

COMMUNITY FUTURES BC: MILESTONES

Created in 1985, Community Futures is the longest-running, national community economic development program in Canada. For the past 35 years, the 34 Community Futures organizations in British Columbia have provided a broad range of initiatives to support their communities.

1985

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The Community Futures model was comprised of a Community Futures Committee and a Business Development Centre.

Each Community Futures received an annual operating budget and \$1.55 million in investment funds to support the start-up and growth of businesses.

They also had access to several program options, most notably the Self-Employment Incentive program.

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1992

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1985

Creation of the Community Futures program

The Government of Canada announces the creation of Community Futures as part of its Canadian Jobs Strategy.

1986

Community Futures organizations are established

Between 1986 and 1987, the first Community Futures organizations are established across rural British Columbia. Nine Business Development Centres (BDCs) that had been created under a previous program are also converted to Community Futures.

First managers' training session

The first training session for BDC managers is held in Vernon, B.C. The training sessions have since grown to become an annual event.

1990

Community Futures expands

By 1990, there are 30 Community Futures organizations across British Columbia. Another three are established between 1990 and 1993. In 1998, Haida Gwaii is the last Community Futures organization to be created in B.C., bringing the total to 34.

1992

Creation of a provincial association

Several Community Futures organizations come together to establish the Community Futures Association of BC and the Yukon as a forum for sharing ideas and best practices.

An Executive Director is hired and an office is opened in downtown Vancouver. The name was later changed to the Community Futures Development Association of BC. It is now known as Community Futures British Columbia (CFBC).

1993



In 2008, the OECD called Community Futures “one of the most innovative and successful rural-oriented policies anywhere in the world.”



1995



1996

**1993****Community Futures is introduced to Russia**

Community Futures North Okanagan and Okanagan-Similkameen, in partnership with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), develop a pilot project to introduce the Community Futures model to communities in Russia. Business Development Centres are established in Zhukovsky and five other Russian communities.

1994**Connecting Canadians province-wide**

Community Futures BC partners with Industry Canada to pilot the Community Access Program (CAP), a province-wide initiative to provide rural and remote communities with public access to the Internet. The program ran from 1994 to 2005.

1995**Restructuring of Community Futures**

Community Futures Committees and Business Development Centres merge to form Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs). At the same time, responsibility for Community Futures is transferred from Human Resources Development Canada to Industry Canada and its Regional Development Agencies. In B.C., the program is transferred to Western Economic Diversification. CFDCs enter into five-year contract agreements with Western Economic Diversification.

1996**Forest Renewal BC**

In partnership with the Province of BC, Community Futures BC creates a \$21 million forestry-related small business investment fund available to all Community Futures organizations across the province. The program ran from 1996 to 2002.

Community Futures Board Training program

With funding from Western Economic Diversification, Community Futures BC produces an orientation manual for volunteer board members. This initiative formed the basis of a board development program that later evolved into the Pan West Community Futures Leadership Institute (CFLI).

Creation of a pan western association

Representatives from the four western provincial associations establish the Community Futures Pan West Network comprised of the chairs and general managers from each provincial association.

1997

**1997****Entrepreneurs with Disabilities**

With funding from Western Economic Diversification, Community Futures BC launches a program to help people with disabilities start and grow their businesses. The program offers businesses advice, training, and loans of up to \$125,000, and is available through each Community Futures office. In 2018, the program was expanded to include Vancouver and Victoria.

1997**Fisheries Community Economic Adjustment Initiative (CEAI)**

Thirteen coastal Community Futures organizations from Vancouver Island, Haida Gwaii and Prince Rupert create the Fisheries Legacy Trust to help coastal communities adjust to changes in the fishing industry. From 1997 to 2015 the Trust and its member organizations accessed more than \$39 million in federal funding to deliver a variety of initiatives.

1998**Community Investment Loan Fund**

Community Futures BC collaborates with the Working Opportunity Fund of BC to create a \$5 million Community Investment Loan Fund to provide Community Futures organizations across B.C. with access to additional loan funds.

1999**Community Futures funding agreements renewed**

Western Economic Diversification renews five-year funding agreements for Community Futures across western Canada.

Provincial asset management program

Community Futures BC creates the Pooled Asset Loan Fund (PAL) to pool \$10 million in investment funds and make them available to support small business development across B.C.

1999

2000

2000**Nechako-Kitamaat Business Loan Fund**

In partnership with the Nechako-Kitamaat Development Fund, three Community Futures in northern BC (CF Nadina, 16/37 and Stuart-Nechako) create a \$2 million business loan fund for communities impacted by Alcan's Kemano Project.

Creation of a national association

The Community Futures Network of Canada is established, bringing together associations from the 10 provinces and two territories.

2001

2001**ICBC Community Enterprise Investment Fund**

With the support of the provincial government, Community Futures BC accesses \$20 million from ICBC to establish the Community Enterprise Investment Fund. The fund allows Community Futures organizations to make single loans of up to a maximum of \$500,000. Previously, loans had been capped at \$125,000.

2002

2002**Softwood Industry Community Economic Adjustment**

Community Futures BC is contracted by Western Economic Diversification to administer a federally-funded community economic adjustment initiative to help revitalize communities impacted by the Canada/U.S. softwood lumber dispute. \$50 million is made available to support CED initiatives in British Columbia.

