
Association of Kootenay & Boundary Local Governments

Strategic Plan 2015

Arling Consulting Ltd - June 19, 2015



Prepared by:

Jacqueline Arling
Arling Consulting Ltd
P.O. Box 2543, Fernie BC
jacqueline.arling@icloud.com

Introduction

The Association of Kootenay & Boundary Local Governments (AKBLG) Executive met on the 19th June 2015 to create a strategic plan for the Association. The purpose of this plan is to outline where the Association is currently, where they want to be, why, and how they will get there. The following report is a summary of this plan.

Mission Statement

‘To assist our members in providing effective, responsible and accountable local government through dialogue, education and advocacy.’



The Association represents the municipalities and electoral areas of the south-eastern portion of the Province of British Columbia. The Executive board is comprised of nine (9) local government leaders elected from within the membership. There is one part time staff person named Secretary/Treasurer, who assists the Executive and the membership in the implementation of the services of the Association.

The Story so far.....

In the last 3-5 years, AKBLG has made significant strides in creating opportunities for dialogue, education, and advocacy. They have increased their organizational effectiveness through improved decision making, group function, and learnings.

Organizational Effectiveness

The Executive has seen increased organizational effectiveness through annual strategic planning sessions, greater focus and management of the AKBLG budget, and creation of policies to assist in decision making. The change of Executive terms from 1 year to 2 years provides for establishing institutional knowledge and continuity of process. As a result, elected members have the knowledge and ability to draft procedures and policies that will improve both efficiency and effectiveness of services. In 2015, AKBLG became a registered Society. This provides a legitimacy for the association and allows for AKBLG to accept and execute contracts. These actions have demonstrated to the membership, both professionalism and credibility of the Executive. Currently 100% of AKBLG's jurisdiction holds membership in the Association. With the growth of the membership comes an increase in volume of needs and issues. This Executive is a working executive, with leadership and participation on both internal and external committees to address these increased needs of the membership. Working as a team to meet the needs of the membership, they have created an environment to foster new ideas and embrace change.

Education and Dialogue

The AKBLG mission statement identifies the purpose and need for regional education and dialogue opportunities for its members. The annual conference and bi-annual education sessions are both valuable forums for the membership to exchange ideas and create a unified regional perspective on challenges in the Kootenay and boundary areas.

Each year there has been incremental improvements to the conference making it more relevant and attracting more participants. Host communities have been provided with guidance on venue, content, and the social aspects of the conference. In 2015, a new Conference Policy was drafted to assist with future conferences. The Executive has also changed the process for choosing a host community to ensure geographical equity and equal opportunities to showcase area initiatives.

One key project that the AKBLG played a leadership role in was the Columbia River Treaty. Through participation, education, and advocacy, the AKBLG, as Chair, led the successful drafting of this treaty along with its membership, the Columbia Basin Trust and the Provincial Government.

Another key project was the Regional Collaboration Committee initiative 'Building Communities Together'. Through regional conversations and a session at the conference in 2013, communities were introduced to examples of service sharing and given the opportunity to discuss servicing solutions between communities. This project was well received and highlighted the need for further conversations to be had in the future.

Advocacy

Advocacy can be direct or indirect in its efforts to influence decisions at the political, economic, and social establishments. In an effort to question the norm from "what is" to "what should be", the AKBLG has had great success in maintaining a regional focus with their limited capacity. Their focus on providing UBCM and The Province with clear and relevant resolutions has made them a leader in the province. Prioritization of resolutions ensures that only the most significant and pertinent issues are brought forward in the form of resolutions for discussion. As a result, AKBLG is recognized as the voice of local government.

The picture now...

Services

To build on the success of the last 3-5 years, AKBLG focuses on 4 main service themes:

- A. Being a hub or pipeline of information;
- B. Representing the membership at the regional and provincial levels;
- C. Conveners for the membership to create consensus building and opportunities for education, as well as the exchange of ideas and issues; and
- D. Outreach to communities and rural areas by providing services that they might not otherwise receive, and ensuring equal representation at the Executive.

The Executive reviewed these services and identified issues and challenges associations with them. In reflection, this will assist in identification of priorities for the next 2-4 years.

