March 2021

Economic Development Resources for Data & Research

Prepared for:

The Economic Trust of the Southern Interior (ETSI-BC)

O'LEARY & ASSOCIATES LTD.

PERFORMANCE. INNOVATION. LEADERSHIP.

Report Overview

The purpose of this report is to outline and analyze available resources for economic development data and research. The Economic Trust of the Southern Interior (ETSI-BC), in commissioning this report, was attempting to get a better understanding of the current data and software platform options available for economic development officers (EDOs) and others working in the economic development field throughout the Southern Interior. The overall goal was to look at a comprehensive analysis of options, which could be used by the Economic Trust of the Southern Interior when considering possible future opportunities to support municipalities and EDOs in their region – even if that support was as simple as providing them with this report to outline the current data and research options available to them.

Broadly speaking, the resources analyzed for this report which focused on data and research predominantly fell into one of two categories: data visualization solutions and labour market data solutions. The data visualization solutions provide access to key data and information about a community and present options for visualizing this data spatially using GIS tools, graphs, and other methods. The labour market data solutions are more specialized, focusing more narrowly on data and research about the local economy and labour market, with less sharing and visualization options.

The research process also identified a range of adjacent solutions that may be beneficial to economic development professionals and local government. These three types of solutions are detailed later in the report, as an additional value-add. These include local government software, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems for economic developers, and an additional solution focused on business retention and expansion (BR&E) support.

The structure of the report is outlined below, to help with navigating the contents within it.
- First, five data visualization solutions and two labour market data solutions are outlined, with each being given a one-page flat sheet detailing the features and some analysis of the offering.
- Secondly, a comparative analysis of these solutions is provided in a visual matrix for ease of comparison.
- Thirdly, an overview of adjacent offerings which could prove valuable for economic developers, including local government, CRM and BR&E solutions, is provided.
- Fourthly, some emerging data sources that are being developed in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region are outlined as a possible template for other regions to follow in improving data sharing and economic development opportunities.
- Finally, a brief conclusion summarizes the report findings and offers a recommendation for the products most likely to fit the needs of EDOs and ETSI-BC given the criteria defined in this project.

The information outlined in this report was gathered through a variety of methods. In addition to online research, O'Leary & Associates conducted demo calls with the companies providing each platform, where possible, and complemented these calls with additional phone call discussions with EDOs based out of the Southern Interior region.

Ultimately, this report provides a well-rounded and thorough overview of resources that ETSI-BC and regional economic developers can utilize to better integrate data and research into their work. These resources can play a key role in helping ETSI-BC and EDOs use data to improve marketing of their community, increase information sharing capabilities for potential investors and site selectors, assist businesses with accessing up-to-date market research, and provide fact-based evidence to improve decision-making processes.

Economic Development Software and Data Resources

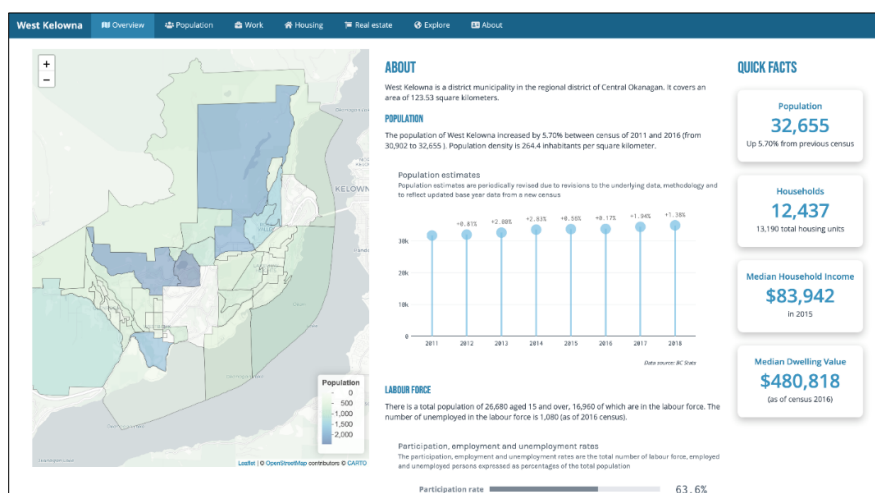## Data Visualization Platforms

Cityviz
(https://cityviz.ca/)

Cityviz is a data visualization platform targeted at municipal economic developers. The parent company, Ruby Industries, is based in West Kelowna and has done work on visualizing the BC provincial housing market with the Government of British Columbia and Innovate BC as the winner of the Data Visualization Challenge in 2016[1]. Cityviz displays data about community demographics and the local business climate, in an easy to access and visually appealing format that both internal staff and the public can understand. This data can be displayed publicly through an organization's website, as with the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (Invest Kelowna) and their use of Cityviz[2]. This data can also be helpful to small businesses or aspiring entrepreneurs to get a snapshot of their local community and determine how to best adapt their offerings to locals. Pricing varies based on community size, and level of data and support required.

Key features include:

- **Detailed dashboards** based on open-source data from federal, provincial, and municipal government entities. This includes data on local demographics, labour force, housing and real estate, and other economic indicators. Organizations can upload .csv files with additional in-house data that can be integrated into their Cityviz dashboard.
- **Artificial intelligence (AI) features** that work to make public data sources, like Census data and airport passenger numbers, always up to date in the Cityviz system.
- **Explore tab** that has a GIS component where layers can be added to see multiple data sources represented visually on a map of the local area.
- **Integration of Spacelist** directly within the platform to provide more information about commercial property listings and commercial property availability information.
- **Numerous export features**, including reports that can be downloaded in .PDF or .DOCX formats so they are ready to share or can be edited for inclusion in municipal reporting. Data spreadsheets and chart images can also be exported, while Cityviz is working on creating downloadable PowerPoint files for future presentation templates.

