



Economic Development Cowichan » ecdevcowichan.com

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January 2019 Update:

Sowing the Seeds for Agricultural Opportunities in the Cowichan Region

In **2018**, EDC co-hosted two round table sessions with the agricultural community, helped action a Cowichan Farm Equipment Bank with Cowichan Green Community and co-hosted the 2018 Islands Agriculture Show at Cowichan Exhibition Park. As we prepare for the 2019 Island Agriculture Show (Feb 1 & 2 at the Saanich Fairgrounds), EDC celebrates a series of new agriculture initiatives for 2019:

- 1. QUALITY ASSURANCE LAB FOR THE BEVERAGE SECTOR** | EDC is exploring the potential for creating new food and beverage testing lab facilities for the Cowichan region. The idea of creating the facility grew out recommendations contained in the Cowichan Beverage Sector Study. If a lab is established, it could make it easier for Island beverage producers to do quality assurance testing right here in the region.
- 2. LAND MATCHING PROGRAM** | In partnership with EDC, Young Agrarians, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Cowichan Green Community, the Land Match Program is connecting emerging farmers with landowners. Three successful land matches have already taken place in the past six months and further matches and entrepreneur training programs are in the works.
- 3. FOCUS ON FOOD PROCESSING** | In tandem with the Small Scale Food Processor Association of BC, EDC is acting on recommendations contained in a 2014 CVRD Food Processing Study. Our goal is to unearth the demand for local food inputs and bring together partners on a Cowichan Food Hub.
- 4. COWICHAN BEVERAGE SECTOR STUDY** | EDC is releasing its newly minted study on the wine, craft brewing, apple cider and the distilling sector. A key study recommendation, to support a Sub Geographical Designation for the Cowichan Valley, is underway. In 2019, EDC also hopes to dig deep on sector issues like housing and accommodation, marketing and worker training.

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EDC HIGHLIGHTS: 2018

January | The CVRD Board adopts EDC's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, aimed at supporting sector growth, business development and stronger communities.

February | The Cowichan Tech Strategy is unveiled, underscoring the need for tech training, investment, connectivity and networking in the local tech sector.

March | EDC collaborates with Vancouver Island Economic Alliance (VIEA) to host a Wood Fibre Forum. EDC's Industrial Land Use Strategy initiative kicks off with visits to every industrial park in the region and the formation of an industry advisory panel.

April | EDC provides project management for the Ladysmith Economic Development Strategy and joins discussions on the Hiking and Cycling Trail Action Plan for the Cowichan Lake Region.

June | The Cowichan Land Match Program launches with Young Agrarians, BC Department of Agriculture and Cowichan Green Community.

July | EDC meets with local beverage producers to produce a sector strategy, and continues consultations surrounding the development of an Industrial Land Use Strategy.

August | In partnership with Vancouver Island University, Apple Canada and School District 79, EDC hosts a networking session with local tech companies to discuss the creation of a local tech training program.

September | As a follow-up to EDC's March 2018 Attainable Housing Forum, a workshop with housing guru Avi Friedman challenges local not-for-profits to move their housing projects to the next level.

October | EDC brings together agricultural and beverage producers to discuss export marketing programs available through the Export Navigator Program.

November | Following the release of the Ladysmith Economic Development Strategy, EDC helps garner support for an Investment Attraction initiative.

December | EDC releases two new videos as part of its Change Maker series. Cowichan: Hipper than You Think celebrates innovators in our community, and a second video profiles Lake Town Ranch.