

**REPORT TO CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT BOARD
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2020**

SUBJECT **Rural Islands Economic Online Marketing Program**

ISSUE SUMMARY

Support island businesses by creating an online business directory and marketing plan.

BACKGROUND

Many rural island businesses have closed their doors during the COVID-19 event to maintain social distancing and assist in keeping their community safe. The Community Economic Development Commission and Community Economic Sustainability Commission support a contract with the Rural Islands Economic Partnership to create an online business directory and marketing plan for rural island businesses. The project will facilitate a marketing program with communications support, web-tech set up, data collection and coordination as described in Appendix A.

The website will market registered island businesses where consumers purchase gift certificate for products and services from their local island businesses. Funds generated from the gift certificate will be sent to the business providing the service or product.

The total cost of the project is \$17,500 and pooled funding sources are as follows:

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|------------------------------------|----------|
| Community Economic Sustainability | \$5,000 |
| Community Economic Development | \$10,000 |
| Rural Islands Economic Partnership | \$2,500 |

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Capital Regional District Board amends the 2020 Community Economic Development Commission Five Year Financial Plan to fund a project with Rural Island Economic Partnership (RIEP) to develop an online business directory and marketing plan for rural businesses in the amount of \$10,000 funded from operating reserves subject to the RIEP returning funds on a proration basis upon securing contributions from RIEP partners participating in the project.

Alternative 2

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Social Implications

The island economies are largely based on seasonal tourism. Many businesses operate at deficit during the winter and rebound in the high season. The COVID impact will leave no season to rebound from. Also recent BC Ferries service cuts will have a negative impact on

island economies. In response to this economic impact the CEDC has consulted with and received support for this initiative from Salt Spring Island, Southern Gulf Islands, Discovery Islands, and Gabriola Chambers of Commerce. The model is based on a similar program launched by Cornwall Ontario 'Campaign to Save Main Street', an online campaign and gift certificate store (<https://www.cornwall-gift-certificates.ca/>). A local organization set up a similar 'Think Local First' campaign for greater Victoria businesses (<https://supportlocalyyj.com/>).

Financial Implications

The marketing program contract will be funded from the Community Economic Development Commission operating reserves; and the Community Economic Sustainability Commission contribution has approved \$5,000 from their operating budget.

The CRD will be procuring a marketing program only and will not be administering or procuring the administration of the management of the program, distribution of gift certificates, or payment of funds to business directory participants.

Service Delivery Implications

A contract with the Rural Islands Economic Partnership will be used to procure Covid-19 Economic Recovery Marketing Program for Salt Spring Island and the Southern Gulf islands.

CONCLUSION

The Community Economic Development Commission and Community Sustainability Commission support a marketing program promoting gift certificates for local islanders to purchase from rural island businesses

RECOMMENDATION

The Capital Regional District Board amends the 2020 Community Economic Development Commission Five Year Financial Plan to fund a project with Rural Island Economic Partnership (RIEP) to develop an online business directory and marketing plan for rural businesses in the amount of \$10,000 funded from operating reserves subject to the RIEP returning funds on a proration basis upon securing contributions from RIEP partners participating in the project.

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| Submitted by: | Karla Campbell, BA, Senior Manager, Salt Spring Island Electoral Area |
| Concurrence: | Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer |

ATTACHMENT(S)

Appendix A: Proposal - A Covid-19 Economic Recovery Marketing Program for the Southern Gulf islands