While Cityviz is early on in its lifecycle and has only a few clients currently, additional features are planned for the future, including possible integration of paid data from Statistics Canada and proprietary data sources. It could be a nice collaboration opportunity for ETSI-BC to engage a small business within the Southern Interior to help provide this service throughout the region.

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[1] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/statistics/infoline/infoline-2020/20-36-bc-housing-market-app
[2] https://data.investkelowna.com/

Townfolio
(https://jointownfolio.com/)

Townfolio is a software solution providing governments and economic developers with access to a civic dashboard, which can provide up-to-date information about a municipality's demographics, labour force, taxation, real estate, transportation, education, utilities and more. The platform is used by over 500 economic development organizations across North America. The platform offers two price points, one for individual cities and another for a larger region.
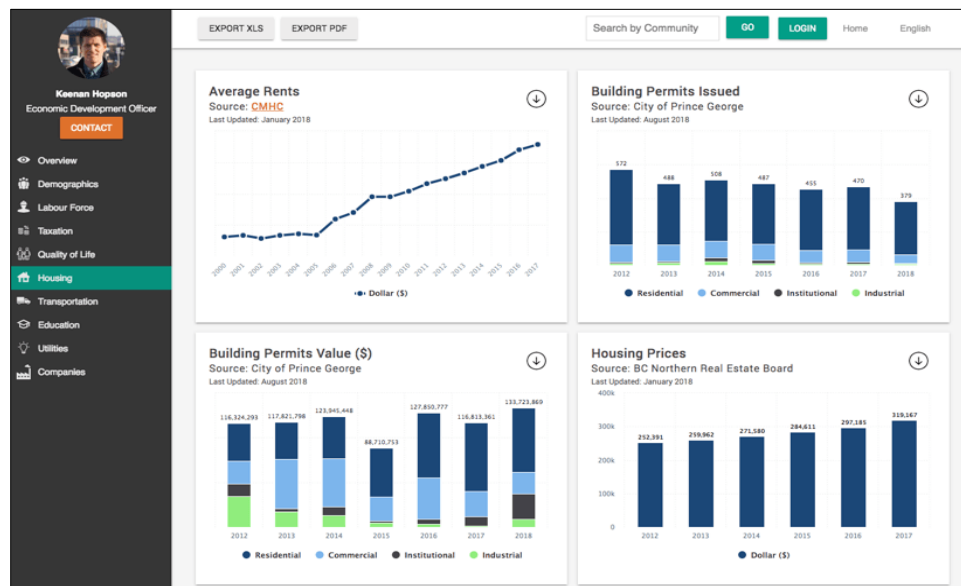
Key features include:

- **Comprehensive data aggregation** using publicly available data from federal and provincial sources. Users can send their own data to the Townfolio team and get them to integrate it with their account/dashboard. The platform does not allow users to self-upload data; this is because Townfolio wants to ensure the data presented through their platform is accurate, vetted and on-brand.
- **Community Profile and Community Performance Dashboard** features, which can be housed on an independent microsite directly through Townfolio or can be integrated within an organization's existing website. These features highlight key data for EDOs, local businesses and site selectors in a publicly accessible format. It should be noted that the option to embed these dashboards into an organization's existing website costs additional money (with the Townfolio website quoting an average cost of $2,500 per year for this feature).

Townfolio is primarily a city marketing tool. While the research sources used are diverse, and the data is easily understood and can be integrated into an economic developer's everyday work and decision-making, it does not function in the same way as solutions such as SimplyAnalytics for internal research purposes. The purpose is primarily on visually highlighting the main features and data about a community to the public. There is some minor customization of the Community Profiles available to clients, mainly in choosing which charts and data to display and editing a community's Overview section. However, as a data sharing and visualization tool, it is highly recommended. Those looking purely for internal-facing software to support with research may be better served by another option.

As mentioned in the report overview, users of each platform were engaged and asked to provide feedback whenever possible. Below is some of the feedback received from EDOs about Townfolio:

- In their opinion Townfolio did not feel customizable enough or robust with the data collected compared to competitors like Cityviz or LocalIntel.
- While embedding a Townfolio dashboard in your own website is possible, for a fee, one economic developer who uses Townfolio said that it was not able to get this integration to work for their website, so this feature may not be accessible to all clients.
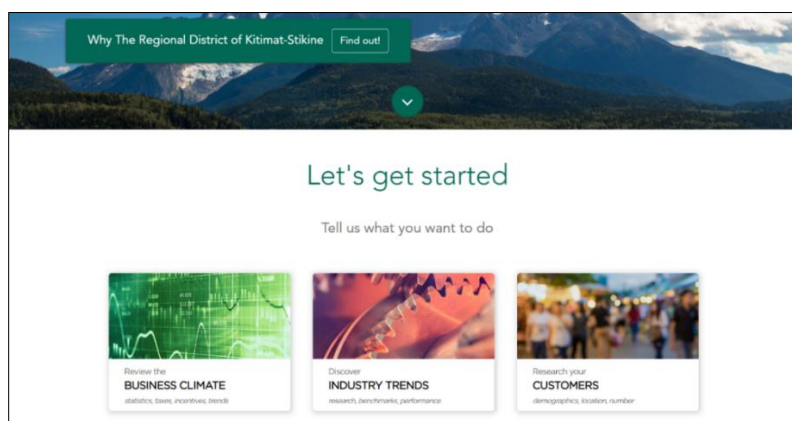
LocalIntel
(https://www.ecdev.org/)
LocalIntel promotes itself as a suite of economic development tools that
can be integrated with the website of economic development
organizations to highlight their community's advantages, provide
information and assistance to stakeholders (including businesses, site selectors and entrepreneurs), and track data and
monitor trends that are key to the local economy. All solutions are mobile responsive, data provided includes premium
(paid) sources that are kept up to date, and the LocalIntel team helps with implementation and integration for your
website. Organizations can also get all of these tools integrated into their own separate microsite, fully designed by the
LocalIntel team and customized with your chosen tools and branding/key messaging.

