Forest Impact Recovery (FIR) Program Application Guide

1. About the Program

The ETSI-BC Forest Impact Recovery (FIR) Program will provide up to $1.35 million in grant funding to support rural communities in the BC Southern Interior and their business support organizations as they take on the challenging task of supporting economic development in communities affected by on-going changes in the forest sector.

This program will provide funding to create 18 or more FIR Advisor positions, focused on Community or Business recovery, or a combination of both. Eligible applicants (Host Organizations) will be local governments, First Nations, economic development agencies and non-profit business support organizations serving those communities.

Host Organizations must be located within the ETSI-BC service area. Priority will be given to communities with populations under 25,000. Eligible projects will be focused on serving communities that have experienced any of the following "Forest Impacts":

- a series of recent (since 2019) forest sector mill curtailments, a recent forest sector mill closure, a significant loss of any forest sector employers, and/or
- a declining fibre supply due to a recent or planned old growth logging deferral in the area, significant wildfire season, pine beetle infestation, or caribou habitat protection.

The selected Host Organizations will receive up to 100% of eligible costs to a maximum of $75,000 per position to engage a FIR Advisor to carry out FIR Community or Business Advisor duties as described in Attachment 1. The new positions may be full-time, part-time, or seasonal.

After reviewing this Application Guide, interested applicants are welcome to contact the ETSI-BC Program Administrator at admin@etsi-bc.ca or (236) 420-3680 ext. 1 to schedule a meeting with the appropriate Project Consultant.

2. Program Objectives

The FIR Program is intended to address capacity challenges faced by rural businesses and smaller communities and First Nations in the Southern Interior, as they work towards economic recovery from the reduction in timber supply. This program is intended to provide substantive services to impacted businesses and/or communities which generates:

- Economic benefits for rural businesses and communities impacted by forest policy changes and other impacts to the forest sector.
- Increased community and regional adaption, resilience, and sustainability.

- Meaningful collaboration and leveraging of existing local community/organization capacity to create incremental supports and resources for impacted businesses, workers and communities.

3. Who Can Apply

All applicants to become Host Organizations must be located within the Southern Interior service area and priority will be for rural communities with less than 25,000 residents. Applicants need to clearly demonstrate "Forest Impacts" to receive funding. Priority will also be given to projects that have a regional focus and demonstrate collaboration between multiple organizations and/or local governments. Eligible applicants include:

- Local, municipal, regional and First Nation governments
- Non-profit business support organizations serving rural communities and First Nations, such as:
  - Economic development agencies, Community Futures, WeBC
  - Non-profit tech accelerators (i.e., KAST, Kamloops Innovation, Accelerate Okanagan)
  - Non-Profit Industry Associations and Chambers of Commerce.

4. Funding Allocations

To ensure regional coverage, every effort will be made to distribute funding equitably between the Thompson-Okanagan and Columbia-Kootenay-Boundary regions of the ETSI-BC service area, reflecting each area's rural population, forest impacts, and access to other complementary resources. If, after the first intake, additional funding is still available, the balance of the funds will be allocated to projects or specialized services that fill gaps in program coverage. Regarding the positions themselves:

- ETSI-BC may allocate up to 100% of eligible costs per community (Host Organization) to a maximum of $75,000 for a FIR Advisor position
- Positions created may be full time, part time, seasonal or a project-based contract
- Positions may be funded for a duration of minimum 6 months to maximum of 18 months
- Each application will be supported by a workplan for the proposed position (template provided)
- See Attachment 1 for sample activities of the Forest Impact Recovery (FIR) Community and Business Advisors.

5. Eligible Costs

Eligible costs that Host Organizations may claim under this funding include the following:

- Wages for new positions created under this program
- Employment related costs – CPP, EI, vacation pay (if days not provided)
- Travel expenses directly related to the project activities
- Training costs directly related to the workplan recovery activities
- Administrative costs (max. 10% of eligible costs) to recruit, hire and support the new position.

All other costs associated with the position (rent, supplies, equipment) must be borne by the Host Organization, and may be provided on an in-kind basis by the Host organization or other partners.

