

Integrated Community Sustainability Planning Implications for Rural BC

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SURVEY

An applied research project funded by the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions — Led by Joan Chess, Smart Planning for Communities; a program of the Fraser Basin Council



GOALS & EXPECTED IMPACTS

The goal of the project is to research and record the application of Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP) in rural BC. What are the measures of success for BC's regional districts and small municipalities, when engaging in an ICSP process and implementing the resulting strategies in pursuit of becoming sustainable communities?

WHY RURAL BC?

- As local governments, regional districts and small municipalities face the same requirements as large cities and metropolitan areas to conduct ICSP in return for receiving per capita gas tax funds.
- Of BC's 158 municipalities, 68% have populations of 10,000 or less.
- All of BC's local governments are required to include policies, actions and targets for reducing GHG emissions, in their OCP's; **addressing climate change is a crucial component of sustainability.**



For this project, rural is defined as all regional districts and their unincorporated areas (except Metro Vancouver), and all the municipalities in these RD's with populations of 10,000 or less.

If BC's regional districts and small municipalities are to be successful in ICSP (or similar processes), and their rural communities and landscapes are to become sustainable, then

1. What are the elements of a successful process for rural areas
2. What tools are suitable for the 'rural tool kit', in developing and implementing their sustainability strategies?
3. What role do regional districts, rural municipalities and landscapes have in supporting the sustainability of BC's cities, and province-wide sustainability goals?

The anticipated outcomes of the research project are information and practical advice for BC's regional districts and small municipalities on the above three points. Research methods included a literature review, two online surveys, and focus groups.

SOLUTIONS — FOCUS



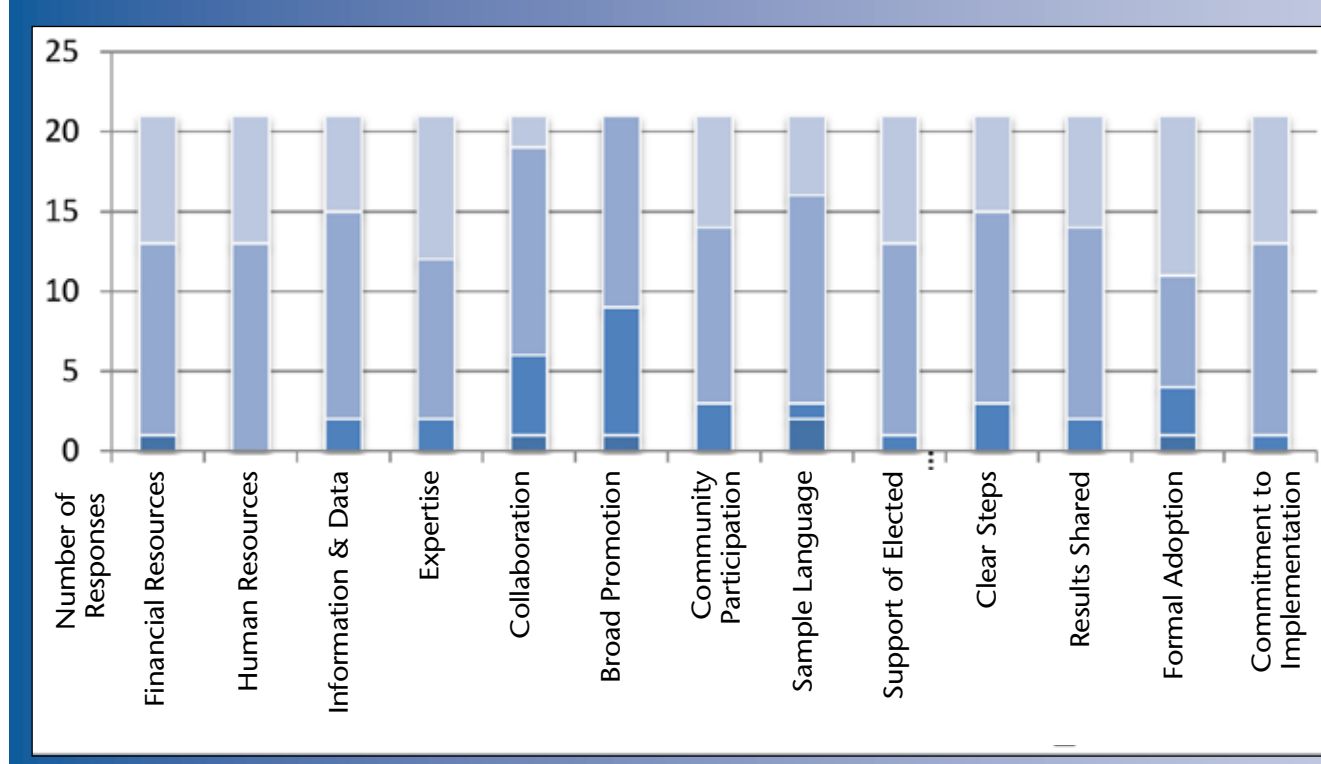
Of all orders of government, local government is the closest to the people, and thus has the greatest influence on individual and collective actions that will advance sustainability principles in practical ways. **Although final analysis and report writing are still in progress, these preliminary findings point to several conclusions:**

