



ANNUAL | REPORT

APRIL 2016-MARCH 2017



imaginekootenay
Your better life



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2016-17 was an amazing year for the Imagine Kootenay partnership. This year we exponentially expanded our online reach as well as increased the number of tools and services provided to communities, investors, job seekers and regional partners. We actively participated in events and workshops and continued to connect with provincial and national economic development organizations to grow and strengthen our program.

This unique partnership services over 70 communities with a combined population of 115,000. We strive to work collaboratively across a large region and have been so successful that we were recognized provincially as a best practice for a regional approach to economic development and workforce attraction with innovative web marketing initiatives. We are proud to report we've had 11 of our existing partners renew their commitment to Imagine Kootenay through a new 5-year Memorandum of Understanding — that's the best affirmation a program can get!

The Imagine Kootenay staff and steering committee members provide communities with the tools and support to be investment ready,

and have been successful in connecting more prospective investors to regional businesses this year than ever before. We work tirelessly with our dedicated team of stakeholders, partners and communities across the Kootenay and Boundary region through talent attraction activities in the technology, tourism, trades and health care sectors. We are extremely proud of these accomplishments and share these successes with all our partner communities.

Our improved metrics highlight the success and growth of the program in a specific and detailed approach, which provides our members with enhanced ways to promote the program and make adjustments to their own strategies when necessary. The Imagine Kootenay staff diligently continue to look for ways to improve the service and add value for our member partners.

We look to 2017-18 with excitement and enthusiasm. We will continue to meet our goals: to provide the capacity and support to continue to connect with domestic and international investors; to support resident and workforce attraction initiatives; and to increase the strength of our regional partnerships and connections.



Terry Van Horn,
Chair, Imagine Kootenay
Partnership

IMAGINE KOOTENAY PROGRAM GOALS

- Raise the profile of partner communities
- Connect investors with opportunities
- Stimulate expanded investment
- Attract a diverse workforce to the region
- Achieve long-term sustainability for the partnership network





Prepared to welcome investment

Imagine Kootenay enhances community investment readiness with training, research, planning and investor support. With 20% of business owners anticipating a change in ownership, we provide tools for succession planning.

IMAGINE KOOTENAY STRIVES TO

Showcase the outstanding work, business and lifestyle opportunities in our communities through a marketing program that raises the profile of the Kootenay region.

Provide interested investors with up-to-date information about a community's business environment.

Improve investor readiness at the community level by providing tools and supports.

Connect people to the variety of employers and employment opportunities available within the Kootenay region.



High profile for partners

The lifestyle and business environment of partner communities are promoted to a broad audience – provincially, nationally and internationally.



Current Partners

City of Nelson and RDCK Areas E & F

City of Revelstoke and CSRD Area B

City of Castlegar

Creston Valley - Kootenay Lake (Yaqan Nukiy - Lower Kootenay Band, RDCK Areas A, B & C, Town of Creston)

Columbia Valley (Invermere, Radium Hot Springs and Canal Flats), RDEK Areas F & G

