

## Appendix B: Annual Service Reviews

### BACKGROUND

On April 30, 2025, the CRD Board (Board) directed staff to report back with specific recommendations on “[conducting] one to two service reviews on an annual basis”.

A service review is a structured assessment of an organization’s service(s), aimed at identifying opportunities to improve service delivery. What constitutes an improvement varies depending on the type of service, user expectations and costs. It may also differ between those responsible for overseeing the service and those receiving it. In some cases, improvements may involve increases in the quantity or quality of service delivered, changing the overall value proposition or streamlining business processes. In others, the focus may be on reducing the cost of delivery or, in rare instances, discontinuing a service altogether. Broadly, service reviews are one of many tools used to support efficiency and effectiveness, and long-term financial sustainability.

The province of British Columbia outlines three primary types of service review processes available to regional districts:

- Informal service reviews, initiated at the discretion of the Board.
- Bylaw-based service review, embedded in the service establishing bylaw.
- Statutory service review, formally initiated by a service participant by notification to the Board, other service participants, and the Minister responsible for local government.

The CRD currently delivers over 200 services which vary considerably in scope, scale, expenditure, source of mandate, governance, and, particularly for sub-regional and local services, the number of participants. Several services are governed by legislation and/or are overseen by commissions and committees with varying degrees of delegated authority from the Board. Over the last decade there has been a sustained volume of new services created each Board term and service bylaw amendments, which are subject to approval by the electors, as well as new initiatives and capital projects undertaken.

CRD services are routinely assessed for effectiveness and efficiency through a variety of established mechanisms. Some reviews occur annually, while others are conducted on a cyclical or ad hoc basis, depending on the nature and needs of the service.

#### *1. CRD Planning Framework*

The CRD’s Planning Framework is a multi-step, organization-wide coordinated process with several touchpoints involving the Board. The process takes place annually, and provides several levers to the Board to evaluate and manage service levels and growth on an annual basis, including:

- The Service & Financial Planning Guidelines, approved each May, set direction for the multi-year service plans and budget development.
- The Board Priorities Check-In, held in each April/May, confirm the strategic direction for the following year.
- The annual review and approval of the service plans (Community Need Summaries) and provisional and final budgets.
- The approval of financial management strategies, typically applied to all services.

In addition, the Board's work is supported by its standing committees and commissions, which provide recommendations to the Board throughout the year on new or amended policies, strategies, initiatives and projects.

## *2. Strategic and Operational Plans*

Many CRD services are also guided by strategic plans or other guiding documents that shape the ongoing evolution of service delivery and identify specific areas of enhancements. When developing or updating these plans, staff regularly carry out public engagement, both virtually and in person, to gather feedback, understand community expectations, and collaborate with service users to identify opportunities for improvements. Examples of Board-approved plans include:

- 2017 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan (currently under review)
- 2018 First Nations Relations Task Force Final Report
- 2021-2025 Climate Action Strategy (currently under review)
- 2021 Solid Waste Management Plan
- 2022 Regional Water Supply Master Plan
- 2022-2032 Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan and suite of operational management plan, including the Land Acquisition Strategy
- 2014 Core Area Liquid Waste Management Plan (Consolidated) and 2024 Long-Term Biosolids Management Strategy
- 2024-2027 CRD Arts Support Service Strategic Plan

## *3. Ad hoc targeted service reviews*

In addition to the regular planning process and development of strategic plans, the Chief Administrative Officer, General Managers, the Board and the Commissions with delegated authority may occasionally initiate supplementary service evaluations. These targeted reviews are designed to provide deeper insights into specific services or to address a specific opportunity or challenge that has emerged. Past examples include:

- Environmental Services and Water Services Service Delivery Review (2008-2009)
- Parks and Community Services/Environmental Sustainability Departmental Integration (2013)
- Bylaw and Animal Care Service Delivery Review (2014-2015)
- Facility Management Review (2016)
- Board considered conducting a global service review process and directed CAO to enhance divisional service planning after evaluating several approaches (2016)
- Regional Parks Operational and Financial Review (2022)
- Information Technology and GIS Service Review (2022)
- Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Service Review (2022)
- Organizational Structure Review – CRD Evolves 2024-2025 (2023-2025)
- Saanich Peninsula Water Commission Amalgamation Study (2024-2025)
- Procurement Review (2024-2025)

Since service participants already have the ability to initiate formal service reviews through the existing provincial mechanism, the CRD does not need to replicate that process. Instead, the focus should be on developing a supplementary, Board-led review process that complements existing tools. To ensure this process is effective and adds value, staff recommend that such reviews be carefully scoped to avoid duplication and be clearly justified.

## PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

Staff have identified two potential gaps in the CRD's current planning framework that could be addressed through a supplementary, structured service review process.

