

October 29, 2024

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Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development & Innovation  
Regional and Rural Development Unit, Rural Policy & Program Branch  
Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program

To Whom It May Concern:

**RE: RURAL ISLANDS ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP SOCIETY – GRANT APPLICATION**

As the Southern Gulf Islands (SGI) Area Director, I am pleased to express my support for the Rural Islands Economic Partnership (RIEP) Society's application for the Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program (REDIP) Economic Diversification Development Stream funding. This funding will support the "Communities Talking: Mapping the Economic Landscapes of Rural-Coastal Communities, Alone and Together" project.

Currently, many of our rural islands and remote coastal communities lack up-to-date data and consistent economic development support, which is crucial for their long-term resilience and success. There is a significant gap in local and regional economic snapshots for these communities, making informed decision-making challenging.

RIEP plans to address this issue by focusing on a sample of rural and remote coastal communities. Recognizing that the Islands Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) currently lacks the capacity to lead this initiative, RIEP is uniquely positioned to gather data, insights, and experiences from community businesses and agencies. This will help identify economic needs, opportunities, and risks for each community, enabling them to gain a clearer understanding of their economic status.

The information collected will serve as the foundation for a Regional State of the Economy Report, equipping these communities with the tools they need for sustained, data-informed economic support.

As the Chair of the Southern Gulf Islands Community Economic Sustainability Commission, I understand that the absence of coordinated local economic data has hindered evidence-based strategies and indicators necessary for effective decision-making. Establishing a system to analyze key economic indicators is vital for fostering resilience and sustainability, allowing our communities to better navigate economic transitions and shocks.



I am enthusiastic about supporting RIEP's Communities Talking Project. It represents a significant step toward improving how our rural islands and remote coastal communities measure their economic well-being. By creating a community-informed economic index model, this project will contribute to building thriving, inclusive, and enduring socio-economic capacity across our communities and throughout rural coastal regions of British Columbia.

Thank you for considering this vital initiative.

Best regards,



Paul Brent  
CRD Electoral Area Director, Southern Gulf Islands

