



Centre for Innovative &
Entrepreneurial Leadership

Business Vitality Initiative (BVI)

Phase Two Focus and Action Report

Hinton, Alberta

February 2009



Funded by:



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The Business Vitality Initiative

The Business Vitality Initiative (BVI) helps communities to assess their capacity to work with and support entrepreneurs, and to foster small business growth. The BVI measures the perceptions of community leaders, business people and citizens about the current business environment in their community and compares the results to an average of other communities to determine possible short and long-term actions the community can undertake to improve its business friendliness.

The Hinton BVI was sponsored by the Town of Hinton, Community Futures West Yellowhead, and the Hinton and District Chamber of Commerce. Representatives from these groups selected and invited the participants, who were to be 50% business people, 25% local leaders and 25% citizens, representing a diversity of interests, ages and perspectives in the community. On November 19, 2008, forty-three people attended the Phase 1 session of the BVI in Hinton.

Phase 1 used focus groups and a comprehensive survey to assess the community's small business potential.

Hinton Phase 1 Assessment Results

In the Assessment Session, participants were asked to give three words to describe their community. The majority of responses were positive. According to respondents, Hinton is an *active, energetic, progressive* community in a *beautiful, scenic* setting. When participants were asked to identify key strengths, the top responses were *geographic location, the diversity of resource industries, and the wilderness*.

When participants were asked why they live in Hinton, *employment, family, and quality of life* were mentioned most. When participants were asked to provide directions for improvement for their community, the need for post-secondary education and retail diversity, along with the need for less dependence on resource-based industries, were mentioned most often.

More detail can be found in the Hinton Phase 1 Assessment Report.

Section Scores

From highest to lowest, section scores out of 100 were as follows: Quality of Life (71), Communication & Connectivity (69), Infrastructure & Business Services (66), Leadership Teamwork & Networking (59), Government & Organizations (59), Innovation (58), Opportunities & Attitudes (57), Capital & Funding (56), Education & Training (56), Markets & Marketing (45). The total score for all sections was 60, a score 12% higher than the average for 17 Canadian

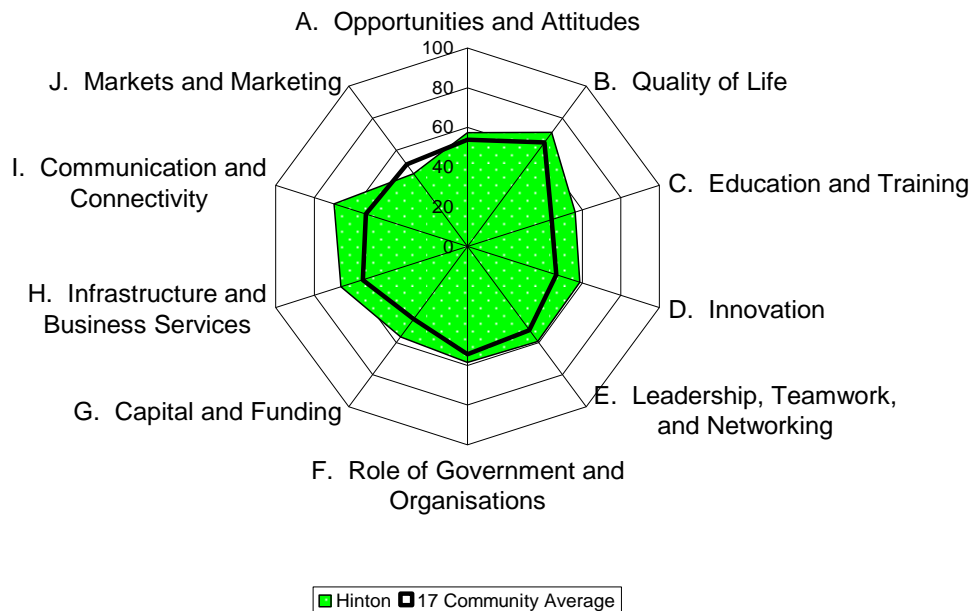
communities which have undertaken the BVI.

Hinton scored equal to or above the 17-community average in 9 out of 10 sections. A particular strength for Hinton are its score for the 'Quality of Life' section of 71 out of 100 (9% above the community average), which was the highest scoring section of the survey, and its score of 69 (31% above average) for Communications and Connectivity.

