

Vancouver Island Tech Attraction Campaign - VITAC (V1.4)

Positioning Paper | Authored by Graham Truax | May 2017

Premise

In consideration to mounting US-based immigration policies, changes to the the [H-1B visa program](#), the positioning of [Canada's Start-up Visa Program](#) and other socio-economic factors, formation of a “**technology attraction campaign**” for Central and North Island communities could be highly [opportune](#). The technology and innovation sectors comprise one of the most culturally diverse and progressive work forces of any industry. Many tech-based SME's are grappling with complicated human-resource issues, potential changes to their business models, and other matters surrounding location-based operations.

Proposition

To create an [ad-hoc Agency or Association](#), comprised of a volunteer advisory committee, and paid Executive Director and Project Manager positions, to execute a **Vancouver Island Tech Attraction Campaign (VITAC)**. The organization would be comprised of six primary regional partners/stakeholders.

1) Cowichan Valley, 2) Nanaimo, 3) Ocean-side, Parksville/Qualicum Beach, 4) Comox Valley, 5) Port Alberni/West Coast, 6) Campbell River.

VITAC aims to secure a \$300,000 [budget](#) via proportionate contributions from each partner (and/or through other leveraged instruments or backers) with a 12 month mandate to realize the following objectives and actions.

Objectives

To promote and solicit the establishment of branch offices, remote workers and/or possible relocations of targeted SME's within the technology and innovation industries to Central and North Island communities. By way of targeted digital marketing campaigns and direct sales-based relationship building processes.

Actions

VITAC would develop a project website with detailed [community profiles](#) acting as a landing page for project activities. Highly targeted prospects (specific companies and industry sub-sectors) would be identified and form the basis for subsequent digital marketing campaigns; including various direct marketing efforts and 1:1 prospecting. VITAC would attend selected industry tradeshows (as non-exhibiting delegate or exhibitor). VITAC would roadmap various issues surrounding immigration policies and logistics, and facilitate "[hand-offs](#)" to stakeholder communities once prospective relationships were matured.

Rationale

Time is of the essence and this is a limited opportunity; also being pursued by "many" larger communities in Canada and around the world. Given geographic, demographic and logistical limitations a "regional" approach is clearly a superior strategy to realization of objectives.

- Various psychographic factors, including lifestyle and comparatively inexpensive real-estate, form secondary selling points.
- Targeted SME prospects will effectively require a larger selection of real-estate (office space and/or residential accommodations) or other amenities than can be offered within any one community; fitting needs that may not be predictable.
- Most SME prospects are accustom to regional development or trade areas and industry corridors; i.e., Silicon Valley is essentially an 80Km "region" ~ whereas the North Island approximates to 200Km (without comparative traffic).
- In a worst-case outcome, the initiative fails to realize objectives, the tourism "exposure" benefits could have substantial lasting value; considering most SME prospects are upwardly mobile and work to play.

Reference Articles

- [B.C. tech sector to get surge of talent fleeing Silicon Valley](#)
- [Silicon Valley is making plans to move foreign-born workers to Canada](#)
- [Canada seizes chance to skim talent from disaffected U.S. tech companies](#)
- [Tech start-ups upset about Trump are turning to Canada](#)
- [Canada Welcomes Tech Companies That Are Spooked by Trump](#)
- [Tech companies are set to battle Washington over visas for foreign workers](#)
- [Meet Americans fleeing Trump – by moving to New Brunswick](#)

Positioning Statement

The following statements are directed to stakeholders; to shape and summarize the nature and intentions of the initiative.

For progressive SME's with diverse workforces who can empower and benefit from a satellite office, or relocation, in a supportive community environment.

Who need to retain or foster international workers in a safe and responsible manner; under a culturally and environmentally responsive Government.

The Vancouver Island Tech Attraction Campaign (VITAC) is a regional marketing initiative comprising six of Vancouver Island's most vibrant communities.

VITAC is a web-based information platform, and targeted campaign, that facilitates exchanges between prospective SME's seeking to establish offices or operations within our respective communities.

Unlike similar efforts in larger cities VITAC delivers a more hands-on approach to the needs of individual companies who may be experiencing workforce distress.

VITAC also provides guidance on issues of taxation, regulatory matters, and liaison services to immigration policy and procedures.