6. Ineligible Costs

Costs which are not eligible for Host Organizations to claim include the following:

- Wages for existing staff or staff funded through other government programs
- Hourly consulting fees for casual consultants who are not dedicated Recovery Advisors
- Office space and/or equipment (i.e., rent, desk, computer, cell phone)
- Living expenses, car allowances or other benefits, such as WCB, extended health or bonuses.

7. Eligible Projects

The FIR Program provides grant funding for incremental capacity to support rural communities that are negatively impacted by reductions in the Forest Sector. Funding is intended to provide advisory services to support smaller communities and businesses primarily in rural areas that lack capacity to deal with the impacts from forestry disruptions. The focus for the FIR Advisor can be:

- Community Economic Recovery and Diversification;
- Business Advisory Services, or
- A combination of the above two focus areas

See Attachment 1 for sample activities of the Forest Impact Recovery (FIR) Community and Business Advisors.

8. Program Timelines

March 8, 2023	Information session – Register here
March 15, 2023	FIR Program funding intake is open
April 15, 2023	Deadline for prospective Host Organizations to submit applications
April 15-30, 2023	Application review and funding decisions
May 15, 2023	Funding announcement for first intake
June 2023- Dec 2024	Forest Impact Recovery Advisors in action, ETSI-BC training and monthly check-ins begin
August 30, 2023	First Interim Report due
September 2023	Limited Round 2 and Contract extensions granted
February 29, 2024	Second Interim Report due
August 30, 2024	Interim/Final Interim Report due (depending on contract end date)
December 31, 2024	Final end date of all contracts (including Round 2 and extensions)
December 31, 2024	Final Report due for all outstanding contracts

9. Assessment Criteria

To optimize business and community impact, applications will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- quality of workplan and budget (see templates attached)
- prospective Host Organization's capacity to manage staff/oversee project
- regional impact (including number of businesses, communities assisted)
- diversity and equity impact
- identified need/opportunity
- collaboration with other organizations, including local First Nations
- direct economic benefit to local governments and First Nations

10. Forest Impact Recovery Advisor Workplan

Prospective Host Organizations are required to provide ETSI-BC with an FIR Advisor workplan and budget as part of their application. Templates for each are attached. The workplan is intended to:

- Clearly articulate the duties to be performed and qualifications required by the host organization for the FIR Advisor position
- Help host organizations undertake the recruitment and selection of applicants that are well aligned with the roles, responsibilities and key duties outlined in the project plan
- Help applicants understand the duties and responsibilities associated with the position
- Develop project and performance metrics that form the basis of project reporting and performance reviews. **Metrics must include, but are not limited to:**
  - **number of community economic recovery activities**
  - **number of businesses contacted**
  - **number of businesses supported**
  - **number of jobs created or maintained**

11. Project Communication and Reporting

Approved Host Organizations will be required to agree to the following communication and project reporting activities as a condition of grant approval.

- Provide confirmation of successful recruitment and qualifications
- Participate in regularly scheduled check in meetings with ETSI-BC and other Host Organizations
- Provide an interim report

- Provide a final report and submit a final report showing budgeted vs actual expenses signed off by the Host Organization's authorized signatory
- Participate in program review calls/meeting from time to time as requested by ETSI-BC or the Province
- Contact ETSI-BC at the earliest opportunity if the Host Organization's FIR Advisor resigns or is terminated for any reason
- Share ongoing program learning, challenges and success stories through regular reporting and check-ins.

12. Application Process

1. Applicants are encouraged to contact ETSI-BC to discuss the proposed project scope and potential alignment with the FIR program prior to submitting an application.

2. Applicants must use the ETSI-BC Grant Application Portal. All supporting information must be submitted electronically through the portal.

3. The ETSI-BC Grant Team undertakes comprehensive due diligence of each funding application received, which may include contacting relevant agencies and organizations as part of the review process.

4. Applications meeting the eligibility and assessment criteria are forwarded to the CEO who has delegated approval authority. Funding decisions will be communicated to proponents as soon as possible following the close of the Funding Intake.

