



Economic Development Cowichan
Service Review
June 2025

BOARD UPDATE

On June 25, 2025, Local Government Consultant Allan Neilson (Neilson Strategies Inc.) will update the Board, and facilitate a discussion with the Board, on the review of Economic Development Cowichan that is underway.

SERVICE REVIEW: Neilson Strategies Inc. was retained by the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) to undertake a review of the Regional District's regional economic development function. The function today is delivered through Economic Development Cowichan, a stand-alone division of the CVRD. The Regional District Board of Directors has asked for the review to:

- assess the efficiency and effectiveness of Economic Development Cowichan, its services and their delivery
- identify potential changes to the suite of services offered and/or the levels of service, in the context of other economic development services in the region, perceived economic development needs, existing service gaps and areas of service duplication
- identify potential changes to the services and service levels
- identify current and future regional economic development challenges
- determine whether the CVRD's economic development services should continue to be delivered through Economic Development Cowichan as a stand-alone economic development function

APPROACH: The consultant's approach to the Service Review consists of five stages:

- *Research Existing Service* — The first stage called on the consultant to review a range of reports, strategies and materials, and to meet with CVRD staff, to develop a clear understanding of the Economic Development Cowichan and its activities. This stage has been largely completed.
- *Board and Stakeholder Interviews* — Stage two, which has also been largely completed, featured interviews of Board Directors and a range of service stakeholders, including representatives from First Nations'

economic development corporations, Chambers of Commerce and Business Improvement Area representatives, staff from member municipalities, and others (a total of over 25 individuals). Interviews were used to understand the different perspectives on Economic Development Cowichan and its services, service levels, potential gaps and areas of duplication, service priorities and other matters.

- *Board Update* — The update to the Board on June 25 constitutes stage three of the review.
- *Assess Issues and Themes* — At stage four the consultant will assess in detail the key issues and themes identified through the research, interviews and discussions. The consultant will also assess the different service delivery options identified in the terms of reference for the assignment. These options include:
 - the *status quo* approach which features delivery through Economic Development Cowichan as a stand-alone division
 - a dispersed delivery model that assigns responsibility for specific economic development services and activities to other existing functions of the CVRD
- *Report* — At the final stage the consultant will provide and present a report on Economic Development Cowichan for the consideration of the CVRD. The report will:
 - profile Economic Development Cowichan as it exists today
 - present all findings, set out in themes, from the research, interviews and discussions
 - provide the consultant's assessment of the existing service
 - identify and assess potential changes to the scope of services provided and service levels
 - provide the consultant's assessment of service delivery options

The report will be submitted to the CVRD in August 2025.

**BOARD
UPDATE:**

At the Board's June 25 Committee of the Whole Meeting, the consultant will brief the Board on findings to date. The consultant will then facilitate a discussion on some of the themes that have emerged from the research and interviews. Economic Development Cowichan's scope of services — and potential changes to the existing scope — is one theme to be discussed. The structure of Economic Development Cowichan is another.

At the same meeting, Economic Development Cowichan staff will update the Board on the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan work underway.