The lowest scoring section of the survey, and the only one which fell below the community average, was 'Markets and Marketing' which had a score of 45 (12% below the 17-community average).

The radial graph below contrasts Hinton's section scores with the average score for other communities which have done the BVI in Canada. The closer the shaded section is to the outside ring, the higher Hinton's score, and the greater the business friendliness.

Hinton and All-Community Section Scores



Hinton Phase 2 Results

The Phase 2, or Focus and Action Session, held on February 11, 2008, was open to the entire community with the purpose of setting priorities for improvement and jump-starting the community to action. See Appendix 1 for an attendance list.

During that session, the assessment scores and other results, as described in the Phase 1 Report, were presented. The community was then given a series of possible courses of action, derived from focus groups and questionnaire responses (and the group was asked to add their own suggestions to that list) to improve the community's environment for business. All of the actions were posted on sheets of paper throughout the room, and participants were given 5 votes to identify their priorities and select actions that they were interested in investing their time and energy into. The results are presented below with the number of votes for each. They are divided into four categories: capacity building, networking, marketing, and research/ administration/ planning.

Possible Short Term Actions		Votes
<i>Shaded items were chosen as priorities and became the subject of action groups.</i>		
Capacity Building	▪ Opportunity Identification Session for youth to identify untapped business, recreation and education opportunities	19
	▪ Lenders forum introducing businesses & potential businesses to finance and needs of lenders	1
	▪ Events to build cooperation and improve community (e.g. highway clean up, summer or winter festival, 'Celebrate Hinton' event, etc.) <i>This item and "Initiatives to Encourage... below in the Networking section were combined into one action group called Encourage More Businesses and Community Collaboration</i>	16
	▪ Youth entrepreneurship program/initiative	4
	▪ CF West Yellowhead to take a higher profile	4
	▪ Create a Community Foundation	15
Marketing	▪ Review and expand tourism development initiatives, especially marketing of Hinton	20
	▪ Highway appearance and signage review <i>(because the corridor plan has already been approved and implementation of features, landscaping, other beautification will be phased in over the next few years, it was felt this should be removed as a potential short-term action. Those interested in being part of future public consultation on Gregg Avenue. Phase should indicate interest to Town Manager)</i>	17
	▪ Publish and promote BVI results, especially untapped opportunities – e.g. - Bike store, restaurant, etc.	8
	▪ Local products and services showcase or event that would also encourage joint marketing	8

Networking	▪ Business mentoring program	3
	▪ Shop local initiative	19
	▪ Initiative to encourage more business and community collaboration, possibly using speaker series, events, educational forums - e.g. finance, start-up, doing business online, etc. <i>This item and “Events to build...” above in the Capacity Building session, were combined into one action group called Encourage More Businesses and Community Collaboration</i>	16
	▪ Beyond the “same ten people (STP)” strategy to increase number of people participating in community initiatives	18
	▪ Community strategy around broader consultation for initiatives like BVI - e.g. poll in paper on picking actions for BVI rather than just the people who show up at a meeting	13
Research, Admin, & Planning	▪ Review commercial and industrial land bylaws and available land with a committee involving local business people	14
	▪ Housing affordability review	5

Action Group Summary

Following the priority setting exercise, participants formed six discussion groups in order to assess the viability of the three courses of action that were chosen.

The ‘Reality Check’ exercise revealed that the six ? initiatives had sufficient energy and resources to proceed. Highlights from the discussion/action groups are outlined below.

Reality Check 1. Marketing Hinton	
Action Group Members: Amanda Hamelink, Shawnn Ritchie, Doug Kopp, Bill Bulger, Gail Dunn, Carol Kihn, Paul Mathias, Ashley Kalk,	
Question	Answer
Success —Describe what the successful action might look like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formalize a destination marketing organization ▪ Development of a Hinton brand and buy-in from other business/organizations ▪ Separation from town brand ▪ Improved Customer Service (Service Best)
Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine how to increase destination awareness and visitation expenditures

	in Hinton
Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communication—critical that tourism businesses buy in ▪ Commitment from Chamber required ▪ Options need to be put out there
Leadership – Who has the skills to lead (organizations, individuals)? Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn't in the room right now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitation first—prioritize tourism development and marketing initiatives ▪ Doesn't necessarily need to be town run and maybe works better if it isn't
Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finding a facilitator, taking this idea back to the tourism marketing committee
Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Travel AB, RADF, other economic diversification funds ▪ Action group will consist of Tourism Marketing Committee, Renée and Ashley
Your recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take action
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take info back to Tourism Marketing Committee (mtg in March)—present BVI idea which will decide on a facilitation process

