



OPEN *for*
BUSINESS
Awards

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE



BC Small Business
Roundtable

Courtesy of Town of Gibsons



This guide supports local government and First Nations that support entrepreneurs in British Columbia to apply for the Open for Business Awards. The guide provides general information on how to build a business-friendly environment in your community.

History

Established by the BC Small Business Roundtable in 2011, the Open for Business Awards (OFBA) recognize and promote BC communities that have implemented leading business friendly policies and initiatives that attract, retain and help small businesses. The program provides an important platform for local governments, First Nations and their organizations that support entrepreneurs to learn from their peers by sharing success stories and showcasing initiatives that have had a meaningful impact on small business in their communities.

Vision

All communities across British Columbia – large, small, rural, urban, and Indigenous – are *Open for Business*.

Purpose

- To inspire communities of all sizes and regions to adopt policy and implement initiatives that support small business growth and success.
- To recognize local governments, First Nations and their organizations that have implemented exceptional Open for Business initiative(s) that have had a meaningful and measurable impact on attracting, retaining and helping businesses to succeed in their community or region.

Value Proposition

Why should I nominate my community?

- Provides a great opportunity to tell the business community you are **Open for Business!**
- Winning communities proudly display the OFBA logo in promotional materials as a testament to the Open for Business culture entrepreneurs and business owners will find in their community.
- Finalists receive two complimentary tickets to the Small Business BC (SBBC) Awards Gala where the OFBA winners are announced – a magnificent evening event and an excellent opportunity to network and create awareness of communities.
- Videos are developed for finalists that communities can use in future promotional opportunities.

Submissions

The OFBA are judged according to the demonstrated best practices as laid out in this guide. The best practices explore how local governments, First Nations and their organizations foster a more progressive business climate for current and future generations and do their part to establish British Columbia as the most “open for business” jurisdiction in North America.

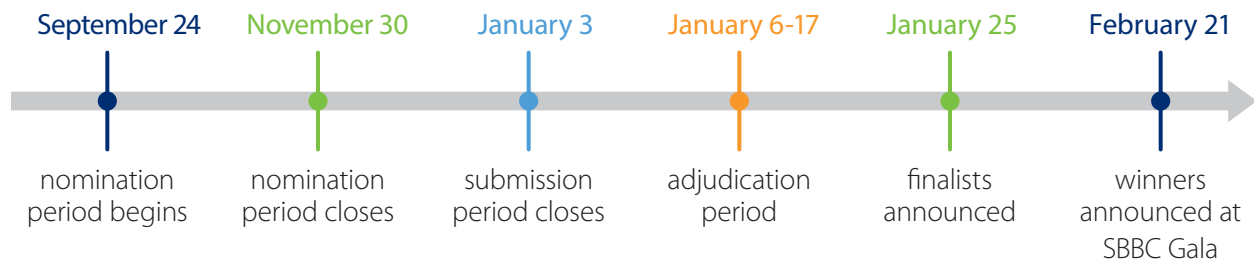
Submissions are active over a three-year window, whereby communities can amend their submissions for the second and third years.

How to Nominate

Local governments and First Nations that support entrepreneurs can self-nominate, or a third party such as a local business or resident can also nominate the community. Creating a submission is an easy two-step process that isn't time consuming to create.

- Step 1: Nominate your community by simply telling us why your community should win.
- Step 2: Tell us about an initiative delivered in the last three years that makes your community the best “Open for Business” community in your category.

Award Timelines/Process



Communities are judged according to the seven best practice categories.

An open for business community:

1. Understands the needs of local small business
2. Attracts and retains business
3. Makes the community more competitive
4. Makes it easier for businesses to attract and develop talent
5. Recognizes the local contributions of small business
6. Simplifies regulatory processes
7. Helps businesses access government procurement opportunities

Best Practices

1 Understands the needs of local small business

Understanding small business needs is the first step to being “Open for Business.”

Consider the needs and impacts of small businesses in policy and program decisions to support business certainty and competitiveness.

Programs and Initiatives

- City of Abbotsford Business Walks → [Learn more](#)
- K̓awatsi Economic Development Corporation → [Learn more](#)
- City of Victoria Business Hub → [Learn more](#)
- FUSE Community Work Hub → [Learn more](#)

Town of Gibsons

2019 Winner – Small Category

→ [Learn more](#)

Winning an OFBA has helped Gibsons advertise and endorse the community as a place where small businesses thrive. Gibsons highlights the award in personal letters to business licence recipients, letting people know they are open for business!

“Over the past two years, the Town of Gibsons has successfully built a vibrant, year-round Public Market and also attracted more than 185 new businesses. We’ve learned that it’s beneficial to support “outside of the box” entrepreneurial and social innovation with all the influence and tools we have available to us.”