1. With almost half of BC's rural local governments not yet started, **ongoing support** will be needed to assist them in conducting successful ICSP processes
2. For a **successful process**, they need the basics: financial and human resources, access to expertise, support from elected officials and community leaders, and commitment to implementation.
3. The planning process needs to be **worthwhile and relevant**, supported by the finding that most local governments had developed their own process, and conducted the work with a combination of staff and experts
4. The **seven ICSP principles** established as part of the Gas Tax Agreement are seen as being very suitable for rural areas, and thus should be continued
5. Actions for rural sustainability strategies need to be **realistic**, as well as **reflect longstanding concerns** felt in many rural areas across BC around drinking water supplies and economic diversification in particular
6. In **developing strategies**, support from elected officials and community leaders, funding, and implementation costs are crucial.

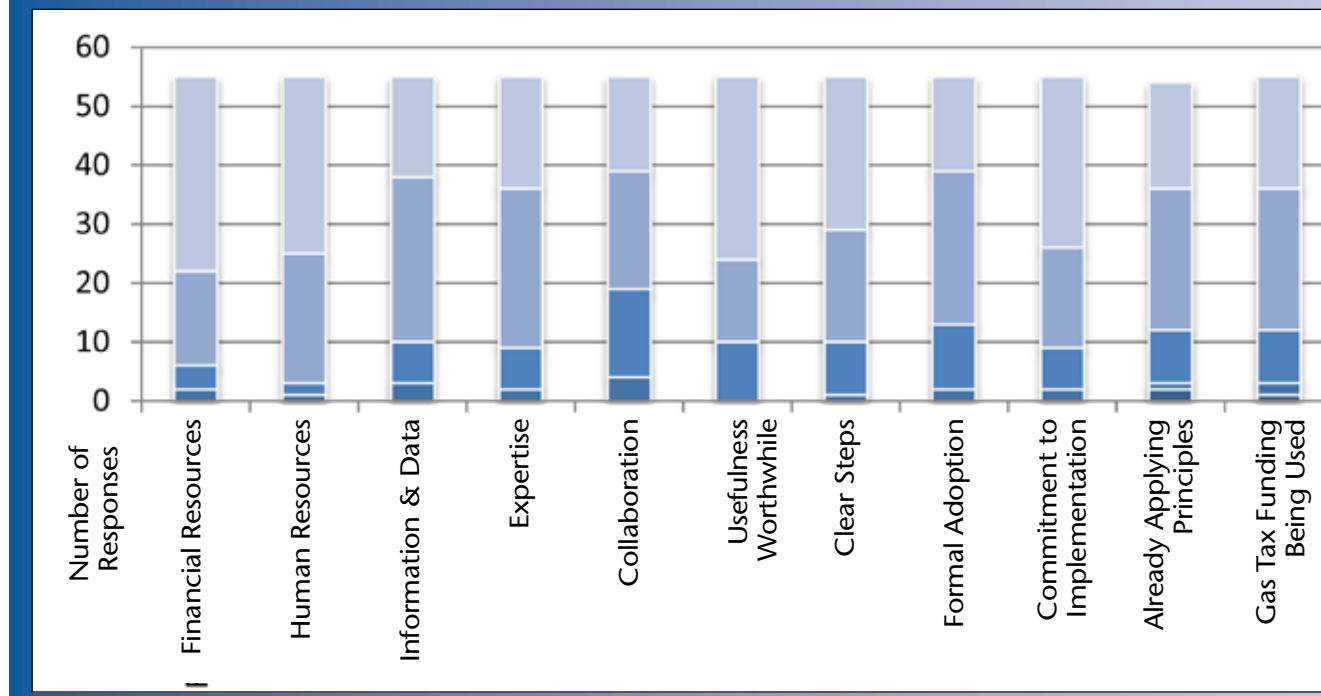
KEY FINDINGS TO DATE

- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Less important
- Not important

