

HOUSING NOW

The 2025 Year in Review reflects Housing NOW's ongoing efforts on Salt Spring Island to strengthen housing stability and support the local workforce. The report outlines key activities, partnerships, and progress achieved through community-based solutions and regional collaboration.

Prepared by the Southern Gulf Islands Community Resource Centre

Year In Review
2025

2025 Year in Review

Housing NOW Homeshare Registry Program



In 2025, the Housing NOW Homeshare Registry Program advanced its mandate to strengthen housing stability, workforce retention, and community well-being across the Southern Gulf Islands, with an enhanced focus on Salt Spring Island. The program continued to operate as a community-based housing solution that directly supports local employers, essential service providers, seniors, and residents. By facilitating short and long-term shared housing arrangements, Housing NOW addressed persistent housing supply constraints that impact economic participation and service delivery.

On Salt Spring Island, Housing NOW deepened engagement with employers, senior-serving organizations, housing advocates, and community partners while participating in more than forty outreach activities across the region. Since program inception, Housing NOW has welcomed 111 homeseekers and 60 homeowners to the Registry, resulting in 16 confirmed homeshare matches across the region. Each successful match represents a tangible reduction in workforce displacement and recruitment pressure for island businesses, nonprofit organizations, and public-serving institutions.

While confirmed matches represent the most visible outcome, the Registry also functions as a critical pipeline, maintaining readiness as housing availability fluctuates and enabling rapid placement when suitable opportunities arise. Based on conservative regional construction cost estimates for equivalent rental units, these housing outcomes reflect an estimated value of more than \$3.9 million, achieved through a comparatively modest public and community investment. This demonstrates strong value for money and positions the Homeshare model as a cost-effective tool for economic resilience.

Digital modernization continued through the phased rollout of the Happipad 2.0 platform to support registry operations and data management. While early technical challenges delayed full implementation, system updates are improving reliability, administrative oversight, and user experience. Communications and engagement efforts also expanded through a high-performing newsletter, the launch of the Shelter SGI Podcast, with monthly episodes, and the publication and distribution of the Kitchen Table Conversations guidebook, now available through island libraries.

Looking ahead, Housing NOW is positioning 2026 as a year of deeper coordination through research and implementation planning for a Community Housing Operations Model, alongside the development of a structured inter-agency referral framework to support long-term housing solutions aligned with local and regional priorities.

Program Overview

The Housing NOW Homeshare Registry connects homeowners with individuals seeking affordable, seasonal, and long-term homeshare arrangements. By supporting shared housing, the program

assists local workers, seniors, and residents who are essential to the social and economic fabric of island communities.

Serving Galiano, Mayne, Pender, Salt Spring, and Saturna Islands, Housing NOW operates within a context of limited housing supply, high demand, and seasonal pressures. Across the region, short-term rentals, infrastructure limitations, and fluctuating visitor patterns continue to shape housing availability. As a result, local employers and service providers rely heavily on private homeowners and the secondary rental market to meet workforce housing needs.

Housing NOW responds through trust-based outreach, education, and individualized support. The Homeshare model offers a flexible, community-rooted approach that strengthens housing stability, supports workforce retention, and contributes to healthier, more resilient island communities.

Goals and Objectives for 2024 to 2025

Key program goals during the review period included:

- Sustaining core staffing, including the Salt Spring Island Coordinator and Island Associates
- Launching and piloting the Happipad 2.0 digital platform
- Strengthening partnerships with senior-serving organizations, health and wellness agencies, and community groups
- Publishing and distributing the Kitchen Table Conversations guidebook to support homeowner participation
- Researching social enterprise and service models to inform long-term program sustainability
- Expanding available housing supply through homeowner outreach and education

Registry Operations and Digital Systems

In May 2025, Housing NOW began transitioning Registry operations to the Happipad 2.0 digital platform to improve efficiency, data integrity, and reporting capacity. Early technical challenges related to user access and administrative workflows temporarily reduced participation. To ensure continuity of service, the program relied on established Standard Operating Procedures while working with the platform provider to resolve system issues.