- There is currently no prescribed approach for reviewing older, legacy services to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose, relevant to the communities they serve, and aligned with industry standards and corporate best practices. To date, reviews of legacy services have relied on staff proactively identifying and initiating them on a case-by-case basis. Staff recommend that the review process include a systematic method for identifying and evaluating such legacy services to ensure they continue to deliver value.
- There is no mechanism for reviewing and potentially consolidating the oversight structure for services that would benefit from consistent and unified management. While consistency is applied at the point of service creation, it often diverges over time. The CRD currently manages over 70 standing committees and commissions, an unusually high number compared to other local governments. These bodies operate under varied governance models, delegated authorities, and administrative support, which places significant demand on organizational capacity. Staff recommend that the review process include an evaluation of oversight structures to improve efficiency, reduce administrative burden, and improve service oversight.

Given the scale and complexity of the CRD's service portfolio, there would be merits in conducting a one-time review of services to address these historical gaps and regularise service oversight. To ensure the process delivers meaningful results, services should be selected based on clear goals and intake criteria, listed below. This targeted approach will help staff focus efforts on the services with the greatest potential for improvement and impact.

The pace of this review would be determined once a list of suitable services has been identified. However, it is important to note upfront that addressing these legacy and governance issues will likely take several years of considerable effort. Following this initial effort, staff would recommend establishing an ongoing process for future assessment in a more proactive and sustainable manner.

### *Goals and Service Selection Criteria*

Staff recommend that the service review process be guided by two overarching goals:

1. Identify opportunities to **improve operational efficiency** by consolidating similar activities, reducing service delivery costs, and/or improving resource utilization.
2. Identify opportunities to **enhance service quality** by implementing new quality control measures, increasing service reliability, and/or discontinuing outdated service models.

To support these goals, staff propose to apply the following issues-based criteria to identify suitable candidate services for review:

1. **Legacy Services:** that have been in operation for 20 or more years and have not undergone a formal review. This is defined as:
  - a. No formal review of service levels, mandate, or strategic direction undertaken in the last 20 years, and/or
  - b. No public engagement or elector approval sought on service levels, mandate or strategic direction in the last 20 years, and/or

- c. The service is not included as an exempted service in the Regional District Service Withdrawal Regulation. Such services include regional parks, emergency telephone systems (e.g. 911) and solid waste management and recycling.
- 2. *Services Needing Strategic Realignment*: services that draw on unusually high levels of internal resources or have known issues related to the goals of operational efficiency or service quality<sup>1</sup>, such as:
  - a. Misalignment between current service delivery and their original mandate or purpose.
  - b. Absence of appropriate quality control measures or mechanisms (e.g. service agreements).
  - c. Delivery models that are outdated or inconsistent with modern industry practices or corporate standards.
  - d. Services impacted by regulatory changes.
- 3. *Sustainability Concerns*: services facing environmental, social or financial sustainability issues that may impact their long-term viability.
- 4. *Opportunities for Consolidation*: services that could be consolidated to reduce service delivery costs and capacity demands, while improving consistency and oversight. This may include reviewing the scope and responsibilities of various committees and commissions.

### *Process*

Staff will apply the intake criteria to identify candidate services for review. The Board's input will be sought, and existing governing bodies may also be canvassed to gather suggestions. Candidate services will then be prioritized to ensure that resources are focused on high-impact reviews. The list of candidates and proposed plan for next steps will be brought back to the Board for approval.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### *Service Delivery Implications*

Service reviews require considerable time and organizational capacity. As noted by the Board, during the deliberation, with over 200 potential services in scope, treating each one equally could result in a lengthy and costly process. Many services are already subject to regular reviews through existing mechanisms. To ensure value and avoid duplication, staff recommend that any supplementary reviews be precisely scoped and clearly justified as outlined in the background.

It is also important to note that the objectives of the CRD Board for this review process may differ from those of the service participants or oversight bodies. These differences can create challenges in defining what constitutes effective and efficient service delivery. Engaging those responsible for operational decisions and oversight is important, as they have shaped the current form of the service and will be instrumental in implementing future changes. However, while consultation with service participants will help ensure informed and inclusive decision-making, it will add complexity and may extend timelines.

To support a successful implementation, the supplementary reviews will need to be planned and scheduled well in advance, allowing for appropriate work planning and allocation of staff time. Existing workplans may need to be re-phased to accommodate this additional work. The estimated timelines may vary depending on the scope. Based on lessons learned during the

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<sup>1</sup> Note that some improvements on such issues were also implemented through CRD Evolves 2024-2025.

planning phase of CRD Evolves 2024-2025, it is estimated that a narrowly focused review could be completed within six months, while a more significant review may take 12 to 18 months.

Additionally, changes to the scope of services would likely require amendments to service establishing bylaws, which is time-consuming and resource intensive work, and may require engaging in an electoral approval process. A coordinated approach to address multiple changes simultaneously may help streamline the implementation process, depending again on the scale and nature of changes.

#### *Financial Implications*

To support the review process, external consultant support may be necessary, particularly for large or complex services. The estimated cost per review, excluding internal staffing costs, ranges between \$20,000 and \$100,000, depending on scope and intricacy. Staff will bring forward any resource requests for Board approval through the annual service planning and financial planning process.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Board endorses this proposed approach, and that staff report back to the Board with a prioritized list of suitable services for review in Q1 2026. Any resources required will be proposed through the usual service planning and financial planning process.