveraging Assets - Building on Your Community Assets
- Revitalizing Your Volunteers (Shared Leadership)

## **Youth**

- Youth Entrepreneurship - Unlocking the Energy
- Setting up a Youth Incubator
- Youth Attraction Strategies - Why Retention is Doomed to Fail

## **Business, Entrepreneurship & Community Entrepreneurship**

- Building an Entrepreneurial Culture - From Cradle to Grave
- 10 Easy Ways to Improve your Business Friendliness
- What Businesses Really Want
- Success Stories - Lessons from the BVI
- Community Entrepreneurship - Harnessing Your Entrepreneurial Energy
- Rural Lessons - What You Can Learn from 9 BC Communities That Challenged Themselves
- Nelson, BC - Canada's Most Entrepreneurial Community



- The Entrepreneurial Century - Lessons for Communities in the 21st Century

### **Innovation**

- The Innovation Challenge - Develop an Innovative Culture or Else....
- Harnessing Technology - The Challenges of Developing Community in the Brave New World
- Cluster Strategies - Creating Peanut Butter & Jam Synergies
- The Power of "I" - The Innovation Advantage - How New Ideas Lead to Prosperous Communities

### **Take Action Workshops**

- Wither Away or Buy Local
- Branding Your Community - Getting Noticed in a Stormy Sea

## 10 Principles for a Vital Community

Working in community is a little like working with Sybil, the character with 16 very different personalities. It's tough to work with this diversity and diversity of agendas, especially in an era where the cult of the individual seems to be winning out over doing things on a community or collective level. Here's a collection of 10 sound principles to consider in your efforts to inject some vitality into your community.

<p><b>1. The solutions are yours.</b> Don't look to senior levels of government to solve the problems of the community. While they can often offer resources, it's the members of the community who are more in touch with the community needs and have the long-term interest in making it a better place to live and work.</p> <p><b>2. Small successes.</b> Too many communities go for the home run without ever having picked up a bat. In order to do large projects or those of a strategic nature, small successes/projects (I would recommend those with low political risk) should be used to build relationships, trust and a track record of success, essential elements for the bigger tasks. Eventually communities should be able to take on strategic projects and evolve to strategic community planning. The metaphor of crawling -walking - running is an effective way of illustrating the concept. Without some successes at the earlier levels, this evolution is impossible.</p> <p><b>3. Find the passion in the community.</b> There's no sense taking on projects or making plans if leaders or community members aren't chomping at the bit to get the actions done. Too many community projects get started because there's funding available. It's better to find the passion. Other resources, especially money, tends to be easier to come by if the community's passions have been identified.</p> <p><b>4. Bring leaders and influential people in the community together for a common purpose.</b> Too often, different sectors of the community do their own thing without ever considering what other community groups may be doing. This 'silo' mentality must be overcome in order to effectively build bridges and build a strong sense of community.</p> <p><b>5. Build consensus.</b> Easier said than done. As mentioned earlier, projects with low risk but visible outcomes are best to try in communities without a track record of success. An inclusive, well-facilitated process helps in building consensus.</p>	<p><b>6. Take stock.</b> Find out where the communities stands or what shape it is in. When one feels badly and goes to the Dr. the doctor doesn't give the patient a pill. He/she runs a battery of tests (cardiovascular health, blood tests, etc.) &amp; objectively assesses what is out of kilter in the patient. Taking stock involves objectively assessing opportunities, assets (Human, physical, etc.), threats and weaknesses. (This is what we try to do with the BVI in a very targeted &amp; graphical way in order to build a common understanding of where the community stands).</p> <p><b>7. Focus.</b> Like almost any other endeavor in life, focus is crucial. Too many communities spread out energy and resources on diverse outcomes.</p> <p><b>8. Don't look for silver bullets.</b> Too many communities believe there is an easy answer. Community building is a long-term process. It's far easier to destroy community than to build it. However, once a strong foundation of community-building success has been developed, a community is much stronger, self-sufficient, and resilient.</p> <p><b>9. Look for the catalytic leaders and organizations to assist in leading.</b> An African study showed that every community champion recruited brought 10 new leaders to the community. Good leaders or influential people, &amp; their ability to work together for the needs of the larger community, are what separates strong communities from weak.</p> <p><b>10. Perform a reality check.</b> Many community-building exercises do not accurately take into account community energy, resources, passion, leadership and timing.</p>
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*Note: These come from experiences in the field working to develop communities (BVI/Rural Economic Development Team of the Columbia Basin Trust/BC Rural Team and other community initiatives) & experiences of other 'on-the-ground' community builders across the country.*



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## *The Power in Perception; The Communities Matrix*

### How do you measure a community's progress, really?

To many who work in community economic development, the measurement of community progress is of vital importance. You must know roughly where you are starting from, to figure out where you are going. It's a crucial part of planning and managing local change. Yet while we state that communities should or must measure progress, the reality is that in many of the places that we work with, people don't. Maybe it's the sheer number of variables to consider that puts people off: personalities, relationships, community history, daily events, moods, whims, internal and external forces, etc. In fact, many of these communities don't do any planning worthy of the name.

The Matrix is a tool a community with little or no planning capacity or experience will really use to ballpark its present state and define a target to move towards.

The Matrix harnesses the perceptions of citizens and leaders to gain an understanding of the community. It describes 10 different levels or stages a community can go through from "highly conflicted" at the bottom to a "learning culture" stage at the top. (Some users have called it "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" for communities.)

At each of the ten levels, there is a list of characteristics that the community might display, what prevents the community from moving up to the next level, and what the

community needs to move up to the next level. Communities on the four lowest levels are "struggling," those at the middle three are "functioning," while those at the top three levels are "highest functioning."

