



REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: ADM-BRD-497

From: Annette Andrews, Communications Manager

Date: May 2, 2024

Subject: Request for Access to Economic Development Funding – Web Page Upgrade

RECOMMENDATION: [Corporate Unweighted]

That the Regional Board allocate \$44,029 from Function 140 – Economic Development to fund costs of a web page upgrade in 2024.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

The Peace River Regional District Web Page prrd.bc.ca is the main source of readily available information for residents about the Peace River Regional District.

In 2021, the Communications Audit Report completed by Mickelson Consulting Inc. identified the website as a key communications tool that needed updating. Staff issued an RFP to have a website overhaul completed, however, the work came in higher than budgeted and the contract was not awarded. Staff submitted a request for additional funds in the next budget year and the Board approved that request. Unfortunately, due to a lack of a project lead in the form of a Communications Manager, the project was never completed. The funding has been carried forward year over year, however, given the rising costs of goods and services, staff is requesting access to the remaining funds in Function 140 Economic Development. Function 140 - Economic Development is no longer an active function for the PRRD, as there is no service establishing bylaw to govern its operation. All obsolete Economic Development bylaws were repealed by the Regional Board in 2021.

Remaining funds consist of \$34,029 in residual economic development funding and \$10,000 recently returned to the Regional District from the City of Dawson Creek from the 2023 Women's National U18 Hockey Championship Event, as the event was funded from Function 140 when COVID necessitated cancellation of the 2020 event the funding was originally approved for.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

1. That the Regional Board provide further direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:

☒ Not Applicable to Strategic Plan

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):

In 2021, the unallocated surplus remaining in Function 140 was distributed to municipalities and electoral areas. Checks were issued to the municipalities and the electoral allocations remained in the budget. The unallocated surplus mainly consisted of Provincial and Municipal grants in lieu, recovery of costs and advertising budget not utilized. The remaining funds available are as follows:

Area C	\$5,339
Area D	\$16,389
Area E	\$12,302
City of Dawson Creek returned funds from National Women's Hockey Championship	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$44,029

Staff noted the above unallocated surplus in a report to the Board on [February 22, 2023](#), and again in February 8, 2024, and the [February 21, 2024 Special Budget Meeting](#) to remind the Board of the remaining funds and encourage spending of the unallocated surplus on economic development activities. No activities have been brought forward by the Regional Board and staff is now requesting these funds be allocated to the Web Page upgrade project.

\$110,000 was budgeted in the 2024 Function 100 – Administration Budget for the website upgrade.

COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):

The Peace River Regional District website serves as our primary tool for external communication, functioning as the mandatory location for all legislatively required public notices since the discontinuation of local newspapers.

It is crucial to note that the costs associated with updating our website have increased due to several factors. Other departments have already established their workplans and did not allocate time for a content audit, thereby expanding the scope of the project. Additionally, the year-over-year increase in the costs of all goods and services has also contributed to the higher expenses.

Despite these challenges, the requested funds will not only enable us to complete the much-needed update to our website but ensure that we provide our residents with a modern, user-friendly and informative online hub that meets new legislated accessibility requirements for all community members.

A government website plays a critical role in public engagement, information dissemination, education and service provision. It serves as a hub where residents access essential services, stay informed about local developments and engage with their communities and government.

An accessible, user-friendly, visually compelling, regionally branded website is a significant economic driver for a region, particularly in rural areas as it facilitates the flow of information and engagement, which is vital the economy.

Our proposed new website aligns with these objectives. By investing in this project, we aim to enhance our communication with residents, stakeholders and partners, leading to a more informed and engaged

public. The new website will also lay the foundation for a more efficient organization that is better equipped to serve the needs of the public and region most effectively now and in the long term.

The importance of this cannot be overstated. We believe this is a worthwhile and necessary expenditure, and we respectfully request the Board's approval to access this funding.

OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):

None at this time.