Key features include:

- A **wide range of integrated data sources**, including Statistics Canada, Canada Revenue Agency, BC Stats and
  proprietary sources, with data about economics, demographics, households, local workforce, livability and more.
- **Location and Accessibility** Advantage tools highlight the town's infrastructure networks and connections to
  domestic and international markets by land, air and sea. It also can highlight the local economic advantages,
  highlighting key statistics from your region, and target sector advantages to highlight the advantages of your
  community for corporate decision makers and site selectors.
- **Economic Development** tools focus on helping businesses, site selectors and entrepreneurs understand the local
  community. This can include sharing demographic and workforce data through dashboards and interactive maps on
  your website, and even go as far as providing information supporting market research and business plan creation
  through customer research, competitor analysis and industry trends for the local community. There is also a
  property search tool that can help site selectors search for commercial property availability.
- The **Economic Impact Explorer** tool provide insights about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the local
  economy, including estimated future changes to local jobs, GDP and more. This data is updated monthly and allows
  for comparisons between impacts locally, provincially and federally.
- The **Business and Investment Assistant**, a support tool for local businesses, both existing and prospective. On top of
  providing local data through five interactive dashboards, it also provides in-depth guides for helping entrepreneurs
  start their business and a database of business resources for discovering relevant licensing, funding, and support
  services.

LocalIntel is predominantly focused on marketing a community, similar to Townfolio. It is very visually appealing and already
used in various communities across BC, such as Nelson[3] and Squamish[4]. A helpful feature that LocalIntel provides is
referenced sources and downloadable graphics when looking through data. Some limitations to note: The commercial
property features included are basic and mostly push users out to a new tab to access Spacelist or Realtor.ca, while options
to share dashboards of data in a proper 'Community Profile' are in development and not yet available.

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[3] https://www.discovernelson.com/nelson-bc/invest/
[4] https://squamish.ca/business-and-development/economic-development/

UrbanLogiq
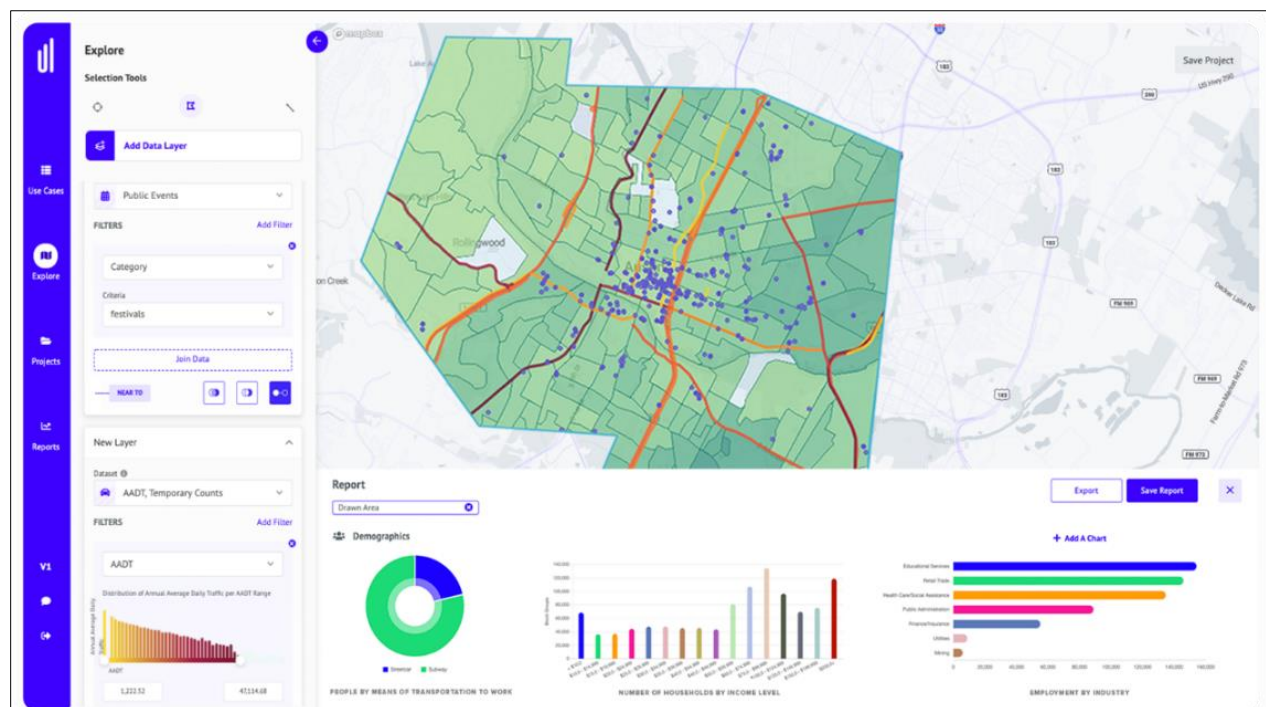(**https://urbanlogiq.com/economic/**)

UrbanLogiq is a Vancouver-based data integration and visualization platform built for government and economic developers. The combination of spatial data, economic indicators and alternative data sources can provide great insights about the local community. It is a Software as a Service (SaaS) business with a subscription model.

Key features include:

- The **ability to integrate data of any type, source, or format**, with UrbanLogiq prepopulating public and private data sets. There is a wealth of proprietary data sources used and the organization appears open to trying to obtain additional data sets from external organizations based on user demand. Users can supplement this with their own data, which the UrbanLogiq team can help integrate into the user's account; customers retain full ownership of their data.
- **Detailed information** about vacancies, land use, business data and more. There are good resources for exploring property availability and characteristics, which is beneficial to site selectors, and the platform can help filter land parcels and vacant areas based on certain filters (for example, minimum proximity to services, public transportation access, green spaces, and more).
- **Powerful options for Business Improvement Areas** to conduct business cluster analysis, using detailed site statistics to analyze the attributes that correlate with success of certain business areas.