– Emanuel Machado, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Gibsons



2 Attracts and retains business

Creating an environment that attracts and retains business is key to being “Open for Business.”

Finding ways for small businesses throughout B.C. to “get to yes” in making investment decisions that support regional economic growth.

Programs and Initiatives

- Venture Kamloops Advisors Program → [Learn more](#)
- West Bank First Nation Start-Up Basics Program → [Learn more](#)
- Kimberley Investment Incentive Program → [Learn more](#)

“The Investment Incentive Program has been critical to helping propel revitalization in downtown Kimberley and making industrial investments more attractive. Since 2014 there have been seven participating commercial investments worth \$1,664,000 in construction value according to building permits.”

– Kevin Wilson, Economic Development Officer, City of Kimberley

City of Kimberley

2018 Winner – Medium Category

→ [Learn more](#)

The Open for Business Award trophy sits prominently in the City of Kimberley’s municipal hall, where staff point it out to visitors. The award helps staff showcase their business-friendly community, enhancing efforts to attract and retain investors and businesses.



Courtesy of City of Kimberley

3 Makes the community more competitive

Instilling a competitive edge supports a community to thrive at being “Open for Business”.

Design programs and resources affecting small business so that they are well developed, accessible, properly funded and effectively communicated.

Programs and Initiatives

- CRadvantage → [Learn more](#)
- Northern Development Initiative Trust Business Façade Improvement → [Learn more](#)
- Nisga’a Business Incubator Service → [Learn more](#)

“With the expected rise in the number of visitors coming in specifically for the Hligu Isgwit Hot Springs Development Project experience, there is more opportunity for our people to develop entrepreneurial based businesses to serve the demands of the tourist. Food and drink services, arts and craft stalls and new cultural tour products are going to be supported through the Nisga’a Lisims Government Business Incubator program.”

– Bertram Mercer, Economic Development Manger, Nisga’a Lisims Government

Nisga’a Lisims Government

2018 Winner – First Nation Category

→ [Learn more](#)

The OFBA has opened the door for the Nisga’a Lisims Government in so many ways. Leadership recognized the award, empowering the government to better foster community prosperity, to bring communities in the region together in collaboration and to leverage tourism opportunities.



Courtesy of Nisga’a Lisims Government, Kiosk and Carving Shed



Courtesy of Lower Columbia Initiatives Corporation

4 Makes it easier for businesses to attract and develop talent

Prioritizing business’ needs to attract and develop talent is an important aspect of being “Open for Business.”

Support training initiatives that meet the changing needs of small business and the labour talent it develops.

Programs and Initiatives

- MIDAS Fab Lab → [Learn more](#)
- Kootenay Association for Science & Technology → [Learn more](#)
- Skills Centre → [Learn more](#)
- Metal Tech Alley → [Learn more](#)

“The Metal Tech Alley campaign includes workforce development strategies to ensure we are growing the leaders of tomorrow and building the existing workforce’s skills. Providing specific training, expertise and deep domain knowledge is enabling businesses to adopt digital technologies.”

– Terry Van Horn, Executive Director, Lower Columbia Initiatives Corporation

Lower Columbia Initiatives Corporation

2019 Winner – Medium Category

→ [Learn more](#)

The OFBA helps validate Lower Columbia Initiatives Corporation’s important work and adds firepower to funding proposals.

5 Recognizes the local contributions of small business

Recognizing local contributions reinforces a community's sense of being "Open for Business."

Create recognition programs in your community that highlight that small businesses form the backbone of all sectors in all B.C. communities, and are a key source of innovation, job creation, economic growth and diversification.

Programs and Initiatives

- BC Indigenous Business Awards → [Learn more](#)
- District of Chetwynd's Shop Local Program → [Learn more](#)



Courtesy of District of Chetwynd, Shop Local Winner

District of Chetwynd

2018 Winner – Small Category

→ [Learn more](#)

Chetwynd's mayor and council were thrilled that the OFBA enhanced community pride and encouraged accolades from the local community. It also supported closer economic development partnerships throughout the northeast.

"Over 60 local businesses were listed. The Shop Local program was designed to be at no cost to local businesses; all supplies were provided and delivered including cards and stickers."

– Ellen McAvany, Economic Development Officer, District of Chetwynd

6 Simplifies regulatory processes

Simplifying administrative processes reduces challenges for small businesses, helping them thrive and contribute to communities being "Open for Business."

Foster a regulatory environment that small business can access, navigate and influence effectively and efficiently.

