PROJECT PROFILE
COMMUNITY TECH STRATEGIES

Qualicum Beach Digital Media Studio

Cloudhead Games Studio

COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE ICET REGION are looking to develop, expand, and renew their economies. Those with a base in traditional resource industries are also keenly interested in diversification, and attracting new high-tech businesses is a key priority for many of the region's cities and towns.

ICET's Technology Attraction / Community Broadband Strategy is a new stream of funding introduced this year through the Economic Development Readiness Program. One of six different focus areas in the EDRP, this new stream provides up to $10,000 for community or regional strategies to attract the tech sector.

The global success of small town companies such as Qualicum's virtual reality pioneers Cloudhead Games or Cumberland's game developer Hinterland Games, are shining the spotlight on Vancouver Island and attracting interest and talent to the region.

With the leadership of Innovation Island, a regional organization which provides executive mentorship and business development support to emerging tech companies, the Island is quickly growing its tech footprint.

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"We've done well with the 'early adopters' choosing the Island and Sunshine Coast, and we're crossing the threshold into a mainstream movement," explains Paris Gaudet, Innovation Island Executive Director. "This funding opportunity from ICET will help communities be strategic and focused on doing the right things at the right time to attract innovative tech entrepreneurs into their tax base."

One of the goals of the new funding stream is to support communities as they create a comprehensive strategic plan that focuses on recruiting and cultivating tech-based businesses and entrepreneurs, and developing the specific initiatives that support their long-term sustainability and "growth in place".

The Cowichan Valley Regional District was the first group to take advantage of the program to build on an existing and growing cluster of tech companies calling the region home. The region is undertaking a comprehensive planning process to get a clear picture of the types of companies that exist, to understand their needs and the needs of the tech sector in general and to identify the appropriate targets for attraction.

"Having ICET funding has helped us turn the corner on a tech strategy that is made in Cowichan yet rooted in regional partnerships," says Economic Development Cowichan Manager Amy Melmock. "Through this process, we've gained an incredible understanding of what tech companies need to feel supported and what we can bring to the table."

In addition to supporting the work of individual communities, the program has been developed to support regional approaches, such as regional tech attraction strategies. In conjunction with community strategies which support "place-based" approaches to tech attraction, the region's communities are developing collaborative mechanisms to support broader regionally based approaches to tech attraction.

Lifestyle amenities, connectivity, workforce, education and affordable housing are just a few of the decision points for tech entrepreneurs in choosing locations. This program will support the work required to ensure that the region is using its resources in the best way possible to find its place in the new tech economy.

TECH STRATEGIES