While UrbanLogiq has arguably the most comprehensive and full-featured data features of any platform that was explored, there are a few things to consider; Firstly, it currently has the most limited export options of all the reviewed options, providing only the export of raw data in .xlsx format. Secondly, it is also an internal-focused platform, with no major options for publicly sharing data or integrating the data visualization features into an organization's existing website or a separate microsite. Thirdly, while UrbanLogiq does offer the ability to work with communities of any size, they predominantly work with large and mid-sized cities, including Ottawa, Toronto, Guelph, Nanaimo, London (ON), Surrey, and Burnaby. In discussions with their staff, it sounds like the smallest cities they have worked with in the past in BC were Kelowna and Delta. Finally, it is the only platform that requires an upfront fee to help clean and integrate data for the subscriber and implement their account features, which is charged in addition to the standard subscription fees.

SimplyAnalytics
(https://simplyanalytics.com/)
SimplyAnalytics is a web-based application focused on mapping, analytics, and data visualization, allowing for the easy creation of interactive maps, charts and reports. utilizing over 100,000 data variables. It is a comprehensive GIS and spatial analysis solution.
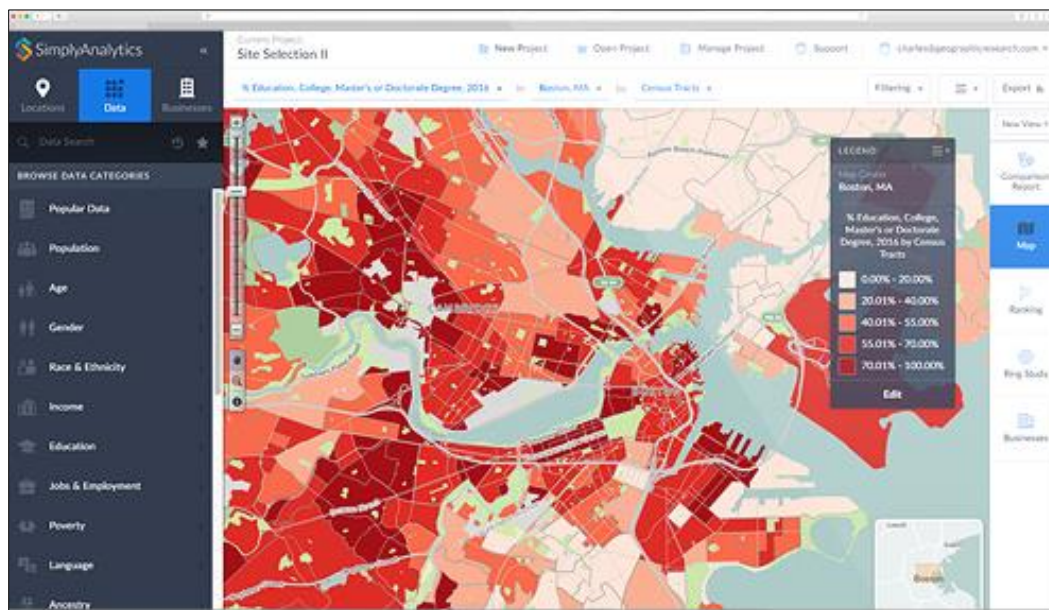
Key features include:
- **Ability to sort data by various geographic indicators**, including by province, by city, or even by census tract. Data variables included relate to areas such as demographics, employment, housing, market segments, businesses, consumer spending, public health, brand preferences, and more, drawn from the latest data. Federal data sources (such as Statistics Canada) and provincial data sources (such as BC Stats) are included in this platform. There are proprietary data sources integrated, such as various datasets integrated from Environics Analytics and commercial data from Dun & Bradstreet.
- **The option to import your own data** to SimplyAnalytics, though it must be imported in CSV format and contain additional location data[5].
- **Access to up-to-date COVID-19 data** integrated for all Canadian and US-based customers, a nice additional value add for navigating the rest of 2021 and the post-pandemic world.
- **Easy export options**, including the ability to export maps from SimplyAnalytics as high-resolution images or shapefiles, as well as export data reports in Excel (XSLX), CSV and DBF file formats. Links can also be generated so you can share your maps and reports directly with others.

The primary target for this platform is universities, colleges and libraries, with students, staff and members able to access the platform on-site for research purposes. Despite this, there are aspects useful for businesses and economic developers. While the organization is based in New York, a wide range of Canadian institutions are customers of SimplyAnalytics.

There are a few additional caveats worth noting. SimplyAnalytics is for internal use only and must be accessed on-site or by proxy. There are no options to share the interactive maps and dashboards of SimplyAnalytics through an organization's website, like most of the other options. As well, the SimplyAnalytics team confirmed that their data vendors do not allow subscribers to publicly disseminate the data contained in the platform through the web or other sources and users do not own the data they access and only have the right to use this data during the subscription period.