Organization

Beyond the concept of creating an ad-hoc Agency or Association, there are two regional bodies that could act as an umbrella organization. 1) Innovation Island, of which I am affiliated with, and 2) VICEDA. With respect to the objectives of the initiative, Innovation Island, would likely provide the best fit and leadership; however, a collaborative approach is preferred.

Formation of a volunteer advisory committee, and a paid Executive Director and Project Manager, is currently envisioned. Various fee-based consultants and service providers would also be required. Regional partners & stakeholders would provide initial consultations, and various inputs, but would not be directly involved with project execution.

Project Funding

The proposed budget to deliver VITAC is \$300,000. Initial or primary capital contributions are likely to be sourced via community stakeholders, which in-turn “may” provide leverage financing with other agency funders. The initiative may also find support with various corporate sponsors who are active in our region and/or other advocates or backers.

The following budget comprises industry standard cost categories for an initiative of this scope. Resources have been assigned on a percentage based formula and allocation.

VITAC (V1.4 Budget)	\$300,000	100%
COST CATEGORY	Total Budget	% of Budget
Human Resources (Proposals / Operations / Consulting)	\$120,000	40%
Executive Director	\$20,000	Check:OK
Project Manager	\$80,000	
Public Relations	\$20,000	
WEBSITE Development	\$30,000	10%
Content Aggregation and Management	\$2,500	Check:OK
Initial Website (Mobile App Development)	\$18,000	
Domains, Hosting & Administration	\$1,000	
A/B Testing, Targeted Surveys & Analytics	\$7,500	
QA & Site Maintenance	\$1,000	
DIGITAL MARKETING	\$90,000	30%
SEO / Search Engine Ads & Banners	\$15,000	Check:OK
Display Retargeting & Paid Linking	\$25,000	
Social Media & Content Marketing	\$30,000	
Blog / Newsletter & Direct Email	\$20,000	
Other	\$60,000	20%
Print Media & Local Promotions	\$12,500	Check:OK
Software Licenses	\$2,500	
Industry Events (Fees, Travel, Accommodation)	\$40,000	
Contingencies	\$5,000	

Budget Activities & Rationale

To maximize impact, and to create a meaningful value proposition, the proposed budget and activities will be structured similar to a [SaaS](#) product release; with respect to marketing & brand development. In consideration to the target audience (SME technology companies, senior management, and associated work-forces) industry standard practices, or better, will be critical to ensuring project [message] competitiveness.

As previously mentioned various fee-based consultants and service providers will be engaged for project-specific tasks; either via RFP or direct award process. It is expected that all of the talent needed to this effect is available on-Island.

Human Resources

The Executive Director will be responsible for overall leadership and initiative integrity; comprising bi-weekly meetings, key correspondence and reporting.

The Project Manager will be responsible [full-time] for execution, [QC & QA](#), of all contracted service providers [assisting with project strategy, tactics, design and action items] and will be the primary face of the initiative; including direct sales efforts and travel.

The Public Relations firm [consultant] will liaise with all service providers, and management, and will assist with program design and key messaging. The consultant will monitor results of various activities, drive news and social media outcomes, and will make adjustments on key activities as needed.

The Project Manager and Public Relations consultant will report to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will report to the initiatives governing body.

WEBSITE Development

Significant content aggregation [from community stakeholders] will be required. Various targeted surveys [to SME prospects] will be needed to proof and standardize information.

It is anticipated that the project will be a “mobile-first” design and development; with a fluid transition to a more traditional website [the majority of targeted SME prospects are highly mobile-centric]. Numerous [application programming interfaces](#) (3rd party API's) will be employed to maximize functionality and utility (i.e., integration with Google Maps, Calendars, YouTube, Social Media feeds, and [CRM systems](#)). Various “internal” [marketing automation](#) and project management software (i.e., [HubSpot marketing, sales, and CRM software](#)) will also be required. Pending targeted surveys [to SME prospects] and results [A/B Testing](#) will be deployed in both mobile and web-based content and design.

DIGITAL MARKETING

Overall digital marketing activities, and expenditures, will be multi-faceted. The project (VITAC) should essentially be viewed as a “product” which is being marketed via numerous means and campaigns to a discerning target audience. As such, a

content-rich strategy is necessary to simultaneously capture search engine traffic and social media exposure and credibility.