Corrective actions included streamlined registration processes, enhanced administrative dashboards, temporary fee waivers during testing, and ongoing quality assurance. The recent release of an upgraded administrative dashboard with improved reporting functionality establishes a stronger foundation for performance monitoring and outcome reporting moving into 2026.

Between May and October 2025, the platform recorded 227 users, 275 sessions, and 691 page views. These metrics provide a baseline for future evaluation as digital systems stabilize and participation increases.

Housing Affordability Trends

Affordability remains a persistent challenge. Average rents listed by homeowner hosts ranged from \$1,500 to \$1,850, while average homeseeker budgets remained closer to \$1,000. Educational outreach and incentive-based engagement with homeowners continue to be essential for narrowing this gap and supporting workforce stability on Salt Spring Island and across the region.

Community Outreach and Engagement

Salt Spring Island

Salt Spring Island remained a central hub for program activity and community engagement. The Salt Spring Island Coordinator played a key role in advancing the Happipad partnership, supporting outreach, and strengthening relationships with local organizations, employers, and service providers.

Community engagement highlights included:

- More than 100 residents participating in the Harbour House High Tea Series
- Over 80 participants engaging in the Transition Salt Spring Common Ground Summit
- More than 50 attendees at the Evicted Cities screening during the Salt Spring Film Festival
- Over 200 community members connecting through the Social Justice Bazaar

Key partnerships included:

- HEARTH, SSHAN, and Fulford Seniors
- Transition Salt Spring and local business associations
- A presentation at the Rural Island Economic Partnership Forum with representatives from 32 BC communities

These activities reinforced workforce housing as a core community planning issue and positioned Housing NOW as a practical, community-led housing response aligned with Salt Spring Island priorities.

Southern Gulf Islands

Across the Southern Gulf Islands, Housing NOW maintained consistent outreach and engagement to support regional coordination and shared learning.

- On Galiano Island, the program convened a housing roundtable with more than 14 community leaders and engaged directly with over 40 organizations and businesses, reaching approximately 250 contacts through mail and email.
- On Pender Island, Housing NOW participated in more than 25 community events, engaging approximately 50 organizations and reaching an estimated 350 to 500 residents through markets, fairs, and seniors' gatherings.

- On Mayne and Saturna Islands, outreach included participation in 12 community events and engagement with approximately 70 organizations and businesses, reaching more than 250 residents and visitors.

Regional communications initiatives included the Shelter SGI Podcast, distribution of the Kitchen Table Conversations guidebook through all island libraries, a quarterly newsletter with a 77 percent open rate and nearly 300 subscribers, collaboration with the SGI Community Justice Program on online housing conversations, and local print and media outreach.

Collectively, these efforts engaged a wide range of Salt Spring Island residents, employers, and service providers and strengthened a relationship-based approach to housing engagement.

Future Direction: Community Housing Operations Model and Referral Framework

Employers and nonprofit organizations across the region consistently identified challenges related to workforce accommodation and housing logistics. In response, Housing NOW is exploring the development of a Community Housing Operations Model as a regional framework to support long-term, purpose-built housing operations.

The Community Housing Operations Model is intended to provide shared operational capacity for community-led housing initiatives, including administrative management support, standardized service agreements, and coordinated tenant relations. This work is being approached in alignment with Provincial governance structures and local implementation readiness.

Complementing this work, Housing NOW is working to develop and implement a structured referral framework that strengthens coordination between housing, healthcare, seniors' services, and workforce-serving organizations. Building on a public-facing Community Connect pathway, the referral framework is designed to improve service navigation, follow-through, and inter-island coordination, while reducing fragmentation for employers and service providers.

Communications and Economic Alignment

Housing NOW increased its regional profile through consistent communications, local media coverage, and public presentations. Coverage in *The Driftwood* and participation in regional forums helped connect housing initiatives with broader economic development and community planning conversations.