Programs and Initiatives

- City of Duncan, Vancouver Island Intercommunity Business Licence → [Learn more](#)
- City of Langford Perpetual Business Licence → [Learn more](#)
- Maple Ridge Home-Based Business Review
 - Update → [Learn more](#)
 - Report → [Learn more](#)
 - Information Boards → [Learn more](#)



Courtesy of City of Maple Ridge, Gratia Café Grand Opening

City of Maple Ridge

2019 Winner – Large Category → [Learn more](#)

"As home-based businesses represent a significant portion of our local economy in Maple Ridge, the intent of the review was to modernize and improve our regulations to better support and enable economic opportunities for our home-based businesses while still balancing the needs of the neighbourhoods where they are located. The goal was to establish business-friendly regulations, with input from established home-based business owners...in order to grow the number of home-based businesses in our City."

– Lino Siracusa, Director of Economic Development and Civic Properties, City of Maple Ridge

7 Helps businesses access government procurement opportunities

Supporting local business growth makes a community more “Open for Business.”

Create long-term growth opportunities for small business through government procurement.

Programs and Initiatives

- Island and Sunshine Coast Community Benefit Hub → [Learn more](#)
- City of Vancouver Community Benefit Agreement → [Learn more](#)
- City of Campbell River Procurement Strategy → [Learn more](#)

“The procurement strategy builds connections between Campbell River and local businesses, draws out start-ups and creatives, and facilitates networking among the local entrepreneurs.”

– Rose Klukas, Economic Development Officer, City of Campbell River

City of Campbell River

2018 Winner – Large Category

→ [Learn more](#)

Not only has the OFBA validated Campbell River as an open for business community, it has also become a standard to which the city continually works. The recognition has supported Campbell River as it transitions from largely a single industry community into the new economy.

More on How to Apply

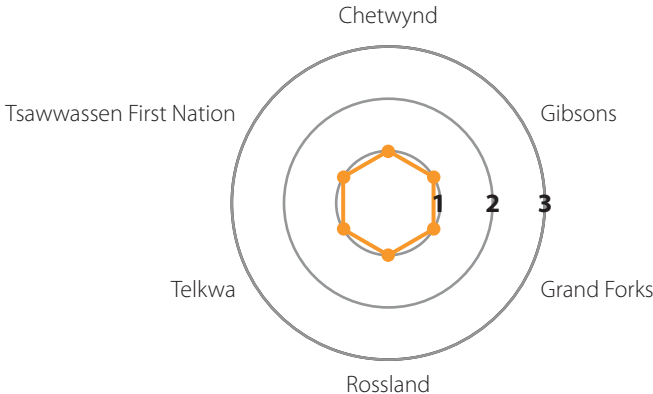
For more information on how to apply to the Open for Business Awards, visit: <https://sbbcawards.ca/open-for-business-awards/open-for-business-awards-how-it-works>



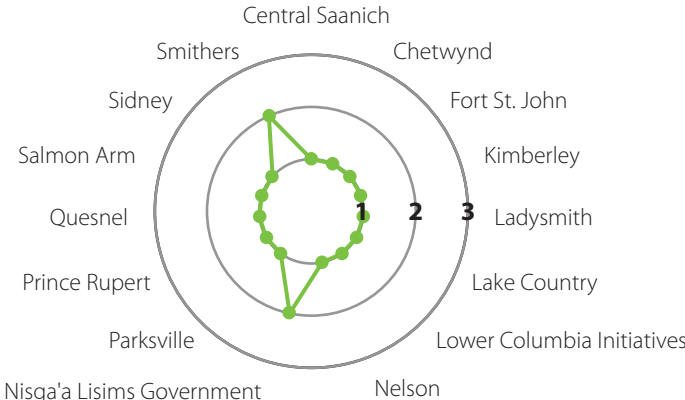
Courtesy of City of Campbell River

OFBA Community Radar: Number of Winners to Date by Category

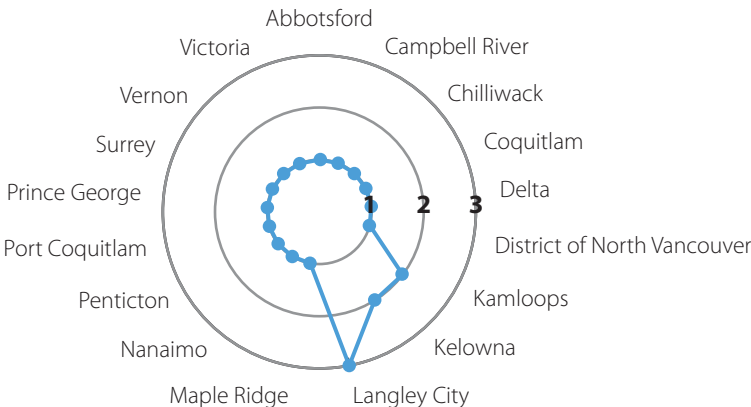
Small Communities (<5,000 residents)



Medium Communities (5,000 to 25,000 residents)



Large Communities (>25,000 residents)





Courtesy of Small Business BC



Courtesy of Small Business BC