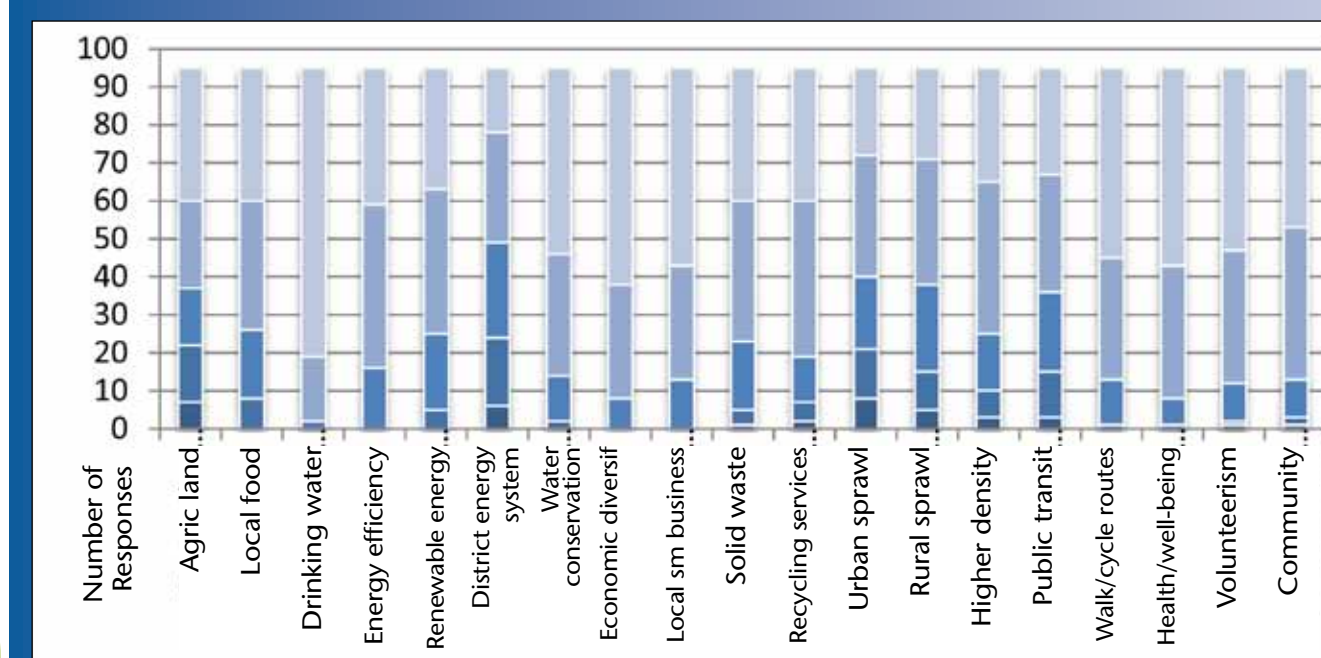
How important was each of the following things to your planning process?



How important was each of the following factors in making a decision about whether to proceed or not with an ICSP process?