The program employed five staff and three contract specialists, worked with local suppliers, and benefited from in-kind support from island businesses, reinforcing local economic circulation and responsible reinvestment of public funds.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Several factors shaped program delivery in 2025. Affordability mismatches, restrictive pet policies, and varying levels of homeowner readiness affected match potential. Technical delays during the digital platform transition reinforced the importance of flexible service models and strong offline systems. Staffing changes and Canada Post service disruptions also impacted outreach timelines.

These challenges informed improvements to program workflows, communication strategies, and partnership approaches, strengthening Housing NOW's operational resilience and capacity to respond to changing community needs.

Funding and Resource Development

Housing NOW operates with support from the Capital Regional District and regional partners. The Southern Gulf Islands Community Resource Centre has applied for funding through the Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program in 2026 to advance the Community Housing Operations Model and strengthen operational capacity. Additional applications are under review with BC Gaming.

No funding decisions have been confirmed at this time, and all initiatives are being planned to align with multiple potential funding outcomes and responsible fiscal management.

Priorities for 2025 to 2026

- Secure funding for the Community Housing Operations Model
- Develop and implement an inter-agency homeshare referral framework
- Strengthen Registry workflows and digital systems
- Continue inter-island engagement and workforce housing advocacy
- Deepen collaboration with community partners across Salt Spring and the Southern Gulf Islands

Acknowledgments

Housing NOW extends appreciation to the Salt Spring Local Community Commission and Capital Regional District, as well as community partners, homeowners, homesharers, employers, and service organizations whose collaboration and trust continue to make this work possible. Together, these efforts support stable housing pathways, resilient services, and strong island communities.

To the LCC members:

The reports below cover two of the 4 recipients from the 2025 Ec Dev. fund from the collaborative request made by the SSI Agriculture Alliance.

Those are Listed here:

1. Linking Land program & identifying host sites for Neighbourhood farmer training program \$7000 (FLT & ING project)- **report below**
2. Abattoir Skills Training \$5000 (Abattoir Society)- **report below**
3. Expanding the Reach of the Tuesday Market \$4500 (Community Market Society) - receiving these funds now (April 2026) - and will use them to promote the market for 2026.
4. Removal and chipping of invasive plants/feasibility of linking with composter project \$3500 (Transition Salt Spring)- We are of the understanding a decision was to fund this from the Grant in Aid program.

Salt Spring Abattoir

1447 B Fulford Ganges Road
Salt Spring Island V8K 2B2



Summary of 2025 Training Achievements – Salt Spring Abattoir Society

In 2025, the Salt Spring Abattoir Society undertook a coordinated training program that significantly strengthened staff capability across all areas of poultry and red-meat processing. Thanks to the financial support from CRD, the Abattoir delivered targeted, hands-on instruction led by experienced butchers, external specialists, and senior crew members.

Key Achievements

- Expanded workforce skills and versatility: Multiple staff were cross-trained across poultry, lamb, beef, and pork processing, reducing operational risk and improving scheduling flexibility.
- Strengthened evisceration and processing proficiency: Focused training in both poultry and red-meat evisceration improved speed, accuracy, and consistency, directly enhancing product quality and regulatory compliance.
- Improved onboarding of new staff: New hires received structured, multi-day training that accelerated integration and ensured they could contribute productively much sooner.
- Enhanced animal-welfare and food-safety practices: Staff received instruction in stunning, equipment handling, sanitation, and proper storage, supporting high compliance standards.
- Increased resilience in Cut & Wrap operations: Dedicated training days improved capacity in

lamb and beef wrapping, addressing a long-standing bottleneck.

- Strengthened team coordination: A full-crew meeting and ongoing mentorship improved communication, alignment, and operational cohesion.

Overall Impact

The 2025 training program delivered clear, measurable improvements in operational reliability, staff competence, and service capacity. The Abattoir is now better equipped to maintain high standards, manage staff turnover, and support the island's farming community. The CRD investment directly enabled these gains, and its positive effects are already visible in day-to-day operations.