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[5] https://simplyanalytics.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360046964812-How-do-I-import-data-into-SimplyAnalytics-Canada-

Labour Market Data Solutions
Emsi
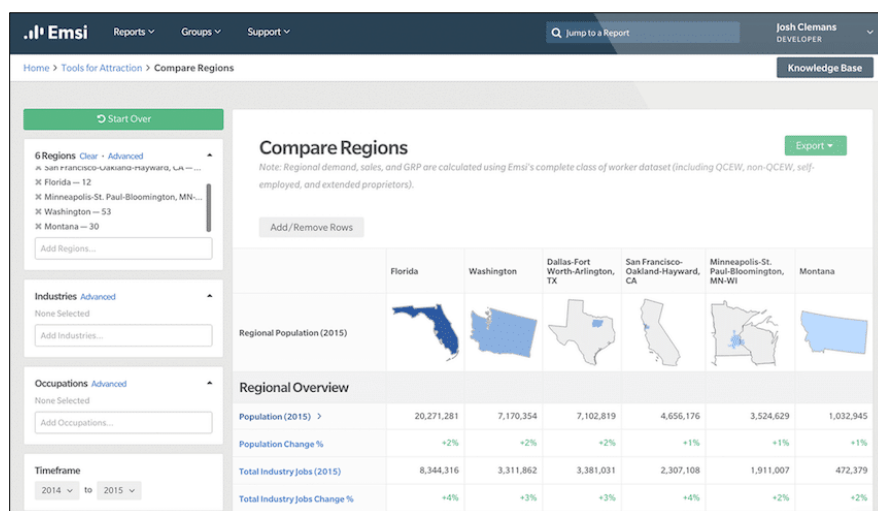(https://www.economicmodeling.com/economic-development/)

Emsi is a platform specifically focused on labour market data and economic analytics. This data includes traditional labour market information pulled from over 18 billion data points from dozens of government sources, job postings and real-time workforce demand projections from hundreds of millions of online job postings, and professional profiles pulling from over 100 million online resumes that highlights the available supply of workers. Western Economic Diversification Canada has a current contract with Emsi for their in-depth employment and industry research data and analysis tools[6]. The document awarding this contract to Emsi remarked that Emsi provides very detailed industry data, even for small regional economies, and highlighted the unique and proprietary features of Emsi's platform.

Key features include:

- **Emsi Developer**, a comprehensive research solution that highlights important labour market data (including top occupations, future worker pipeline from regional educational institutions, unemployment tracking and more), as well as strategic information that can identify key industry clusters locally and analyze their historic and projected performance. Data is aggregated in real-time from a variety of sources, including job boards and LinkedIn.
- **Emsi Business Engage**, a monitoring tool for business retention and expansion (BR&E), which helps analyze a region's competitive advantages, identify expanding and at-risk businesses, and monitor the health of a region's most important industries.
- **A proprietary input/output economic model**, a unique feature which allows users to add projected jobs and other details and see how these changes to the labour supply or local business community will influence the local economy – a great tool for economic developers to forecast changes in the local market.
- **Visually appealing export options** for reports, as well as exportable spreadsheets with relevant data and downloadable charts and graphics.
- **Additional solutions include in-depth consulting services** for organizations needing expert analysis and recommendations for their economic development challenges, as well as a Career Coach that can help job seekers prepare for employment through resume support, education and training recommendations, and more.

While EDOs can share data from Emsi outwardly if cited, there is a caveat that all users must be a staff member of the entity which subscribed to the service. As well, Emsi does not have GIS features integrated currently so data visualization is not easily accomplished, though Emsi data could be exported to Tableau or other solutions to try to visualize some of the data potentially. With that said, the comprehensive nature and usability of the platform make it a great option to consider when specifically looking for data about the local economy and labour market.

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6 https://buyandsell.gc.ca/cds/public/2019/09/13/8534911eb11d6ca85fa198345ed8911b/acan_-_emsi_-_en.pdf

Vicinity Jobs
(https://www.vicinityjobs.net/)
Vicinity Jobs is a Canadian-based big data technology solution for economic developers, providing real-time labour market information to users. The solutions offered by Vicinity Jobs mostly concentrate on data and analytics pertaining to hiring demand and labour supply across Canada, which can be valuable to economists, economic developers, and even job seekers.

Key features include:
- **Hiring Demand Analytics Suite**, which scrapes job boards and individual company websites to collate data from millions of job postings regarding hiring demand from businesses. This real-time data can be filtered using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and National Occupation Code (NOC) system, among other filters, and can help EDOs understand regional trends in labour demand. This suite even allows users to see the actual job postings that were compiled, for additional verifiability.
- **Labour Supply Analytics Suite**, in parallel to the Hiring Demand Analytics suite, scrapes online professional profiles and online resumes from job seekers to provide insights into the current labour supply across Canada. There are some limitations to this, as less online resumes are posted than online job postings, but this solution can provide a regional overview of labour supply while not compromising the privacy of the job seekers. Filters available include occupation, education level, industry experience, and career level.
- **Access to Worxica, a curated archive of job vacancies in Canada**. This is available to access to the public, free of charge. Entering a job title and a location, Worxica is able to tell you how many job postings for that specific job were made in the past 12 months. It also provides a list of the currently posted jobs with that job title, with links to more information and the work platform the listing was sourced from. This makes Worxica a useful resource for economic developers to understand popular careers and the companies searching for those roles locally, while providing job seekers a comprehensive resource for finding relevant job postings in their local area.
- **Ample export options**, such as dozens of customizable and downloadable reports and graphs, for sharing information forward with stakeholders and organizational reporting requirements. While Vicinity Jobs does not have much in the way of GIS features or data visualization options, the exported data can be integrated into some of the data visualization platforms mentioned earlier in this report, such as Cityviz.

In talking with an EDO who uses Vicinity Jobs, they were highly satisfied with the Hiring Demand Analytics suite, as it pulls data from a wide range of sources and provides detailed data for exploration. The EDO felt more skeptical about the Labour Supply Analytics suite, though, as it is entirely based off of the data that job seekers share publicly so it can only provide as much insight as job seekers willingly share. Since this works off of the amount of online job postings and job seeker profiles available, small communities are unlikely to find much benefit in this offering either. With that said, using Worxica as a free resource to determine hiring demand for specific careers could be a good tool for EDOs to leverage.