Committees

The AKBLG Constitution and Bylaws lists two Standing Committees - the Nominating and Life Member, and the Resolution Committee. Along with these two Standing Committees, there are Select Committees. Some of these committees are responsible for ongoing functions, while others are time bound, adhoc, or external. Much of the business of the Executive is currently being handled as a 'Committee of the Whole'. This tends to function well as the Executive meets a minimum of 6 times a year and can make decisions as a team at those times. In discussion, there is a need to develop a set of criteria for select committees that will see some of the work being done as a 'Committee of the Whole', and some work by standing committees. There is a desire to seek volunteerism from the membership to sit on various committees that are time bound, and relevant to the AKBLG mission.

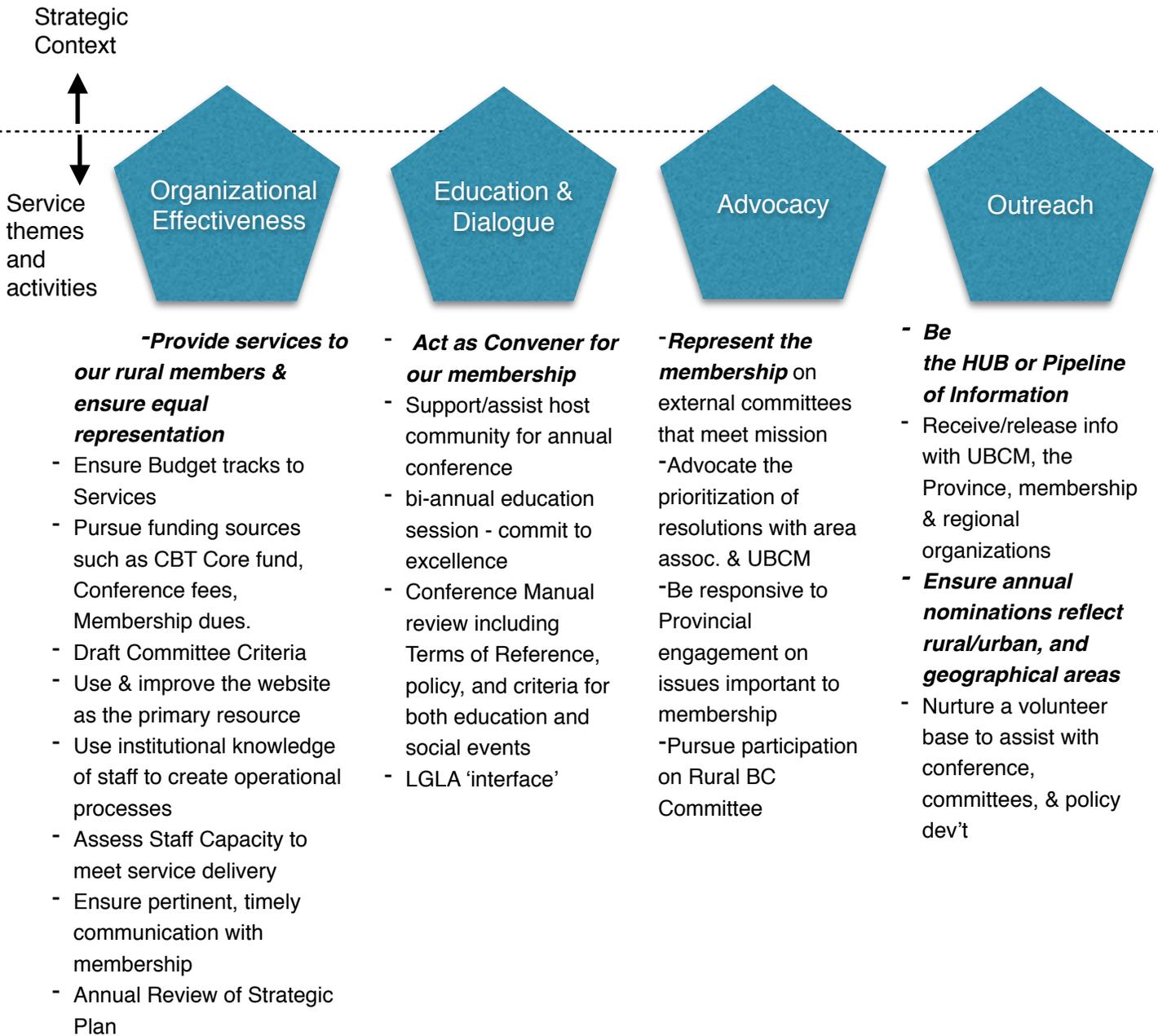
Action Plan for Priorities

The following page is a snap shot of strategies and activities for the AKBLG Executive. It will assist in providing direction for action items in the next 3-5 years. It is fluid and should be reviewed regularly.