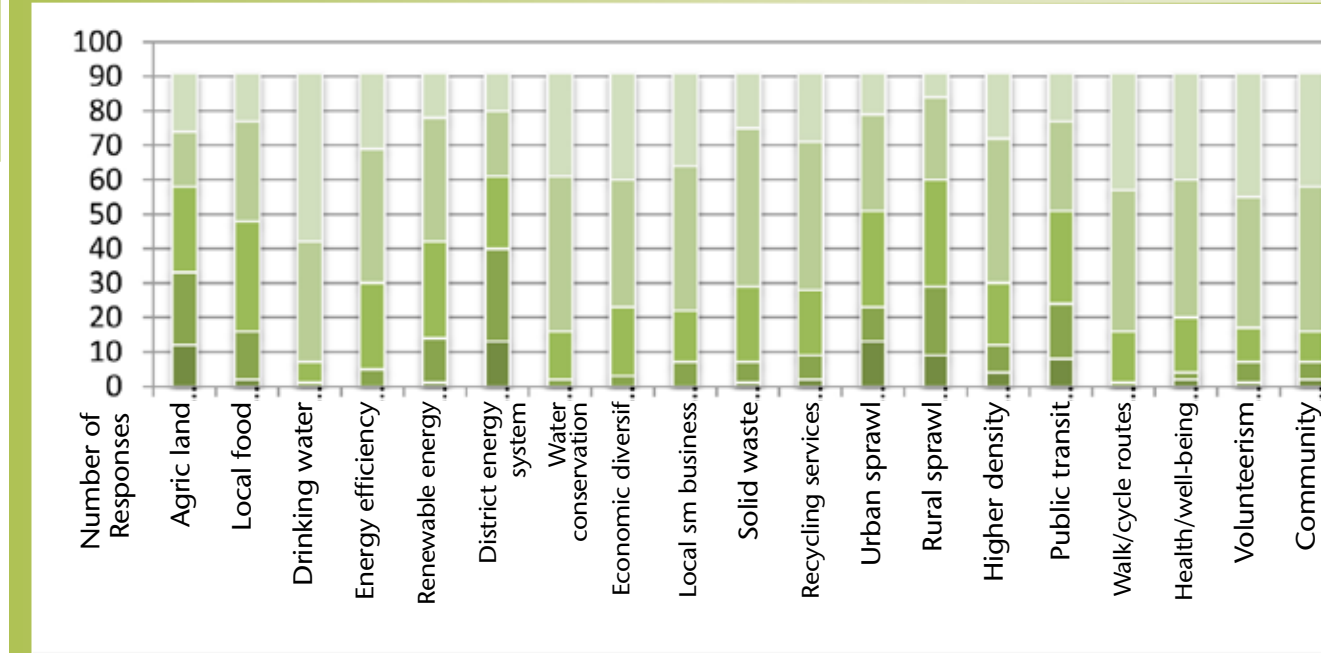


How important are each of the following actions as part of a sustainability strategy for your rural area and/or community(ies)?



- Very realistic
- Realistic
- Somewhat realistic
- Less realistic
- Not Realistic

How realistic is it that each of the following actions would be implemented as part of a sustainability strategy for your rural area and/or community(ies)?



PLANNING PROCESS FACTORS The factors rated most frequently as 'very important' to their process, by those who have completed one, were: formal adoption of final document and/or policies; expertise; 'important' factors were: financial and human resources; information and data; support from elected officials and community leaders; and commitment to implementation.

DECISION-MAKING FACTORS For those who had not yet started a process, the factors most frequently rated as 'very important' in making a decision to proceed or not were (in order): financial resources; usefulness or worthwhile doing; human resources; and commitment to implementation. As well, **65.5%** indicated that support from elected officials is extremely important in making the decision to proceed or not.

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES Respondents rated the importance of potential actions that might be included in a sustainability strategy. Actions most frequently chosen as being 'very important' (in order) were: protecting drinking water supplies (**80%**); pursuing economic diversification (**60%**); supporting locally owned small businesses; and encouraging health and social well-being (both at **55%**).

REALISTIC ACTION-PLANNING Respondents rated how realistic it is that these potential actions would be implemented in a sustainability strategy. Protecting drinking water supplies was most frequently chosen as very realistic (**54%**). Most actions listed were rated as 'realistic'. Some actions rated as somewhat realistic included protecting agricultural land; supporting food security and local producers; and preventing urban and rural sprawl. Developing a district or community energy system was most frequently rated as being less realistic (**30%**).

PROFILE

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SURVEY RESPONDENTS

33% ELECTED OFFICIALS

66% STAFF

21% REGIONAL DISTRICTS

79% MUNICIPALITIES

STAGE

OF ICSP PROCESS

18% COMPLETED

19% UNDERWAY

47% NOT STARTED

15% DON'T KNOW



PROCESS DELIVERY

Of those with completed or ICSP's underway, **50% to 62%** conducted their process with a combination of staff and outside experts; and developed their own process rather than use an existing framework.

APPROPRIATE ACTIONS

The top factors selected for being 'very important' in choosing appropriate sustainability actions for rural areas were (in order):

- support from elected officials and community leaders - **79%**
- access to funding - **78%**
- implementation costs - **75%**
- willingness of residents - **59%**

ICSP PRINCIPLES

Almost all respondents rated the seven ICSP principles as being 'Very Suitable' or 'Suitable' for rural areas.

Principles:

1. Long term thinking
2. Broad in scope
3. Integration
4. Collaboration
5. Public engagement
6. Implementation
7. Monitoring and evaluation



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