



SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS- SHARED BUSINESS SERVICES ENTERPRISE (SGI-SBSE)

A Coordinated Regional Approach

In the rural Southern Gulf Islands local businesses are challenged by limited access to markets, elevated costs for many core business services, and limited and costly ferry connections to Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland that makes exporting to nearby and regional markets a major challenge. Combined with a preponderance of small, owner-operator businesses across all economic sectors, it is difficult for Southern Gulf Island businesses to achieve the economies of scale available to their competitors in more urban settings.

Building on the SSI-Community Economic Development Commission's (CEDC) 2016-18 *Rural Business Accelerator* program, CEDC learned that more support was needed to help local producers grow and sustain their businesses. To achieve this goal, a Feasibility Study, was conducted in 2018, and served as the basis for a 2019 Rural Dividend Fund Award to establish a shared business services program to enhance the economic productivity of local businesses.

Specifically, the award has provided seed funding to establish, overtime, a sustainable revenue producing entity that will facilitate the ability of local island producers to have the costs of production and distribution, marketing, labour spread over a larger number of goods to create economies of scale.

The long-term vision includes collaboration with local producers and entrepreneurs that will insure sustainable capacity to deliver these services:

- a. Strategic Marketing and Sales Resources
- b. Commercial Distribution and Export Hub
- c. IT and Administrative Services
- d. Labour Force Shared Resources
- e. Coordination Of Commercial Repairs
- f. Business Training Opportunities
- g. Greater Access To Supplies For Production Of Local Products

Additional economic benefits of a *Southern Gulf Islands Shared Business Services Enterprise* for island producers and providers will include increased ability for rural businesses to offer year-round employment and sustain year-round income.