Mission

To assist our members in providing effective, responsible and accountable local government through dialogue, education and advocacy.



Appendix 1: Participants

Participants:

Mayor Debra Kozak - City of Nelson - AKBLG President

Mayor Gerry Taft - District of Invermere - AKBLG Vice president

Mayor Jason Clarke - Village of Silverton - Director

Director Rob Gay - Regional District of East Kootenay -
AKBLG Director

Director Garry Jackman - Regional District of Central Kootenay - AKBLG Director

Councillor Ange Qualizza - City of Fernie - Director

Councillor Marguerite Rotvold - Village of Midway - Director

Director Linda Worley - Regional District of Kootenay Boundary -Director

Arlene Parkinson - Secretary /Treasurer, Staff AKBLG

Regrets:

Director Roland Russell - Regional District of Kootenay Boundary - Director

Appendix 2: Agenda June 19 2015

AKBLG Strategic Planning Session

June 19, 2015

8:45 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Facilitators: Jacqueline Arling

Attendees: Debra Kozak, Gerry Taft, Jason Clarke, Rob Gay, Garry Jackman, Ange Qualizza, Marguerite Rotvoid, Linda Worley

Regrets: Roland Russell

Place: Creston, BC

8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Group Introductions and Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What are your hopes for the day?▪ What do you think are the most important issues to work on?
9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.	The Story so far An opportunity to review highlights of the past 3 to 5 years
9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	The picture now An overview of current services and committees Major issues facing each service
10:00 a.m. – 10:15 p.m.	Refreshment Break
10:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Issues and challenges Identify and explore the major issues and challenges for: a. each service and committee b. the organization as a whole
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Lunch Break
12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Action plan for Priorities What are the priorities of this board’s term? What needs to be achieved? By when? Who has to do what and when, to make it happen? If issues can’t be resolved at the meeting, what is the process for how they are to be resolved?
2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Wrap-up

Following the Strategic Session will be a Committee Meeting of the Whole

We are committed to starting on time and ending on time.

Appendix 3: Meeting Notes

Notes of Strategic Planning Meeting

19 June 2015

The following has been recorded verbatim from the notes on the flip charts that were drafted during the session. Minor edits have been done to provide clarification, some verbal dialogue, and correction of spelling errors.

The Story so far.....

The Executive reflected on the success of the past 3-5 years through the following conversation.

1. Greater focus and management of AKBLG budget
2. 100% of jurisdiction holds a membership
3. Annual Executive Strategic Planning sessions
4. Executive Meetings - volume of business has increased. This is a working executive.
5. Executive is working as a team for the needs of the membership.
6. Improvements to the conference - more relevant, more participation.
 - Support the success of the Host community through guidance, content, social aspects and venue.
 - Change in process for how AKBLG chooses a community to host the conference
7. Resolutions - Prioritization.
 - AKBLG are leaders in the province.
 - The credibility and quality of the resolutions at the provincial level.
8. AKBLG - recognized as the voice of local government in the Kootenay and boundary region.
9. Columbia River Treaty - the AKBLG was part of the initiation, partnership, leader, and ensured education and advocacy.
10. Regional Collaboration Committee - Three (3) community conversations/discussions
11. Executive and membership are open to new ideas and change.
12. Executive has reviewed and implemented new policies.
13. Executive Term has changed to 2 years rather than 1 year which provides for institutional knowledge. It allows for the creation of policy and continuity of process.
14. Registered Society - The advantage is the AKBLG can accept and execute contracts. It creates an identify and legitimacy for the Association.
15. AKBLG has encouraged and supported regional collaboration and participation.
16. Professionalism and credibility of the Executive by its members.
17. Success even with the limited capacity of the AKBLG Executive and staff. Focus on the business at the regional level.

The Picture now

Service Themes

1. Hub or Pipeline - as the initial point of contact, AKBLG disseminates/receives information to all members. It acts as a resource for information both internally and externally.
2. Conveners - inclusionary. Provides opportunities for members to exchange with each other through dialogue, advocacy, education, networking, and showcasing projects.
3. Professional Development opportunities for local government
4. Represents members at UBCM and on occasion, the Province. There is two way communication between UBCM, AKBLG, and local governments.
5. Website - a tool for communication. For the 2015 conference, a conference page was linked to the website.
6. Consensus building amongst members - provides support and a venue.
7. Outreach - Representation of the Executive is geographical balanced - Municipal/Rural
8. Represents the membership on external committees at the regional and provincial levels.