Comparative Analysis

To better highlight the different options for software services supporting economic developers, a comparative analysis was undertaken to clearly differentiate between the options and determine the primary purposes for electing to purchase or subscribe to each platform.

	Data & Research									Visualization			Export/Sharing Options						Technology & Accessibility						Pricing		
	Statistics Canada Data	BC Stats Data	Municipal Data Sources	Proprietary Data Sources	Option to self-upload own data	Provider integrates user-provided data	Commercial real estate data	Labour market data	User retains full ownership of own data	Customizable Dashboard	GIS Functions / Interactive Map	Filter/Layer Options for Data	Reports (PDF / .docx)	Spreadsheets (.xlsx / .csv)	Graphs/Charts	Presentations (PPT)	Website integration available	Independent community profile	Cloud-based	Web platform	Mobile application (iOS/Android)	Desktop software (Windows/Mac)	Data Encryption	Ongoing User Support Available	Set-up/onboarding fee required	Subscription model	Purchase model (one-time fee)
Cityviz	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Townfolio	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
LocalIntel	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
UrbanLogiq	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
SimplyAnalytics	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Emsi	✓		✓					✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Vicinity Jobs			✓					✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	

One thing worth noting about the data visualization platforms is that, while all of them can provide data that can be helpful to economic developers, they can have different purposes. For example, Cityviz, Townfolio and LocalIntel are primarily data visualization tools used for marketing a community and public sharing of data. They provide visually appealing and easy to read data options, with ample export options and the ability to integrate their dashboards into an existing website and/or separate microsite. Options like UrbanLogiq and SimplyAnalytics are more focused on internal research solutions that can be used to obtain data about the local economy and support evidence-based decision-making.

Adjacent Economic Development Solutions

The software and data solutions outlined above were determined to have the greatest relevance to the needs of economic developers. Through the research and analysis phase of this project, a number of additional solutions were identified that are worth noting for being economic development adjacent and may provide features that some organizations may find helpful. These additional solutions are outlined below and divided into three sections:

- Local Government Software

- Customer Relationship Management Systems

- Business Retention & Expansion Support Solutions

Local Government Software

CityView

(**https://www.municipalsoftware.com//en/cityview-suite/**)
CityView is a software suite developed by BC-based Municipal Software. The suite's main purpose is to support community development and municipal land management functions and provides many features that fall under the scope of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems. It is very specialized, focusing primarily on supporting land use planning, permitting, code enforcement, licensing and similar activities. There are options to streamline and automate permit approval and issuing processes, tracking tools for managing zoning and development applications, and online citizen self-service tools to reduce workloads for staff by automating applications, inspections and payments. There are even other miscellaneous solutions, including cemetery management, electronic marriage and death records, and parking management software. CityView has a partnership with Esri to allow maps and spatial features to be embedded directly into CityView, using Esri's ArcGIS Server technology. This ties into CityView solutions like providing property information, where users can easily view all data and land management activities for a parcel of land, and the planning features for tracking and managing zoning and development applications. While some of these functions in CityView are of relevance to economic developers, most of the solutions are more targeted at general municipal government functions that often do not fall to the economic development firms to manage. As such, this is not likely the best investment of resources when specifically considering the most comprehensive data resources for economic development in ETSI-BC's region.

GovSense

(https://govsense.com/)

GovSense is a cloud software solution aimed at local government. Focused on end-to-end Government Resource Planning (GRP), it helps local governments with a wide range of modules, including financial management modules (such as accounting, budgeting, asset management, payroll and project management features) and land management modules (such as planning, permitting, licensing, code enforcement and GIS features). The land management modules contain a specific module focused on economic development, which includes CRM features for managing projects and business relationships (for BR&E purposes). Despite this, the overarching focus on local government does not make this the best solution for every economic developer, particularly those operating independently of government. More focused economic development solutions are best recommended for most organizations. For economic developers housed within local government this could still be considered but would need to be explored with various departments within their municipality due to the overlap between many GovSense modules and the software solutions already being used within these organizations.

MuniSight

(https://munisight.com/)

While not a full featured ERP solution, MuniSight provides digital offerings for local governments to simplify their processes. While not as comprehensive as the aforementioned software solutions, there are a number of useful functions. WebMap is a GIS tool that centralizes municipal information, such as tax data, property information, bylaw tracking, infrastructure data, utility data and more. Another module, MuniSight Planner, offers an all-in-one permitting solution to help consolidate the permitting process and provide easy searchability. There are also some more niche modules like AMP, which helps with asset management planning (for roads, sewers, equipment, buildings and more), and AG-Mobile for municipal agriculture management and tracking of weeds and pests. These solutions are unlikely to be needed by most economic developers, but any EDOs working out of a municipal government setting may benefit from some of these offerings if used within the organization, particularly WebMap.

Customer Relationship Management Systems

It is important to also highlight Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, as they are a fundamental part of an economic developer's day-to-day work. In discussions with economic developers throughout the BC Interior as part of the research component of this project, greater opportunities to access CRM solutions was identified as an area of opportunity. This section will highlight some prominent CRM options that economic developers can use for managing their work.

ExecutivePulse
(https://www.executivepulse.com/)
ExecutivePulse is a CRM solution aimed specifically at economic developers. It is cloud-based, integrates with major browsers and email platforms, integrates with the Microsoft and Adobe software suites, and is mobile-responsive (with a free mobile app for Android, iOS, Kindle and Microsoft).
ExecutivePulse is highly customizable based on an organization's specific needs, including business recruitment, business retention & expansion, entrepreneurial development, event management, investor relations management, project management, sector or cluster-based initiatives, sites and buildings, workforce development and more. It also allows for easily creating professionally formatted reports, which can be exported in all major file formats, and quick graphs and charts.