The Neighbourhood Farmer Training Program Report to the CRD and Local Community Commission April 2026

Funds provided by the LCC to the SSI Farmland Trust supported the work done in 2025 by the SSI FLT and Island Natural Growers to develop the Neighbourhood Farmer Training Program and for the recruitment of the 2026 training cohort. Funds were also received from other sources.

- 4 part-time contractors and volunteers from the participating organizations worked on the program team.
 - The Neighbourhood Farmer Training Program is unique in that it combines professional farmer training, land matching and support from a local neighbourhood.
- The Salt Spring Agricultural Alliance hosted a webpage for the program providing detailed information for landowners, neighbourhoods, and potential trainees (www.ssiagalliance.org/nfp).
- Other outreach activities included newspaper articles, a CBC radio interview, social media, and attendance at agricultural events on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland.
- Conversations were held with twenty-two Salt Spring landowners. Five farm sites were secured with two more landowners prepared to sign agreements. □ Kwantlen Polytechnic University assisted with developing a robust curriculum which covers organic-regenerative agricultural practices, rural entrepreneurship and community-based food systems.

- The training commitment is 18 months. This includes six months full time training at Chorus Frog Farm, matching with a participating landowner, mentoring and support to develop the new farm and to connect with the local neighbourhood.

- Interest was received from across Canada from individuals with diverse backgrounds including career-transition adults and young families, highlighting the widespread need for accessible pathways into farming.

- The first cohort of 4 trainees started the training on April 7, 2026. Feedback to date suggests landowners and trainees are excited about the potential of the program. □ Although good value for money, the cost of training combined with full-time attendance was prohibitive for some. For 2027 we will be exploring options for customised part-time attendance to increase accessibility.



Salt Spring Island

Neighbourhood

Farm Program



✓ Do you have land that needs a farmer?

✓ Are you a farmer looking for land?

✓ Do you want to support a local farmer and eat locally grown food?

✓ Do you want to start a farm that grows food for your neighborhood?

✓ Check out Salt Spring Island's Neighbourhood Farm Program!



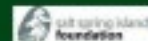
The Neighbourhood Farm Program combines professional farmer training, matching trainees with land, and selling to neighbours and local markets. We are looking for people who want to help grow our island's local food system!



Contact Us
nfp.saltspring@gmail.com



Our Website
sslagalliance.org/nfp



Salt Spring Island Visitor Information Centre



Visitor Statistics 2025 Final Report

Jan. 12, 2026

Brigitte Diebold
VIC Steering Committee Member

1. Visitor Information Centre Statistic 2025 – Final Report

Summarised are key highlights and observations from the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) statistics (Jan. -Dec.2025).



Key Highlights

- **Overall Visitors:** The VIC welcomed 9,999 visitors in 2025 compared to 7,691 visitors in 2024. This is a 30% increase over the year. The month from July-September were seen as peak visitor month for the VIC.
- **Volunteer Support:** 42 VIC ambassadors and 4 summer students covered 1,239 hours in 2025, in comparison to 868 hours in 2024. This is 42.7% more than last year.
- **Global Location from visiting Parties:** 84.2% (5,205) visited from Canada. 7.8 % (487) from the US, 4.7 % (292) from Europe. Asia, Australia and others covered 3.2 % (201).
- **BC Visitor / SSI Residents:** The VIC stated 4286 parties coming from BC, which is 69.3 % of all parties reported. 1645 parties were residents to the island, which is 26.6% who came to the VIC in 2025
- **Nights in Community per Party:** 42.3 % of parties tracked, were day trippers. 44.3% stayed 1-3 nights. 13.3 % stayed 1 or 2 weeks or longer than 14+ days. Those parties with a higher length are indicating a larger impact on the community.

Note:

- Comparisons reflecting the same time period (Jan. to Dec.) for 2024 and 2025
- Destination BC is collecting data based mainly on parties, e.g., a family of 4 visitors is tracked as 1 party
- Starting from Mid June the Visitor Information Centre was open 7 days a week in 2025