Reality Check

2. Opportunity Identification Sessions For Youth

Action Group Members: Randy Reich, Jason Paterson

Question	Answer
Success —Describe what the successful action might look like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunity identification sessions for youth to identify untapped business, recreation & educational opportunities
Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify local business opportunities and make them public ▪ Identify local mentorships for business opportunities
Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes, once the need is identified and published
Leadership – Who has the skills to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chamber, successful business

lead (organizations, individuals)? 1 Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn't in the room right now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> people who can mentor ▪ Town and Community Futures ▪ High School ▪ Young entrepreneur programs
Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6 to 8 months ▪ Lack of volunteers and mentors
Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No
Your recommendation	Take action
Next Steps	Identify other groups who are doing similar projects and work with them to build a cohesive committee ASAP

Reality Check

3. Beyond the “Same Ten People” Strategy

Action Group Members: Allison Rutley, Tanya Hulbert, Joan Melvin, Jerome Cranston, Alexandra Hotte, Karen Hough, Katie Yalte, Lisa Gesyler, Bernie Kreiner, Lisa Jones, Gord Gesyler

Question	Answer
Success —Describe what the successful action might look like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More involvement of different community members
Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage more community members in what goes on in town
Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family oriented community focus ▪ Belief that voices are heard=results ▪ Advertising
Leadership – Who has the skills to lead (organizations, individuals)? 1 Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn't in the room right now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town Rep. ▪ 25-34 age range rep business owners ▪ Volunteer information centre ▪ Mainstream media to Facebook
Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time frame? ▪ Funding factors will affect
Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FCSS ▪ Quality of life grant.

into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer and information centre
Your recommendation	Take action
Next Steps	Wed 25 th . 7pm

Reality Check

4. Introduce a “Business Voice” to Town Council

Note: this group did not arise from the “Possible Short-Term Actions” table above, but was formed spontaneously during the session.

Action Group Members: Dennis Poirier, Lesley Poirier, Keith Wilson, Lori Wilcox

Question	Answer
Success —Describe what the successful action might look like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve all businesses All businesses have knowledge of council’s by-law and development plans before passed Business have a vote on Hinton’s future
Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have a business voice on council and to have a say in decisions before we are shut out and it is passed.
Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, we are sure that every business person in town would love to be involved
Leadership – Who has the skills to lead (organizations, individuals)? 1 Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn’t in the room right now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A business owner or two who is willing to be at the town council meetings. All business owners who care about town decisions.
Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It could be accomplished at any time and no funding would be needed.
Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No financial resources are needed
Your recommendation	Take action
Next Steps	

Reality Check

5. Encourage More Business and Community Collaboration

Action Group Members: Lorraine Mackay, Louise Gale, Myrna Norquay, Shirley Pasioka, Andrea Coté

Question	Answer
<p>Success—Describe what the successful action might look like.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access and use town events calendar published twice a month in local newspaper ▪ Encourage all businesses/ entrepreneurs as well as the Chamber to unify and come together for common goals ▪ Promote business to support community collaboration of events, festivals and forums
<p>Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Successful collaboration
<p>Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes
<p>Leadership – Who has the skills to lead (organizations, individuals)? 1 Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn't in the room right now?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town ▪ Chamber ▪ Community Futures ▪ Involve parks & rec/arts & heritage groups ▪ Social groups
<p>Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 year—fully pulled together after meeting with Chamber and EDC
<p>Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ C.F.
<p>Your recommendation</p>	<p>Get more information before starting</p>
<p>Next Steps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Present to EDC and Chamber ▪ E-mail network of group

Reality Check

6. Buy Local

Action Group Members: Natalie Charlton, George Higgerty, Janice Callihoo, Dawn Gravel, Mark Retallack, Russ Bailey, Tammy Powell, Risa Croken, Bill Bodenchuck