Committees

A hand out was provided to all of the participants that listed the Standing and Select Committees. Reflecting on those committees and the AKBLG Constitution and Bylaws, participants discussed criteria for a committee.

1. Should committees have a goal and mandate and possibly an end date?
2. Committees are struck to address the immediate concerns of the membership for the development of an action plan.
3. Should be task orientated, ad hoc
4. Should service a purpose
5. Not subvert democracy or work distribution
6. Committees are great to provide an opportunity to be more involved and participate. Call out to membership.
7. Most things are covered as a Committee of the Whole
8. Present Standing Committees make sense.
9. The function of the Executive to review committee work and relevancy regularly (annually)
10. Deadlines can shape the need for a committee
11. Should the Committee Chair appoint or seek volunteers from the membership?
12. Question to ask:
 - Does the committee meet our mandate/mission?
 - Do we apply criteria to both internal and external committees?
 - Is this work being done by someone else?
 - Would a policy better serve us than a committee?

Issues and Challenges

1. Hub or Pipeline

- Making sure our members know that we are a hub and a great resource
- Staff/volunteer capacity
- Protection of privacy
- Professionalism and careful use
- Freedom of information requests for information both external and internal
- Not being seen as “spammers”
- Need policy around suitable content to promote

2. Conveners

- Defining a set of minimum requirements (accommodation, food/bev) so we don't set smaller communities up to fail
- Move to more technical ways
- Balance between members and guest organization
- Income generation??
- Do not reinvent the wheel - good progress on capturing guidelines, not quite there

3. Professional Development for Local Government

- Encouraging all local government (including multi-term persons) to see the VALUE of and updating professional development
- Costs to members ex: small villages
- Regional geography and climate - time of year for conference and workshops
- avoid repetition
- Keep it interesting by choosing topics, issues, that are broad and encompass the larger membership
- Maintaining/managing expectations versus promoting an event (over/under) hyping
- Followup after event - e.g. For Richer For Poorer Workshop and no regional traction after event. Reason? Capacity of staff and volunteers.
- Or not, if event is just a primer for other events.

4. Representation

- Time to attend meetings in Vancouver
- Cost for smaller communities on a small budget
- Keeping information accurate, relevant, and timely
- Maintaining priority of very small rural issues at organization dominated by much larger communities
- Advancing change and the rural agenda
- Getting support for issues from other associations in the Province.

5. Website

- Not well used or updated often
- Need to make it relevant/current/less static

-
- Cost/benefit - can we measure? \$12,00/yr
 - Time barriers re: staff capacity
 - Promotion of site to members - who does updates etc.
 - Keep it simple and easy to navigate
 - Underused
 - What's a website? youth use something else now (so my sons and daughter tell me)
 - Development of skill set to maintain/develop site in an area where the base technology is constantly changing/shifting.
 - Realize the value and asset of website and opportunities.

6. Consensus Building

- Is this a service or a goal? or just a lucky outcome
- Keeping focuses issue, keep it simple, don't over complicate it.
- Being respectful of issues that don't receive the members prioritization
- Respecting diverse opinions while building partnership
- Recognizing our limitations to reach true/full consensus
- Decision Impact and control
- Balancing this objective with the inherent conflicting ideas and goals in politics.
- Promote regional rather than territorial or specific local.

7. Outreach

- Distance between communities
- Winter Travel
- Time and safety issues around travel for face to face...
- We see/meet with some members much more often than others. Tendency to favour easier connections?
- Getting and maintaining buy-in. Help us help you.
- Positive, productive experience,
- Personalities are important not titles/location
- mentorship is required to attract newly elected to stand for executive
- an unwritten but important policy
- Look at big Picture not territorial rural/municipal
- embrace the similarities - don't focus on differences. All areas of the region are equally important and have needs and attention

8. Representation

- Payment for time/travel
- Capacity
- Time commitment travel, who pays etc?
- Scope creep, when do we say NO!?
- Making sure our committee investment (internal or external) gives/yields return and supports our mandate - relevancy