By sharing with leaders and citizens, the community can engage in a conversation to determine what level their community is at. They can identify where they want the community to be (there is an alternative!) and the incremental steps that can be taken by the community in order to get there. Our experience has taught us that communities, like families, feel they are more dysfunctional than they really are. Knowing there are others out there like you is a liberating thought. The Matrix also provides some common language and terminology that allow those conversations to take place. The grid seems to be an excellent way to show progression.

Communities can move up or down the Matrix grid. Progress can be uneven and is not necessarily linear. Some communities require huge leaps or paradigm shifts to move from one level to another.

The Matrix can be used for geographic communities, communities of interest, or even communities within communities. One city manager used the Matrix for polling city councilors about the state of local social, arts, business, and cultural communities. The Matrix was simple enough for everyone to understand. This is one of the many tools that CIEL uses.

	Level/ Stage	Characteristics	Lack of	To move up to next level
1	<p><b>"Learning Culture" Stage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning community; learning culture present in core values of people and organizations</li> </ul> <p><b>Innovation Stage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community innovation occurs; sense of opportunity permeates community</li> </ul> <p><b>Integration Stage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business, education, NGOs &amp; community work together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reflection &amp; scanning to see ways of learning &amp; improving</li> <li>-Empowered individuals &amp; organizations</li> <li>-Can easily come together and make decisions</li> <li>-Integration of community, individual and business values</li> <li>-Sense of community entrepreneurship and opportunism</li> <li>-Innovative community-sponsored opportunities &amp; projects</li> <li>-Co-operation among business, education &amp; community to further mutual self-interests and especially interests of citizens</li> <li>-Shared decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sense of commitment to constant learning &amp; improvement for individuals, organizations &amp; community</li> <li>-Culture of innovation and entrepreneurship</li> <li>-Recognition of opportunities for community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Desire (shared among individuals and organizations) to constantly learn and improve</li> <li>-Build culture of innovation and entrepreneurship</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Vision Stage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Able to undertake (&amp; follow through on) vision &amp; comprehensive strategic planning (<i>many communities can stumble on follow through</i>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategic Stage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communities become strategic in their planning; some longer-term strategic planning possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ability to undertake &amp; follow through on strategic plans</li> <li>-Regularly update comprehensive planning &amp; visioning</li> <li>-Able to access \$ from outside community &amp; resources from within</li> <li>-Able to look years in advance to determine community vision</li> <li>-Less reacting – more proactive approach</li> <li>-Priorities well understood by members of community</li> <li>-Able to take strategic decisions (but not necessarily undertake strategic planning); significant community consultation</li> <li>-More proactive approach, some reaction</li> <li>-Community recognizes its strengths &amp; weaknesses, &amp; strategically builds on assets; sets some priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Opportunity and/or recognition of the need for business, education, NGOs &amp; community to work together</li> <li>-Commitment to strategic/long-term planning &amp; visioning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increase in networking opportunities to build social capital</li> <li>-Ability of leadership to recognize synergies of community's organizations &amp; citizens</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Simple Planning Stage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simple planning &amp; limited community comprehensive planning &amp; visioning possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Some simple planning undertaken; community still reacts</li> <li>-Some citizen consultation</li> <li>-Community chases funding without really recognizing its needs or having priorities</li> <li>-Starting to look to other communities for examples &amp; lessons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Recognition of need for being strategic</li> <li>-Ability to recognize community assets</li> <li>-Recognition of community priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Recognition of community assets</li> <li>-Recognition of need for being strategic</li> <li>-Financial resources</li> <li>-Success with simple planning</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>Coping Stage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning for day-to-day &amp; infrastructure-related needs possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Able to manage issues as they arise (mill closure, hospital relocation)</li> <li>-Little community consultation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Financial or human resources to plan</li> <li>-Commitment to move community ahead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Recognition community will fall behind without meaningful planning</li> <li>-Success in small projects</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Paralysis/Unfocused Stage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting goals or making simple plans impossible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-No community plan and/or consultation</li> <li>-No obvious direction for community</li> <li>-Lack of shared vision</li> <li>-Paralysis in decision-making</li> <li>-New issues can cause crises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ability to plan</li> <li>-Leaders unable/unwilling to unite community</li> <li>-Priorities &amp; focus</li> <li>-Success in small projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Training in goal setting, meeting management, etc.</li> <li>-Leaders to bring people together</li> <li>-Outside Facilitation</li> <li>-Assessment of where community stands</li> <li>-Success in small projects</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Non-co-operation Stage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working together is impossible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Can gather but cannot work together</li> <li>-Deep-seated divisions in values</li> <li>-Lack ability to listen to one another</li> <li>-Can't get together to accomplish anything</li> <li>-Community has experienced extensive changes in economy</li> <li>-Self-esteem low, no or little sense of pride</li> <li>-People feel stuck &amp;/or sense of stagnation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Trust &amp;/or values different</li> <li>-Communication</li> <li>-Basic conflict resolution skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Small non-political projects with win-win outcomes (i.e. downtown beautification)</li> <li>-Conflict resolution skills</li> <li>-Individuals or org. to provide catalyst to get together</li> <li>-Outside facilitation</li> </ul>
7	<p><b>Conflict Stage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Truly conflicted community</li> </ul>			

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Any Comments, Questions, or Feedback about this tool can be directed to  
Mike Stolte at the Centre for Innovative & Entrepreneurial Leadership (CIEL):



201-514 Vernon St., Nelson BC CANADA V1L 4E7  
tel 250-352-1933 x 106, fax 250-352-5926  
www.theciel.com. mstolte@futures.bc.ca