Question	Answer
Success —Describe what the successful action might look like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gather info ▪ Select a path ▪ Activate!
Purpose – What is the main goal of this action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Product and service awareness must be increased
Commitment – Can we get commitment and energy from the town and community to undertake this? If not, what do we have to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Get both hill and valley to participate ▪ Get increased commitment to service quality and choice of product ▪ Get businesses to support other businesses
Leadership – Who has the skills to lead (organizations, individuals)? 1 Who else do we need to involve to ensure success who isn't in the room right now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'Service Best' training- front line ▪ Emphasize key staff attitudes - continuity
Time Frame – How long will it take to accomplish? Are there any political, economic or funding factors which might hurt/help the timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Campaign—who benefits from increased service ▪ Business owners can benefit if they buy in
Finances/ Resources – What, if any, financial resources do we need to tap into? Are there any organizations that can assist this action? Any other resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tap into Tammy Powell for possible resources and info ▪ Business owners
Your recommendation	Get a bit more information before starting
Next Steps/Provisional Leader	Natalie – Old Grind

Next Steps

The most important element of successfully completing an action is the presence of strong community leadership and energy. The community must identify human resources to champion and lead each action. The facilitator asked that those in attendance identify working group members. The Community Sponsors will also continue to work with the working groups in order to follow through on the identified courses of action. Most working groups made a commitment at the meeting to schedule and attend a follow-up meeting.

Long-Term Actions

The following long-term actions were proposed in the Phase 1 Assessment Report, but were not voted on at the Focus and Action meeting on February 11.

Possible Long Term Actions (actions taking more than 12 months to complete)	
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategy for creating a venue or venues for performance, art, etc. (Improvements, Section B) ▪ Air service strategy (Section I) ▪ Sport facility review (Section B) ▪ Strategy to support volunteers and start-up of community groups (e.g. a meeting venue, assistance with recruitment of volunteers, training, accessing finance, etc) (Section B)
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Branding review to correct image of Hinton as a desirable community - especially for young adults - using opportunities & unique characteristics referenced in BVI (e.g. abundant outdoor recreation opportunities, etc.) (Focus Groups, Sections B & H, J6, B6) ▪ Community beautification strategy - e.g. downtown cleanup, outdoor stewardship, addressing sprawl, etc. (Sections B & H, B6)
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outreach, communication and participation strategy to reach out to broader community (Themes, throughout report) ▪ Develop new business welcome program &/or new resident welcome program (Section A) ▪ Strategy to increase production and joint marketing of local goods and services (J8, J9, J10, Section J)
Research, Admin. and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Corridor plan completed (Focus Groups) ▪ Post-secondary strategy (involving research) so that Hinton becomes innovative adult education community (the strategy should also address trades training) - (Top 10, Section B, Themes) ▪ Housing affordability strategy involving business community (to look at this as an economic development issue) (B13, Improvements) ▪ Commercial land and building strategy – e.g. increase land base (Section H) ▪ Coherent land-base plan that addresses competing issues of needing to increase the land base for business with the desire to centralize and reduce sprawl (Themes, throughout report)

Appendix 1: Attendance List

- . Alex Hotte
- . Allison Rutley
- . Amanda Hamelink
- . Andrea Cote
- . Ashley Kalk
- . Bernie Kreiner
- . Bill Bodenchuk
- . Bill Bulger
- . Carol Kihn
- . Dawn Gravel
- . Dennis & Lisa Poirier
- . Doug Kopp
- . Gail Dunn
- . George Higgerty
- . Gord & Lesley Gysler
- . Janice Calihoo
- . Koren Hough
- . Jason Paterson
- . Jerome Cranston
- . Joan Melvin
- . Joan Udell
- . Karla Bailey
- . Katie Yalte
- . Keith Wilson
- . Lisa Jones
- . Lori Wilcox
- . Lorrain MacKay
- . Louise Gale
- . Marc Retallack
- . Natalie Charlton
- . Paul Mathias
- . Randy Reich
- . Risa Croken
- . Robert Hornbrook
- . Shawn Ritchie
- . Shirley Pasieka
- . Tammy Powell
- . Tanya Hulbert
- . Yvette Donais

Appendix 2: Examples of How BVI Communities Have Taken Action

Community 1

- Marketing Coordinator for the whole valley (to find emphasis/strengths, facilitate cooperation & networking)
- Make community “Horticultural Centre of B.C.”
- Clean up and develop the downtown area and community core
- “Buy Local” program
- Develop recreational potential (facilities, bike paths)

Community 2

- Formation of a community business group to look at possibilities
- Use community watershed story to create a community “brand”. (Market the story)
- Renovate community hall(s)
- Plan around ideal set-up of community art(isan’s) gallery
- Accommodation and camping facility development