There are potential opportunities to access ExecutivePulse at discount rates due to the company's partnership with BCEDA, though pricing varies (with costs subsidized for some smaller communities). In discussions with economic development professionals in BC who have used ExecutivePulse in the past, a frequent comment was that ExecutivePulse is very US-centric in providing features that economic development firms in the US would often require, but that do not fit the Canadian economic development market. For example, the platforms has features around administering loan portfolios and managing commercial property leasing. Since it is a US-based solution, and US economic development organizations are usually larger in scope and function compared to those in Canada, each organization's mileage may vary when it comes to this solution.

ED Lead Tracker
(**https://www.edleadtracker.com/**)
ED Lead Tracker is a CRM system designed for economic developers. It is web-based, mobile friendly, and features easy tracking of leads, prospects and projects with custom-designed forms built with EDOs in mind. It also includes features to manage detailed contact records. The platform provides option to generate reports with detailed trend data to share with board members and other stakeholders, which are automated and include visually appealing and easy to read charts, graphs and tables. On top of features related to tracking external engagements, the system also tracks internal considerations like board meetings and attendance, fundraising, memberships, committees, and strategic planning. The task manager feature allows users to collaboratively assign and track your work alongside your team members, and an activity tracking feature helps track ad-hoc meetings and encounters with clients and prospects. There is also a simple but secure file storage feature and important information can be integrated with the CRM by blind copying (BCCing) emails into the system. While it can act as a standalone CRM for small economic development firms, it can also integrate with an existing CRM system if an organization wants to flesh out their existing system.

Salesforce
(**https://www.salesforce.com/ca/crm/**)
Salesforce, while not strictly developed for economic developers, is arguably one of the most used CRMs within BC for economic development professionals, based on discussions with this audience. The main function of Salesforce as a CRM is to help manage the organization's relationships with businesses, community members, and government bodies. Salesforce extensions such as Experience Builder can help organization's design simple public-facing websites for clients to get information about grants, financial incentives, property information and more. This is drag-and-drop style and requires no coding experience. Salesforce is a major global organization with solid financial stability, making it a good long-term solution that is less likely to have interruptions in service and loss of data which may happen if a small CRM solution were to fold.

Some companies, like Conrin, are creating custom applications using the Salesforce platform to develop solutions to specific economic development needs[7]. Conrin's solution, in particular, can capture information from multiple data sources (email, spreadsheets, Word documents and more) and tracks information about company metrics, projects, BR&E activities and more. By centrally tracking email history, meetings and tasks, any member of a team can be armed with relevant information to make their next interaction with a contact seamless.

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[7] https://conrin.com/

HubSpot

(https://www.hubspot.com/products/crm)
HubSpot is another popular CRM option for economic developers. HubSpot offers a number of free features for those getting started, such as email and prospect tracking, meeting scheduling, client pipeline management, and a reporting dashboard. For those EDOs primarily looking for a CRM solution to help with contact management and meeting scheduling, a free HubSpot account is a good option. There are additional paid tiers for HubSpot, called Sales Hub, which can add in more advanced features and automation functions.

Similarly to how Conrin developed a custom Salesforce CRM solution for economic developers, Convergence has developed a similar CRM solution that is built using HubSpot[8]. It provides an opportunity to track businesses, partner organizations, site selectors, properties, and other relevant contact records, while having marketing features as well such as lead generation features, email campaign development, landing page creation and more. This dual function as a full-featured CRM system that also has ample marketing functions could make this a good option for EDOs looking to better track their organization's activities, with more tailored features for economic development that go above and beyond HubSpot's standard offerings.

Freedom Software by Accrisoft

(https://www.accrisoft.com/freedom-software/)
Developed by Accrisoft, Freedom Software is a cloud-based software solution that is targeted at a wide range of organizations, including membership associations, Chambers of Commerce, non-profits, real estate groups and economic development offices. The software has five core applications – websites & mobile apps, membership & events, finance & accounting, sales & CRM, and marketing automation. The breadth of features offered by Freedom Software goes beyond most standard CRM solutions. While the website features, CRM functionality, and marketing automation tools may have some relevance to economic developers, this solution does not provide much support for exploring relevant data and research, which is the focus of this report. This software could be considered by economic developers that are looking for day-to-day software to improve their work processes but was not included in the above analysis due to the lack of alignment with the report's purpose.

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[8] https://convergence-crm.com/economic-development-crm/

Business Retention & Expansion Support Solutions

Triage BR+E
(https://mdbinsight.com/economic-development/)
Triage BR+E is an offering by MDB Insight that focuses on BR&E, providing helpful intelligence and insights on the local business community. Undertaking a Triage BR+E engagement can help identify businesses most in need of support, while highlighting businesses that have not been previously engaged (and should be contacted) and outlining a list of priorities to help support local businesses. While outwardly this offering appears to be a software solution for BR&E purposes, in conversations with the MDB Insight team it appears to be a more standard consulting solution. Pursuing Triage BR+E is done as a one-time fee. The resulting short-term project involves a MDB Insight-affiliated call centre reaching out to local businesses (typically numbering 100 to 200 businesses), taking one or two weeks, with a full report about the findings provided within 6 to 8 weeks of starting the engagement. EDOs are provided with the raw survey data and the MDB Insight team can provide a presentation to the local city council about the highlights of the findings and key performance indicators (KPIs). This could be a good opportunity for EDOs to validate their business directory and better understand the needs of their business community, particularly if there is no in-house capacity to do this directly.

New and Upcoming Data Sources

With the COVID-19 pandemic still ongoing and economic developers in recovery mode, considering the most pertinent and recent research and data sources is important. While all of the aforementioned platforms are active and ready to subscribe, it is also worth considering upcoming data sources of relevance to economic developers within the Southern Interior region. This section will outline some developing options that have either recently launched or are in development, stemming from discussions with the Regional District of the East Kootenay (RDEK) and the work of Selkirk College's Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (RDI). While these sources are geographically limited currently, they could act as a model that could be duplicated in other regions across the Southern Interior.

