rdi structure & function

May 2014

The purpose of this document is provide information related to the structure and function of the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (RDI) to ensure Selkirk College and RDI staff, CBT staff, advisors, partners and communities have a clear understanding of the RDI and the scope of its activities. It is a living document and will be updated regularly as required.

In 2011, CBT entered into a partnership with Selkirk College to create the RDI with the intent of an eight-year partnership. The purpose of the RDI is to promote and support informed planning and decision-making in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region through region-specific information and applied research. CBT provides funding and Selkirk College supports the operation of the RDI through its infrastructure and specific capabilities, including the Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic Development (RIC) who directs the research agenda of the institute. In addition to the RIC, RDI has a team of masters-level researchers (employed by Selkirk College) focusing on specific research priorities.

Relationship to Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic Development

The work of Selkirk College’s Regional Innovation Chair (RIC) is part of the institute. The institute’s strategic plan includes the RIC goals. The RIC Chair serves as the institute’s inaugural senior officer. Aside from managing staff and directing the research agenda and activities of the institute, the RIC maintains a focus on rural economic development, including:

* active participation in regional, provincial and national economic development networks and research partnerships,
* promotion of and applied research related to economic development best practices through research and knowledge mobilization activities (i.e. presentations, Knowledge Briefs, Knowledge Videos), and
* support to regional partnerships that engage in economic diversification activities, including provision of college applied research support to companies.

Governance & Advisory Committees

The RDI has developed a [three-year strategic plan](http://www.cbrdi.ca/wp-content/uploads/RDI-StrategicPlan2014-17.pdf) (2014-2017) that outlines the mission, vision and strategic priorities of the RDI. The strategic plan will guide the RDI’s activities over a three-year period and is informed by various consultation processes that have been completed in the region.

Governance Committee

The RDI is governed by a Governance Committee (the Committee) that consists of two CBT representatives (President /CAO, Director Special Initiatives) and three Selkirk College representatives (President / CAO, VP Education and Students, Dean of Applied Research) with the position of Chair alternating on an annual basis. The Committee may be expanded at any future time to include up to two additional members to be agreed on by CBT and Selkirk College. As detailed in the [Governance Committee Terms of Reference](http://www.cbrdi.ca/wp-content/uploads/RDI_Governance-Committee_Terms-of-Reference-2014-15.docx), the Governance Committee approves the strategic plan, annual operation plan and budget, reviews performance annually against annual operating plan, budget, and strategic plan, and provides strategic advice on the applied research needs, gaps and / or focus areas.

Advisory Committee

Initially, two advisory committees (East and West Kootenay) provided guidance for the applied research priorities of RDI. The two advisory committees have been amalgamated into one regional advisory committee to provide advice and direction to RDI around the strategic plan, applied research topics and related knowledge mobilization products and activities. As detailed in the [Advisory Committee Terms of Reference](http://www.cbrdi.ca/wp-content/uploads/RDI_Advisory-Committee_Terms-of-Reference-2014-15.docx), the Advisory Committee is one mechanism for input into the decision-making process, providing advice on a range of issues including:

* Regional issues and research priorities for the RDI;
* Goals and objectives for addressing identified issues and research priorities;
* Strategies and activities for achieving goals and objectives; and
* Other areas, as may be periodically requested.

Project Advisory Groups

Project advisory groups have been formed to support specific applied research projects, such as the State of the Environment project, Business Retention and Expansion, and Employment Lands projects. The continuation of project advisory groups is currently under review.

Strategic Plan

The Rural Development Institute (RDI) is a regional research centre that provides Basin-Boundary communities with credible, timely and relevant information to support informed decision-making and learning. It leads, brokers and supports regional applied research efforts that address identified rural development research opportunities and needs. In addition, the RDI mobilizes knowledge to support the creation and use of research, promotes innovation and regional collaboration, and facilitates rural development-focused learning.

The RDI has developed a [three-year strategic plan](http://www.cbrdi.ca/wp-content/uploads/RDI-StrategicPlan2014-171.pdf) (2014-2017) that outlines the mission, vision and strategic priorities of the RDI. The strategic plan will guide the RDI’s activities over a three-year period and is informed by various consultation processes that have been completed in the region, such as the CBT Sector Strategic Plans and the Selkirk College Strategic Plan as well as findings from the 2013 RDI evaluation, consultations with economic, social, cultural and environmental stakeholders and feedback from the RDI Advisory Committee and Governance Committee.