District of Sparwood

City of Fernie

City of Kimberley

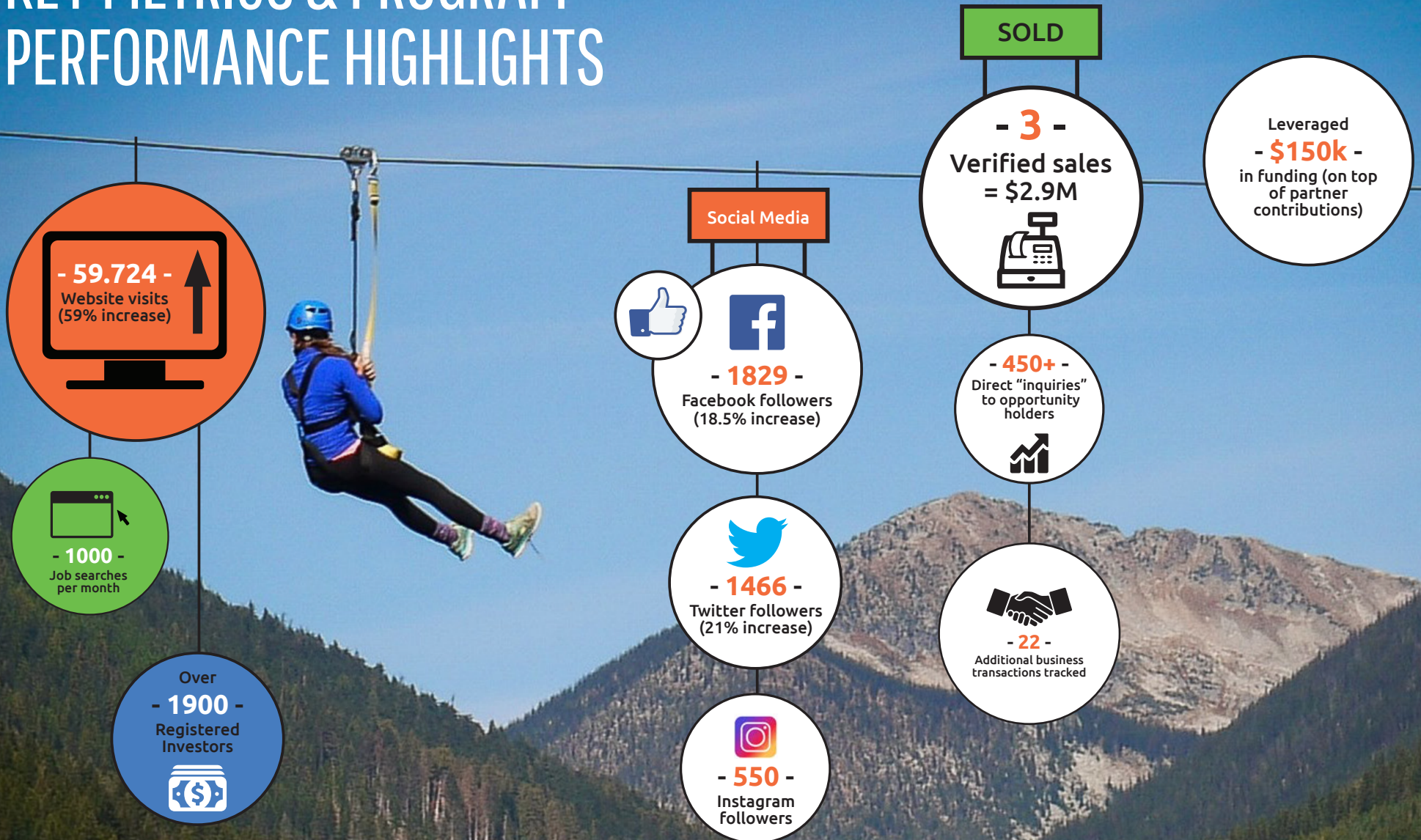
Trail, Rossland & Area

Boundary Country

Village of Nakusp

Golden and CSRD Area A

2016-17 KEY METRICS & PROGRAM PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS



KEY ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES 2016-17



Continued Progression

Fully launched the new Imagine Kootenay website and marketing strategy



Working Together

Continued a variety of “complementary” marketing initiatives with key partners such as Kootenay Rockies Tourism, Kootenay Association of Science & Technology and WorkBC



Ongoing Refinement

Continued to develop and refine the Imagine Kootenay website with a variety of tools for all users including opportunity holders, investors and community members



Regional Goals

Completed a large multi-year project with the Ministry of International Trade to develop an auto-upload feed of opportunities from the Imagine Kootenay website to their BritishColumbia.ca site. The completion of this project increases the visibility of the Kootenay region as well as investment and business opportunities to international markets



Financially Astute

Successful leveraging of partner fees for project execution



Long-term Sustainability

A new 5-year MOU was signed by partners



Further Expansion

Welcomed Creston Valley - Kootenay Lake as a new community partner



Measuring and Reporting

Developed new program reporting and value added data for community partners and opportunity holders



Innovation Award

Imagine Kootenay won the 2016 BC Economic Development Association's Marketing Innovation Award for the imaginekootenay.com website. This achievement provided great exposure across the province to the partnership and the Kootenay-Boundary region.