RDI State of the Basin

State of the Basin is an RDI initiative that provides key data and analysis of the Columbia Basin-Boundary region, with a focus on indicator monitoring for economic, social, cultural, and environmental trends[9]. One of the biggest features of this initiative is the Community Profiles project, which features detailed reports about each municipality in the region, ranging from larger centres like Cranbrook and Nelson to smaller communities like Canal Flats and Silverton[10]. These profiles take the form of downloadable reports, numbering roughly 20 to 25 pages in length, and cover important statistics and data pertaining to each community. These reports draw from federal, provincial, and local government sources, including both open-source and custom data.

While the Community Profiles are comprehensive and are a good source of information about each community for local businesses and potential investors, there are other initiatives from State of the Basin

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[9] https://stateofthebasin.ca/
[10] http://cbrdi.ca/Signature-Programs/Community-Profiles

as well such as annual 'Snapshot Reports', which highlight key data for the Columbia Basin-Boundary region and how this data compares to previous years in a graphic summary, as well as subjective well-being reports generated based on polling of Columbia Basin-Boundary residents. These initiatives provide economic developers, site selectors, investors, and businesses with a comprehensive understanding of the Columbia Basin municipalities and what makes each one unique.

RDEK Employment Lands Inventory

Created by RDI, on behalf of RDEK, the Employment Lands Inventory is an inventory research project that offers a GIS solution mapping key resources throughout the East Kootenay region[11]. It is a GIS solution developed using ArcGIS and currently focuses primarily on land use planning inventories. Another layer of direct relevance to the local region is the integration of investment opportunities from Imagine Kootenay into the platform. This could be developed further in the future as community assets and other features are mapped and integrated to the platform.

There are some limitations to this solution currently. As mentioned, the data currently integrated with this platform is limited in scope and will require contracted support in the future to integrate additional layers and data. As well, this is not a comprehensive solution that can be easily extended to other areas. RDI's focus on the Columbia Basin region includes the full extent of the Kootenays, extending west to the Boundary region towns of Grand Forks and Greenwood, and as far north as Golden and Valemount. While it may be possible to commission a similar project for regional districts in the Columbia Basin, in the same vein as this project with RDEK, this will not cover the full Southern Interior region that ETSI-BC services.

Tech Workforce Development GIS Analysis & Integration

As a follow-up project to the Employment Lands Inventory, the Tech Workforce Development GIS Analysis & Integration project is being developed to better understand the workforce in the Columbia Valley, particularly technology workers and potential technology workers. It also plans to explore employer needs and opportunities. This early-stage project was proposed by Columbia Valley Community Economic Development (CVCED) and is being developed by RDI. This is intended to add value to the aforementioned Employment Lands Inventory GIS solution by adding additional value and utility to that platform. The main information intended to be added include community assets (such as parks, schools, health care and childcare), workforce characteristics, and agricultural lands information. Additionally, the project is intended to include additional data available from open sources like the Government of British Columbia's public mapping application BC Economic Atlas. Once the project is completed, this additional information will hopefully be an asset to individuals and businesses in identifying the suitability of relocating to the East Kootenay region.

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[11] https://selkirk.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=aa67d37e046c4723a8a64a5ef1ccde3d

Conclusion

As this report details, there are a lot of options available for economic developers to access detailed data and research for their communities. **Based on the research and analysis conducted by O'Leary & Associates, it is recommended that ETSI-BC consider engaging Cityviz as a data solution for the organization's region across the Southern Interior**.

Cityviz is a good option to explore for ETSI-BC and its stakeholders for a few reasons:

- It is a local company that is based in West Kelowna, so there is the inherent positive benefit of engaging with and supporting a local solution.

- The platform engages with a wide range of open-source data features and can even support the integration of municipal data sources if they are open-source. Subscribers can additionally upload their own data, or even get the Cityviz team to help them integrate this data into their system, with the subscriber retaining full ownership of their data that is provided.

- The community profile microsite that each community gets is customizable based on the individual subscriber's desired focus, while the internal Economic Indicators dashboard for exploring the provided data can also be customized. There are benefits to this combination of public-facing dashboards to help market a community, while also having strong data sources that can be used for internal-facing research and decision-making.

- There is the option to have paid add-ons for even more in-depth features. One example is how Spacelist data about commercial real estate and property listings can be integrated into Cityviz if these features are desired by a community, data that is helpful when an EDO is engaging site selectors and prospective businesses in business expansion efforts.

Finally, the platform is developing rapidly. In talking with the Cityviz team, they are looking to integrate more proprietary data sources in the future as they continue to grow and are willing to explore specific additional data needs on a per-client basis as well. In addition, while Cityviz already provides most of the necessary export features for a data analysis and visualization platform (such as templated or custom reports in PDF or Word format, Excel spreadsheets with raw data, and downloadable image files for graphs and charts), they are currently working on adding the possibility to download data in an accessible and visually appealing PowerPoint file, making it easy for EDOs to share information forward with relevant stakeholders. All of these details considered, Cityviz is a highly recommendable option for ETSI-BC to engage with.

If the goal is a more internal-focused solution, offering the most robust option when it comes to data acquisition and research, UrbanLogiq would be the best choice. It is based in British Columbia and has the most options when it comes to gathering useful data. While the company has not worked with a lot of communities with less than 100,000 residents, their team appeared receptive to working with smaller communities and their pricing is partly dependent on the size of the community that wishes to subscribe to their service.

Every platform evaluated in this report has some merit. Depending on the ultimate needs of the EDO that will use them, there are opportunities to explore solutions outside of the recommendations. It is hoped that the information and analysis outlined above will be a beneficial resource for any economic developer looking to make better use of data in their day-to-day work.