Strategic Priorities

1. Consolidate, identify gaps and build regional knowledge
2. Undertake applied rural development focused research
3. Support the access, use and application of RDI and rural development research and tools
4. Support meaningful collaboration amongst educational institutions and the Columbia Basin Trust

State of the Basin

The State of the Basin (SOTB) is an initiative to monitor and report on information relating to well-being within the Columbia Basin-Boundary region and is based on a series of indicators relating to four key pillars: economic, social, cultural, and environmental. The SoTB products include Snap Shot and Long Reports as well as Trends Analysis Briefs, and the Digital Basin. Refining baseline indicators and the expansion of indicators in each pillar is undertaken with input from the advisory committee and set criteria. Snap shot reports are produced annually, the long report is produced every 5 years following the release of the Census, trends analysis are released quarterly and the Digital Basin is updated on an ongoing basis as new data becomes available.

Applied Research Priorities

The RDI takes on various applied regional research priorities each year based on a set of criteria and consultation with the advisory group, Selkirk College, CBT and economic, social, cultural and environmental stakeholders in the region. Some applied research priorities may require substantial effort and may span several years depending on the project goals and objectives. Information on previous applied research projects and outcomes can be viewed [here](http://cbrdi.ca/research-areas/applied-research/). The RDI does not provide funding for applied research projects, but supports informed planning and decision making by providing research and analysis as well as by acting as a hub for research. The RDI provides regional data and research as well as partner research via their [research database](http://www.cbrdi.ca/resources/) and the [State of the Basin](http://www.cbrdi.ca/resources/) pages.

The audience for applied research projects varies depending on the nature of the applied research focus and can be cross-sectoral in nature. It includes local governments, non-government organizations, Chambers of Commerce among others. It is not possible for RDI to address requests to undertake community-based research from individuals/organizations, although where possible, RDI will connect individuals/organizations to students and faculty applied research support, related information on the Digital Basin, information generated by organizations with existing research and/or similar efforts underway in the region or elsewhere. The RDI will keep track of research requests to inform future decisions around applied research priorities. The RDI also supports organizations in their efforts to design community-based research projects through the provision of advisory services as RDI time and resources allow.

Knowledge Mobilization

The RDI has amassed significant data and research related to rural development in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region. The purpose of the RDI is to support informed planning and decision making based on relevant, timely and credible information, therefore ensuring data/research are applied is critical. The RDI is developing an approach to effectively build the capacity of the region to access, understand and apply the data and research that has been completed by the RDI. The RDI has developed an online resources database as well as the Digital Basin to ensure data/research are easily accessible. The RDI offers training workshops and delivers presentations to support knowledge mobilization directly related to RDI applied research (i.e. Business Retention and Expansion, Digital Basin) as well as produces a series of knowledge briefs on relevant topics to the region. Research topics are selected annually in consultation with RDI Advisory and Governance Committees. The RIC also delivers presentations to regional economic development groups on requested topics as capacity allows.

Research Support for Communities

#### Research Advisory Services

The RDI team includes Masters-level researchers with expertise in diverse subject matter. Stemming from a recognized need to grow the research capacity of the region, the RDI offers [research advisory services](http://www.cbrdi.ca/research-support/research-advisory-services/) to organizations that are planning to engage in economic, social, cultural or environmental research. These services can help researchers clarify their project purpose or methodology, understand available data or funding sources, and make connections to related research underway in the region. Research advisory support is available on a first-come-first-serve basis as RDI researchers’ capacities and capabilities allow. [Request research support](http://www.cbrdi.ca/research-support/request-research-support/).

#### Data and Information Provision Services

As part of the State of the Basin and regional applied research projects, the RDI compiles and maintains an extensive suite of datasets specific to the Basin-Boundary region. Data is stored in many forms, including databases, geospatial shapefiles, graphs, tables and reports. The RDI can provide local organizations access to much of this data in order to assist with planning, project proposals, and other activities that require informed decisions. [Learn more about data and information provision services and available data](http://www.cbrdi.ca/research-support/information-and-data-provision-services/).

#### Indirect Supports

Through our links to the wider research community, the RDI offers the following additional benefits to the Basin-Boundary region:

* Brokering of access to applied research supports for companies and organizations offered by college students and faculty by [requesting research support](http://www.cbrdi.ca/research-support/request-research-support/).
* Connection to regional, provincial and national rural development networks by [requesting research support](http://www.cbrdi/research-support/request-research-support/).