5. A Contribution Agreement will be provided to the applicant for signature once the applicant has been approved.

Questions?

Email: admin@etsi-bc.ca
Phone: (236) 420-3680 ext 0
www.etsi-bc.ca

ATTACHMENT 1: FIR Program Activities

Program funds will be available for Host Organizations to:

- Provide direct one-on-one advisory services to support rural businesses and communities in impacted areas.

- Support the implementation of community or regional economic recovery and diversification strategies.

- Support communities in developing applications for funding programs including those within the Forestry Worker and Community Supports programs.

- Provide access to specialized professional services (accounting, legal, human resources, technical expertise, etc.) that can provide advice and expertise to businesses and communities on an as-needed basis.

Sample FIR Community Advisor Activities

Possible activities of FIR Community Advisors may include but are not limited to the following:

1. **Economic development planning:**

   - Economic development planning and strategies
   - Business retention and expansion plans
   - Downtown revitalization plans
   - Workforce attraction and housing strategies

2. **Community based research and analysis:**

   - Research and analysis that will support economic development planning and priority setting
   - Community consultation and engagement
   - Community impact assessments
   - Key economic sector analysis
   - Collaborative research studies or evaluations
   - Feasibility studies and market research

3. **Sector development and economic diversification:**

   - Activities and efforts aimed at diversifying the economy
   - Expanding and supporting existing industry clusters
   - Opportunity analysis and research
   - Attracting new businesses or sectors to a community

4. **Community marketing and promotion:**

   - Marketing activities that promote a specific economic opportunity

- Community marketing/branding strategies
- Promotion strategies of community assets
- Content for investment packages (i.e., videos, printed material)

5. **Business investment and attraction:**

- Creating an investment ready strategy
- Developing investment attraction ambassador network

Sample FIR Business Advisor Activities

Possible activities of FIR Business Advisors may include but are not limited to the following:

1. **Business outreach:**

- Network with local businesses
- Identify specific business needs
- Pathfinding to business programs, resources and services
- Business needs assessments
- Assist business owners in applying for recover programs and services

2. **Business recovery and growth planning support:**

- Business planning and strategy development
- Business diversification strategies
- Review of workflow and operations
- Review of products and services

3. **Marketing and promotion support:**

- Assist in market research and analysis
- Review of current industry trends
- Assist business in revising target markets
- Provide advice on new promotional strategies

4. **Finance and capital assistance:**

- Review of current financial statements
- Cashflow forecasting
- Explore financial restructuring options
- Refer businesses to financing programs and services

5. **Access to specialized professional services**

- Identify key areas which require in-depth professional support (accounting, legal, human resources, technical expertise, etc)
- Assist with finding funding to access those services through FIR Program.

ATTACHMENT 2: Sample Workplan and Budget

NOTE: See ETSI-BC Grant Application Portal for fillable version

Sample Workplan

Sample Workplan					
Goal 1:					
Key Action Steps	Timeline	Expected Outcome(s)	Key Performance Indicator Proposed	Key Performance Indicator Achieved	Comments
Goal 2:					
Key Action Steps	Timeline	Expected Outcome(s)	Key Performance Indicator Proposed	Key Performance Indicators Achieved	Comments
Goal 3:					
Key Action Steps	Timeline	Expected Outcome(s)	Key Performance Indicator Proposed	Key Performance Indicators Achieved	Comments
Goal 4:					
Key Action Steps	Timeline	Expected Outcome(s)	Key Performance Indicator Proposed	Key Performance Indicators Achieved	Comments

Sample Budget

Budget			
Expense Type (from Application)	**Description**	**Budget**	**Portion Funded by ETSI-BC**
Incremental Staff Expenses			
Consulting Fees / Contractor Costs			
Research / Data			
Marketing / Promotion			
Travel Expenses			
Supplies / Materials			
Other (specify)			
Total		$0.00	$0.00

Other Funding Sources and In-Kind Contributions (if applicable)				
Name of Organization	**Contact Name & Title**	**Cash/In-kind**	**Amount**	**Confirmed?**