

LIGHTING THE FUSE: QUICK START PROJECTS ARE ECONOMIC CATALYSTS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES



PROJECT PROFILE

QUICK START PROJECTS



IN THE PAST 3 YEARS, the Economic Development Readiness Program has supported the development of more than a dozen new economic development and diversification strategies in small and rural communities. But many of these small communities struggle with the capacity required to move the full strategy into action.

The new 'Quick Start' stream of the EDRP program was developed to help communities with limited staff and resources "kick start" their new strategies. The funding can be used to implement easy-to-realize priorities in the strategy or to bridge the planning gap for more complex initiatives. As the name implies, the goal of the program is to quickly turn concepts into action, with deliverables often completed in a matter of weeks.

The Sayward waterfront planning project is a good example of how the Quick Start program helps to bridge the gap from strategy to action, creating momentum to support longer-term objectives. The community is embracing its resource-industry background, and leveraging that history into a unique tourism and educational experience for visitors and residents alike.

"The Kelsey Bay Harbour is Sayward's most valuable community asset, and our project will incorporate existing assets - wharves, seafood processors, the log sort and more, as part of a 'working waterfront walkway', adding interpretive signage, viewing areas, restaurants, artisans, and perhaps even a small maritime museum," explains Sayward Mayor John McDonald.

**IT IS TRULY REWARDING TO SEE THIS VISION
COMING TO LIFE — MAYOR OF TAHISIS, JUDE SCHOONER**

Zeballos and Tahsis – with the support of the area's First Nation communities – are jointly building on existing strengths in their tourism and recreation market to develop a shared-use ATV trail system. "There are miles and miles of deactivated logging roads crisscrossing the region, and we have a great opportunity to showcase the region and its history by creating a great trail network," said Zeballos Mayor Donn Cox.

The Zeballos and Tahsis Quick Start projects focused on the development of a business plan and technical analysis fieldwork required to build the 25km multi-use trail. "With the planning work now complete, we are very excited to be moving this project into the funding and trail building phase," explains Tahsis Mayor Jude Schooner. "It is truly rewarding to see this vision coming to life."

In Port Alice, an industry downturn that led to curtailment of one of the region's largest employers, sparked the development of a new economic development strategy. One of the key diversification priorities was to build on the branding of 'Gateway to the Wild West Coast' by improving signage at the junction of the major transportation routes leading to Port Alice. "Port Alice has the natural amenities that visitors to the North Island are seeking," explained Mayor Jan Allen. "A refreshed marketing presence is our first step in drawing more visitors to our community."

On the other side of the Island, the 'Namgis First Nation and the Village of Alert Bay came together in 2015 to complete an award winning economic development strategy. The results placed a high priority on growing tourism and supporting the development of small business. This led to a Quick Start project to develop new cultural and historic signage for the waterfront as well as vendor kiosks to support small business incubation and artisan business development.

"What we're showcasing on Cormorant Island is an experience: our natural environment, First Nations culture, and the stories of the people and places that make us unique," said Michael Berry, Mayor of Alert Bay. "This project will help us all to move new opportunities forward."

What all of these projects have in common is the focus on leveraging the Quick Start funding as a catalyst for long lasting economic diversification: turning plans into action.



QUICK
STARTS