## **Research Priorities & Decision-Making**

The RDI addresses a number of research topics each year based on a set of criteria and consultations with the advisory group, Selkirk College, CBT and economic, social, cultural and environmental stakeholders in the region. In January of each year, the RDI produces a list of research topics for consideration by the RDI Governance and Advisory Committees. Based on feedback, the RDI proposes treatment of research topics through a series of approaches and knowledge products, including Trends Analysis Briefs and new data layers added to the Digital Basin, regional applied research projects, Knowledge Briefs, Knowledge Videos, presentations, and webinars. A minimum of one knowledge product is released each month. [Learn more](http://www.cbrdi.ca/wp-content/uploads/RDI-Assets-Indicators-Decisionmaking-Process-Matrix..docx) about decision-making related to the addition of new data layers on the Digital Basin. [Learn more](http://www.cbrdi.ca/wp-content/uploads/RDI-Applied-Research-Decisionmaking-Process-Matrix..docx) about decision-making related to the selection of regional research projects.

The RDI’s mission is to support informed decision making in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region through the provision of information, applied research and related outreach and extension support. While the RDI does not provide direct community-based research support to communities beyond advisory services related to research design and related data collection instruments, a process is undertaken each year to determine regional research priorities based on set criteria and Advisory Committee, Selkirk College and CBT input. The audience for RDI projects may vary depending on the nature of the applied research and data/information products.

## **Monitoring, Evaluation and reporting**

An independent evaluation of the RDI was completed in 2013 and an evaluation is planned for year six. The RDI is currently developing a monitoring and evaluation plan to assess the RDI’s success and identify learning opportunities based on desired outcomes in annual work plans. The RDI will prepare and distribute to the Governance Committee annually, within 30 days of the end of each fiscal year financial statements in the form required by the Committee, together with an [Annual Report](http://www.cbrdi.ca/wp-content/uploads/RDI-AnnualReport2014-2017.pdf) on activities, including performance against the annual operating plan and budget, performance against the strategic plan and achievement of other measureable objectives and milestones established by the Committee. This DRAFT [Evaluation Framework](http://www.cbrdi.ca/wp-content/uploads/RDI-Evaluation-Objectives-Outcomes-Performance-Measures-2014-2017.docx) is a starting point for the RDI’s Monitoring and Evaluation Plan that seeks input from interested stakeholders (cbrdi@selkrik.ca), which is expected to be finalized by Summer 2014.

## **Funding**

While CBT is the main financial funder of the RDI, Selkirk College supports the operation of the institute through its infrastructure and specific capabilities, including the Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic Development (RIC), who directs the institute’s research agenda. In addition, the RDI accesses grant funding from various organizations (i.e. Real Estate Foundation, National Research Council, etc.) on a project-by-project basis. CBT funding is provided annually based on the RDI strategic plan, work plans, budgets and monitoring/evaluation. Selkirk College provides $125,000 annually, office space for the institute, and administration.

## **RDI and CBT**

Currently Special Initiatives is the CBT departmental point of contact for the RDI. Due to the complex nature of the breadth and depth of work both RDI and CBT undertake in the region, a coordinated approach between the two organizations is required.

CBT will facilitate an internal staff process every year that brings staff together to map ongoing and upcoming research needs and identify opportunities for collaboration with the RDI. CBT will continue to conduct research independent of the RDI, but may be able to provide data/research to RDI to store and apply in knowledge products. In some cases, the RDI may have the time and expertise to support CBT required research and this will be determined by RDI/CBT staff points of contact each year. CBT could provide an annual summary of research underway as well as research needs to RDI and RDI can determine their capacity to support. Where research priorities emerge throughout the year for either organization, they will be funnelled through Special Initiatives and the appropriate RDI contact to jointly determine feasibility. Where opportunities for collaboration are feasible, RDI researchers and CBT staff will coordinate amongst themselves, providing updates to the RDI/CBT points of contact. The RDI will ensure that any CBT related work is reflected in their work planning, updates and budget.

As the RDI evolves and the focus on strategic priorities shift, there may be natural synergies between CBT/RDI that become apparent based on each organizations strengths. An example is knowledge mobilization as CBT has various partners and contacts and could potentially provide extension services via Community Liaisons. CBT and the RDI will keep track of these opportunities and will bring any significant changes to the current approach to the Governance Committee for discussion.

## **RDI and College of the Rockies (COTR)**

The RDI has worked collaboratively with the College of the Rockies (COTR) on a project level, although the COTR has not been comprehensively engaged in the overall direction or strategy of the RDI to date. The RDI will develop an approach to engage the COTR in the RDI to build a more comprehensive organization that is truly a regional centre for information and applied research. Initial partnership expansion efforts include support for a COTR summer research internship position and the exploration of potential of applied research partnerships with COTR.

## **RDI Team**

In addition to the RIC Chair acting as the senior inaugural officer, RDI has a team of masters-level researchers (employed by Selkirk College) focusing on specific research priorities. Currently there are 3 full time equivalents (FTE): one full time researcher and three part time researchers responsible for aspects of each of the four pillars. A full time coordinator responsible for projects, communications and operations also supplements the team.