Community 3

- Local economic development organization to offer more business courses in the area around needs of community business
- Opportunity identification session with young people (under 40)
- Customer service training

Community 4

- Create community foundation
- Increase cooperation between business, government, and citizens by working together on a project
- Opportunity Identification Sessions (one for youth and one for broader community)
- Buy local campaign or program

Community 5

- Buy local campaign
- Networking sessions more regularly among community groups and businesses
- “Did you know” citizen ambassador program
- Joint marketing session – best practices - with Chamber as catalyst

Community 6

- Improve cooperation and communication between stakeholders (business, council, residents)
- Promote tourism and cultural assets
- Buy local program

Community 7

- Joint marketing of products and services by business
- Education of community on benefits of new business
- Develop community brand / market the community
- Build community spirit through festivals / projects

Community 8

- Draft some short-term tourism actions & striking a tourism action group specifically around addressing high quality recreational opportunities
- Develop strategy to attract more capital / possibility of cooperative financing for services community identifies as needing / community identifies potential sources of equity in the community/ Meetings between area lenders and businesses to raise awareness of lending options
- Improve telecommunications / develop telecommunications plan (look at cooperative structure for bringing in high speed (fibre optics))
- Develop brand around beauty / work ethic / independent attitude / creativity / seclusion ('find us if you can' where arts & a pioneer spirit meet the mountains)
- Coordinated or cooperative marketing effort for local products or services (i.e. tourism operators, artisans)

Community 9

- Use landfill/methane/waste management as a catalyst for innovation, education & economic development
- Increase presence of night policing
- Work on a beautification/pride project that increases cooperation among business, residents and government
- Create volunteer attraction/retention/recognition and leadership identification program for community to combat burnout
- Improve customer service (training for front-line employees)

Community 10

- Improve the image of the town by revitalizing main areas and entrances starting with beautification and cleanliness.
- Develop a regional event to promote and unify the town.
- Buy local program.

Community 11

- Review and revise promotional strategy and identify local attractions, to increase tourism and population growth.
- Beautify main street (including public toilet improvements), to make the main town centre more attractive to visitors, travellers, and the community.
- Form a committee to consult with major industries to assess what those industries require of the community.

Community 12

- Develop a youth retention and engagement strategy to give youth a reason to return to the community.
- Targeted outreach marketing strategy to attract more people.
- Make the community a commercial hub for the arts, including a dual/multi facility for historical arts precinct and museum and a working space for artists and craftspeople.
- Buy local campaign.

Community 13

- Develop a loyalty shopping program to give consumers a reason and incentive to shop locally.
- Improve town entrance, to encourage highway travellers to visit the community and to create a pride in the town by local residents.
- Develop a marketing package to attract new residents and businesses.
- Revive “heritage river” and “gateway” concepts and provide recreation to the town i.e. fishing, camping, swimming, to get people talking about the town.

Community 14

- Buy local program
- Develop festivals and events, e.g. Italian festival, power boat competition
- Improve streetscape and capital works including parking/roundabout and bridge treatment.

Appendix 3: About CIEL

The Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership (CIEL) strengthens communities by helping them become more business-friendly, more culturally vibrant, and more sustainable. We also assist them in improving leadership and enhancing community involvement.

CIEL is a non-profit organization located in Nelson, British Columbia, in a region featuring many communities that are quickly having to make transitions to survive in a fast-changing global economy.

Our early work assisted small communities in the neighbouring mountain valleys. We developed innovative assessments coupled with strategic processes that helped communities focus, leverage assets and energy and, most importantly, jumpstart action. Then our ideas attracted the attention of communities farther afield, and we began working with communities across the rest of B.C. More recently we have been invited into communities across Canada, the U.S, New Zealand and Australia.

Our Communities Matrix – a one page tool for assessing stages of community readiness – has now been used in many countries across the globe. The Government of Canada contracted CIEL to research, develop and build a collaborative leadership program as an effective means of building capacity for rural communities in Canada.

CIEL continues to develop practical, engaging and innovative tools and processes that strengthen communities. In 2008, CIEL won the award for the region's most innovative organization from the Kootenay Association for Science & Technology.

Our network of facilitators and trainers allows us to be responsive to the needs of communities across the world. CIEL's conference presentations have inspired at the local, regional, state/province and international level. Our work has been featured on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Living Magazine and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Contact us to help build a custom solution to engage your community and move it to action.