APPLICATION

Please review guidelines before submitting an application. Applications must be received at info@bia.bc.ca no later than 5:00 pm PST on April 20, 2026.
No extensions will be given.

Applicant Information

Organization: Parksville Downtown Business Association

Contact: Teresa Cooper

Email: teresa@parksvilledowntown.ca

Project Information

Project Title: Imagine | Build | Thrive: A Community-Led Transformation of Parksville Downtown

Project Timeframe: June 2025 - ongoing

Category:

- [ ] Community Leadership
- [ ] Events and Marketing
- [ ] External Relations / Public Relations
- [x] Organizational (Operational) Excellence

Values:

- [x] Innovative
- [x] Sustainability
- [x] Relationship Building

Project Overview

Brief Description (maximum 500 words):

Imagine | Build | Thrive was not created as a theoretical model—it was built out of necessity.

Like many BIAs, Parksville Downtown operates with limited resources, fixed levy funding, and a volunteer board that changes over time. At the same time, we were facing a downtown that had been in gradual decline for decades, combined with increasing pressure to support our businesses in a short, seasonal economy. We knew that waiting for a single large investment or grant to "fix" things was not a realistic path forward.

Our first step started with community engagement—speaking directly with residents, businesses, and partners about what was missing and what was possible. What we heard was clear: people wanted more vibrancy, more reasons to come downtown, and an economy that extended beyond the summer months.

From there, we built Imagine | Build | Thrive as a practical framework, not a one-time plan. We organized our work into five connected workstreams so we could start small, test ideas, and build momentum over time. For example, our approach to placemaking began with simple activations in Memorial Plaza—an area that had previously been underutilized and, at times, challenging. Through consistent, respectful engagement and small-scale events, we saw a noticeable shift in how the space was used and perceived. That success gave us the confidence to expand our efforts with seating, planters, and additional programming.

At the same time, we began working with partners in new ways. Our Arts, Culture and Heritage workstream is now being developed in collaboration with the Oceanside Community Arts Council, while conversations with Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism are focused on extending our visitor season.

We are also exploring ways to support local entrepreneurs in developing new tourism experiences—something we identified as a gap through our engagement process.

One of our biggest lessons has been that progress does not require large, complex projects to start. Small, visible actions—when aligned with a larger vision—can build trust, momentum, and community confidence.

Another key lesson is the importance of flexibility. By structuring our work into independent but connected streams, we have been able to adapt quickly to new opportunities, partnerships, and changing capacity.This approach is highly transferable to other BIAs. It does not require significant upfront funding or large-scale infrastructure projects. It requires a clear framework, a willingness to engage the community, and a commitment to building partnerships over time.

Imagine | Build | Thrive demonstrates that BIAs can play a much larger role in shaping their communities—not by doing everything themselves, but by creating the structure and momentum that allows others to contribute. With the right approach, even small BIAs can lead meaningful, long-term economic transformation.

Top Three Measurable Outcomes (maximum 200 words each):

Remember to include your Key Performance Indicators and how they were met.

Key performance indicators focus on three core areas: increased downtown activity and visitation, strengthened business participation and confidence, and expanded partnerships and investment readiness. Together, these measures reflect both the immediate and long-term impact of the initiative.

1. Outcome: Increased Downtown Vitality & Activity

KPIs:
• Event attendance
→ Target: +25–50% growth year-over-year. We are actually seeing attendance double for some events.
• Number of downtown activations/events
→ Target: Increase from baseline 2-3 per week. Now seeing daily activation in Memorial Plaza
• Pedestrian foot traffic in Parksville Downtown
→ We cannot afford devices for measuring our foot traffic and count on observation. Traffic in Memorial Plaza has increased substantially. Business owners agree that the streets are busier.
• Average dwell time
→ Again, anecdotally, people are now sitting in Memorial Plaza to eat their lunch, use their phone, and play with the activities that are available.

2. Outcome: Strengthened Business Ecosystem

KPIs:
• Number of participating businesses in events and programs, and as volunteers increase 22%
• Business sentiment (survey-based)
→ Confidence in downtown direction up 15%

3. Outcome: Increased Collaboration & Investment Readiness

KPIs:
• Number of active project-based partnerships formed
→ City, Arts Council, Tourism, Chamber of Commerce
• External funding leveraged or applied for
→ (ICET, REDIP)
• Number of workstreams with active partner leads – 100%

Project Budget

	Category	Dollars
REVENUES:		
	TOTAL REVENUES	
EXPENSES:		
	TOTAL EXPENSES	
	PROFIT/LOSS	0

Budget Notes (Maximum 100 words):

This project was built using data and insights from a previously funded community engagement process. A local steering committee helped review the findings and set the overall direction. The Imagine | Build | Thrive framework was then developed in-house by the Executive Director, turning community input into a clear, practical plan. Early steps focused on building partnerships, testing ideas, and starting small pilot projects. All of this work was completed within existing staff and resources, meaning no additional costs were required to develop or begin implementing the project. This demonstrates a practical, low-cost approach to community-driven economic development.

Along with your application, you can upload any marketing or other project materials to a maximum of 10 MBs. Formats can include Word, Excel, PDF. JPG and PNG.