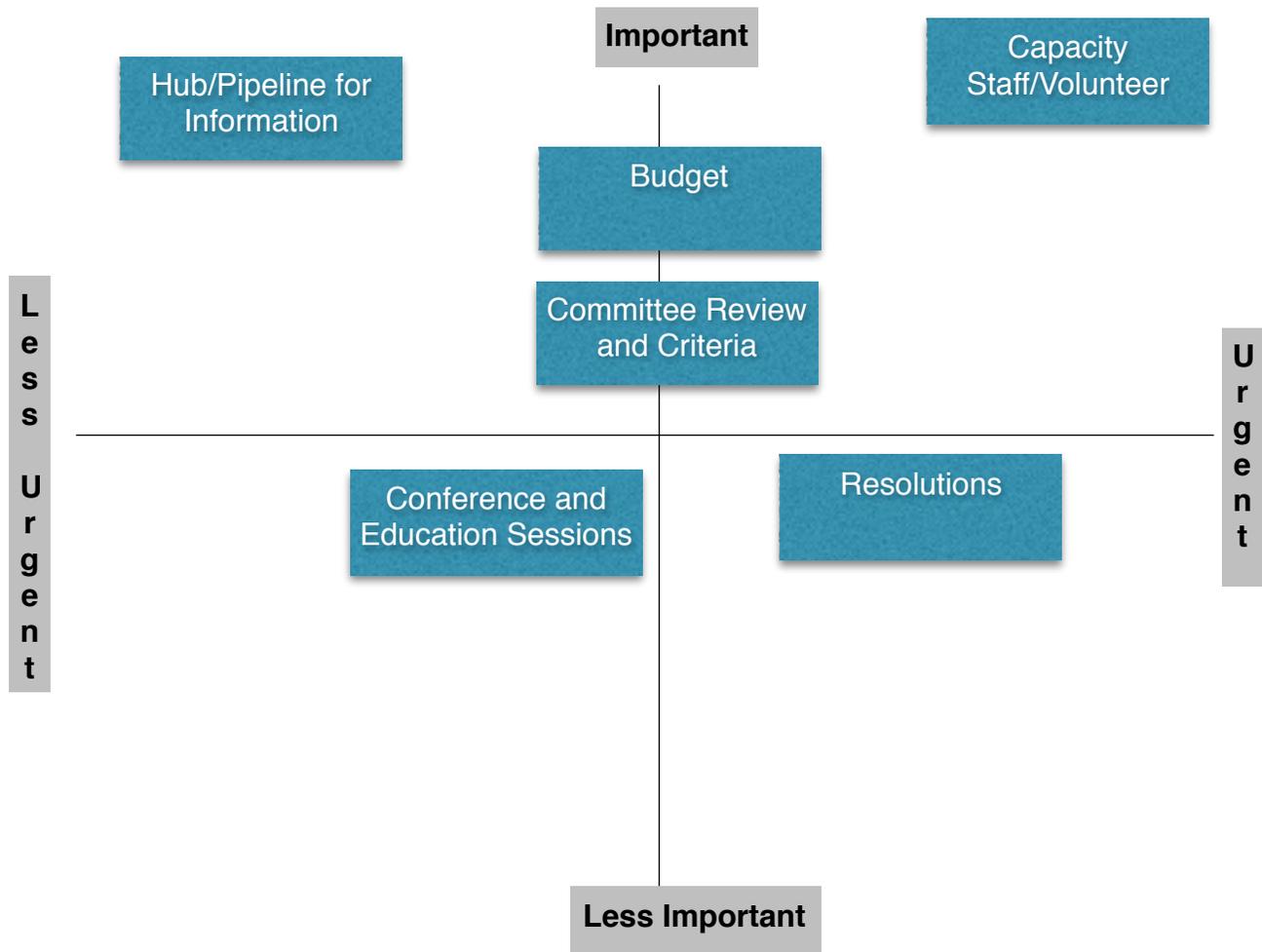
- Possible duplication of effort - appointees from regional boards may provide effective representation for same member communities but be much more timely and interactive for reporting.

Action Plan for Priorities

In this exercise, the Executive considered the questions:

1. What are the priorities of this Executive's term?
2. What needs to be achieved? By when?
3. Who does what?

In the interest of time, some of these questions were not answered. However the Executive did participate in an exercise to priorities the services and classify them as:



Wrap up and Parking Lot

'to track important items that may not be useful to discuss at this time on the agenda'

1. AKBLG - alienation due to lack of knowledge of the association.
 - This item is addressed in the priorities under hub/pipeline for information
2. Provincial consultation sometimes goes to local municipalities rather than AKBLG
 - This is not considered a priority as it is out of scope for the AKBLG at this time
3. How to send emails to ensure the right people get them.
 - Deb/Gerry/Arlene will discuss this protocol following the Strategic Session

In wrap-up, the day was considered a success by the participants. It provided a good opportunity to update the new executive members on the successes over the past 3-5 years and the current services offered by the association. It was a great team building exercise to ensure that working forward, the Executive has a foundation to build from.