**2002****Aboriginal Business Service Network**

Community Futures BC establishes an Aboriginal Business Services Network (ABSN) in partnership with an Aboriginal Steering Committee, the Canada/BC Business Services Society and Western Economic Diversification. A regional coordinator is hired and based in the CFBC office.

Believe BC Campaign

Working with Western Economic Diversification, Community Futures BC undertakes a province-wide promotional campaign to showcase the role of Community Futures in supporting community economic diversification. The 12-week campaign consists of a series of newspaper articles and TV spots featuring 36 success stories from Community Futures offices across the province.

2003

2003**GrowthStart Investment Fund**

Spearheaded by CF Central Kootenay, Community Futures BC collaborates with 11 credit unions to create a joint investment fund to expand funding opportunities for rural businesses.

**2004****Invest Kootenay**

CF Central Kootenay and four other Community Futures organizations partner with nine communities in the Kootenay-Boundary area to launch Invest Kootenay, an online regional investment attraction and retention tool. Rebranded as Imagine Kootenay in 2016, the marketing initiative has expanded to include more than 60 communities and four regional districts.

2007



2008

2011

2007**Community Futures branding**

The Community Futures Pan West Network introduces a common Community Futures brand across the four western provinces.

Community Futures funding freeze

2007 marks the beginning of a WD funding freeze that continues through 2021. Prior to this, Community Futures organizations received annual increases in operating funds as well as additional funds for community economic development initiatives.

2008**Rural Economic Diversification Initiative (REDI)**

With \$3 million in funding from Western Economic Diversification, Community Futures BC administers a program to encourage community economic diversification in rural communities. From 2008 to 2012, more than 1,188 jobs were created and/or maintained and an additional \$3.6 million of investment was leveraged from other partners.

2011**Venture Connect expands province-wide**

Venture Connect, a business succession program developed by CF Alberni-Clayoquot and five other Community Futures on Vancouver Island, is made available through all 34 Community Futures organizations in BC. First established in 2007 as a local initiative, Venture Connect received funding from the Province of BC and the Island Coastal Economic Trust.

2012**BC Futures Fund (BCFF)**

A revamped asset management program replaces the Pooled Assets and Lending model (PAL) that had been established in 1999.

2016**Export Navigator Pilot Project**

Five Community Futures organizations participate with the Province of BC, Small Business BC, and Western Economic Diversification on a pilot project to help businesses expand into international markets. Export Navigator became a fully funded program in 2019. Today, the program is delivered by seven Community Futures organizations to rural communities throughout the province.

2018

**2018****Wildfire Business Transition**

Community Futures BC and six Community Futures organizations leverage \$3.16 million from Western Economic Diversification, Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT), the Cariboo-Chilcotin Beetle Action Coalition, and the Red Cross to help more than 3,250 businesses recover from the impact of the 2017 wildfire season, the worst in recorded history. The program ran from 2018 to 2020, and serves as a model for future economic recovery programs.

2018**Boundary Area Flooding**

As part of a joint task force with the Kootenay Boundary regional district and the City of Grand Forks, Community Futures Boundary is appointed to lead the economic recovery effort following catastrophic flooding in the Boundary region. The task force successfully accessed more than \$3.675 million in funding from the federal and provincial governments.

2019

2019**The Rural Opportunities Fund (ROF)**

With funding from Western Economic Diversification, the Community Futures Pan West Network creates a \$4.1 million fund to support community economic development initiatives across the four western provinces. An additional \$1.526 million in COVID-19 relief funding was received in June 2020. In British Columbia, nine Community Futures organizations accessed \$1.35 million for 13 projects.

Community Futures Lending Investment Pool (CFLIP)

The BC Futures Fund is replaced by CFLIP with updated terms that make it easier for Community Futures organizations to invest in the pooled funds.

2020

2020**Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF)**

Community Futures is contracted to deliver the federal RRRF to help small and medium sized businesses in rural communities cope with the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In British Columbia, Community Futures helped 1,400 businesses access \$57.84 million in emergency funding, saving more than 4,869 jobs.



2020

2020**Taking Care of Business**

Building on the Wildfire Business Transition model, nine Community Futures organizations in northern BC receive \$1 million in funding from the Government of Canada to help communities adjust to a slowdown in the forest industry.

The Consulting Hive

With funding from the Rural Opportunities Fund, CF Alberni-Clayoquot spearheads the creation of The Consulting Hive, an online referral program that provides businesses with access to a network of business consultants province-wide. The program is offered through all 34 Community Futures organizations in B.C.

2021**Rural BC Economic Bulletin**

Community Futures BC launches the Rural BC Economic Bulletin covering highlights of the latest economic data and trends in rural British Columbia. Prepared by a professional economist, it is thought to be the only report dedicated to reporting on rural economic issues in British Columbia.

2021

2021**Contracts renewed**

Community Futures contracts are renewed for another five years, but funding remains frozen at 2007 levels.

Network 34 Initiative

A logo is created to brand local and regional initiatives that can be accessed by all 34 Community Futures organizations across British Columbia.

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Port Alberni, BC
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Community Futures Boundary

Grand Forks, BC
(250) 442-2722
www.boundarycf.ca

Community Futures Cariboo Chilcotin

Williams Lake, BC
(250) 392-3626
www.cfdccariboo.com

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www.cfdcofcifn.com

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