2016-2017 SUCCESSES

Best Practice

The Imagine Kootenay program has been recognized provincially as a best practice for regional and multi-community economic development models.

A Shining Example

The program and model is highlighted during the BCEDA's Economic Development Building Blocks Workshops.

Coollest Website

Imagine Kootenay was recognized by Kootenay Business Magazine as the 2016 Best of Business Award Winner for "Coolest West Kootenay Website".

Online Integration

Imagine Kootenay, working in partnership with the Ministry of International Trade, completed work on the development of a direct feed of opportunities from the Imagine Kootenay website to the Trade & Invest BC website www.britishcolumbia.ca. This feature will enhance the visibility of Kootenay business opportunities nationally and internationally.

Exceeding Targets

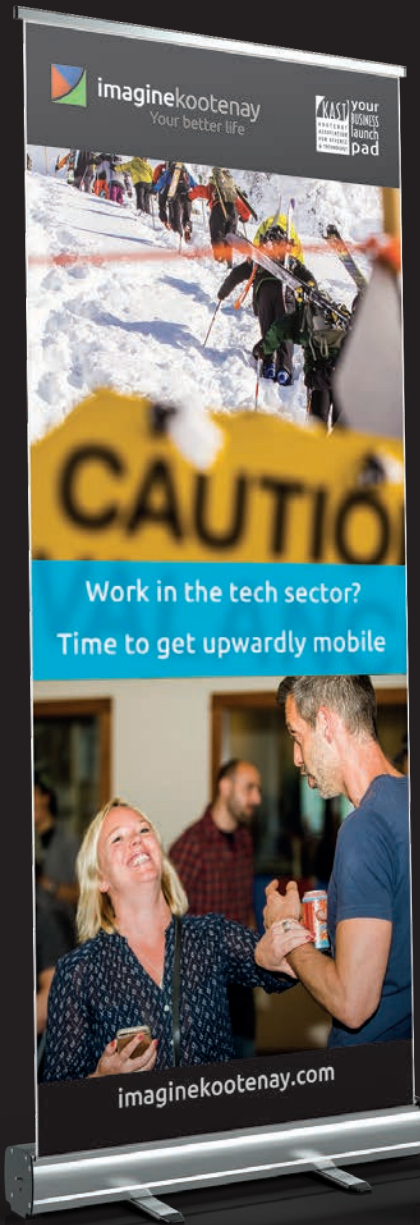
Imagine Kootenay exceeded web traffic goals and performed 70% above set targets in its first year.

Workforce Opportunities

Imagine Kootenay continues to develop activities and initiatives under the workforce attraction program.

This included the development of a job search aggregator (Indeed.com feed) as well as partnering with local organizations to support sector specific (Tech & Tourism) workforce and talent attraction initiatives.

MARKETING ACTIVITY



IMAGINE KOOTENAY PROGRAM FEEDBACK



"In the process of setting up i4C.tech my business group used Imagine Kootenay extensively to see what

was available in the region. I think it is a wonderful initiative with great branding that we can now use to recruit people and companies to join us."

**– Brian Fry, Tech Entrepreneur,
Mentor and Investor - Industrial IoT**



"Thinking back on progress over the past few years, I believe we have made a steady shift from

complacency and relative isolation to a recognition that collectively we can have a much greater positive impact on our economic prospects. Support from the Columbia Basin Trust obviously creates conditions where the 'buy in' for each partner is more affordable, but just as important is how the spirit projected in every CBT initiative to work cooperatively reinforces our resolve to work together for the benefit of the basin as a whole."

**- Garry Jackman, Regional Director,
RDCK Area A**



"Collaboration with Imagine Kootenay is absolutely integral to KAST's current operations and our vision to create an unexpected

regional oasis of opportunity for people who invest, start companies and work in technology. Technology and metallurgical sector pages at Imagine Kootenay inform new talented people about the diversity of economic activity in the Columbia Basin. In 2017, we will launch a collaborative human resources program to match technology sector workers with local companies and widen the reach of KAST's popular "You Can Do That Here" entrepreneurship feature series through an Imagine Kootenay partnership (<http://kast.com/you-can-do-that-here-podcast/>)."

**- Erin Handy, Executive Director,
Kootenay Association for Science &
Technology**