Once content has been designed and captured it will then be distributed via [Facebook Advertising](#), [Google AdWords](#), various [SEO](#) strategies, [LinkedIn Advertising](#), [Display Retargeting](#), Paid Linking, [Content Marketing](#) techniques, paid and organic Social Media efforts [Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat etc.] traditional blogs & newsletters and direct email campaigns.

In tech-based marketing Web, Content and Social Media are highly interchangeable and fluid. A decent comparative is [The BC Ale Trail](#); combining much of what has been discussed above, including a regional effort with multiple partners.

Traditional and Physical Assets

After campaign strategies and branding have been successfully tested and deployed a limited print media effort will also be engaged. Primarily to serve attendance at tech-based tradeshows and events [i.e., [SXSW](#), [CES](#), [Burning Man](#), and industry specific shows such as the [GDC](#)]. Small cost-effective exhibits “may” be required for certain shows or events.

To aid in budgetary flexibility all RFP's will be called to allow for a 10-15% contingency.

Community Profiles and Engagement

To maximize marketing and communication efficiency, and equitability, a standardized template will be designed for web-based community profiles; in somewhat of a [co-opetitive](#) model.

Aside to the socio-political or cultural aspects of the VITAC initiative, or specific community-based amenities, it should be noted that featured lifestyles & activities can often have huge sway with [target] tech-based CEO's and/or other corporate decision makers. Proximity to mountain biking or hiking trails, snow or surf resorts, sailing, kayaking, hunting or fishing destinations, farmers markets, caving, climbing or simply access to rural space, etc., can be equal, or possibly greater draws, than purely socio-economic factors.

In essence, VITAC aims to create awareness and demand for companies to set up shop in stakeholder communities. In tech-based marketing this is known as [demand generation](#). [VITAC's ultimate goal is to deliver mature sales-ready leads that can be handed to respective community agencies](#); whereby each community would be responsible for creating their own specific incentives and business support to close prospective relationships.

By cooperatively pooling and leveraging resources, under a common banner with consistent and persistent messaging, stakeholder communities will gain credibility in the eyes of complex and diverse customers who have little awareness or concern to specific regional geography.

Community Profile Template

Positioning Statement	One paragraph on what makes your community great
Photo Gallery	Wow factor! Video or pictorials with scripted overlay
Key Amenities	Business and Lifestyle related
Drive times	To the beach, mountains, etc.
Digital Infrastructure	Broadband services, etc.
Average Home Price	Links to MLS, etc.
Office Lease rates	Links, vacancy rates, etc.
Municipal Taxation	Tax breaks and/or other incentives
Transportation Infrastructure	Airports, etc.
Tech businesses already here	ACME Widgets, etc.
Local contacts	Names and faces
Contact the Mayor	Direct phone and face

Next Steps

Graham Truax:

Following a concept presentation to VICEDA [Quarterly Meeting February 16, 2017 in Ucluelet] an update to this paper was requested, including a breakout of the proposed budget (complete).

As of March 27, 2017 a conference call with the VICEDA Executive took place, WRT Q&A on version 1.3 of this paper. A “preliminary” cost-sharing model was also presented by Jamie Vann Struth of Vann Struth Consulting Group ([here](#)).

Additional conference calls occurred in April leading to preparation for the VICEDA Quarterly Meeting May 16th in Qualicum Beach, and V1.4 of this document. VICEDA Members are continuing to review concept, as presented, and seek to table questions or other inputs.

To better inform the concept, and this positioning paper, I pose the following questions to VICEDA. I/we should consider these matters prior to formalizing next steps.

Q&A

Please reply to the questions below, within this document, by email (graham@innovationisland.ca) or via this [survey form](#).

- 1. Do you feel this is a worthy and equitable project?**
- 2. Are the Objectives of this initiative realistic?**
- 3. Do you feel that secondary benefits, such as tourism exposure, are of value?**
- 4. What are the primary roadblocks to implementation?**
- 5. What are the primary roadblocks to success?**
- 6. What specific skills or relationships could you or your organization bring to the initiative?**
- 7. What external funding mechanisms could fit the project?**
- 8. Other comments, questions or concerns?**