

CLUSTER IDENTIFICATION

About Industry Clusters in North Central British Columbia

FAQs

How can I get involved?

There are many ways to be involved in the industry cluster project. One way is to attend a focus group in your community. The dates and times will be announced through the community contacts or please visit the 16-97 Alliance website. Another way is to participate in a one-on-one interview with MNP, or to forward your comments about regional economic development and 'clusters' you feel are important to the growth of the region to the 16-97 Alliance.

Who is involved with the Steering Committee?

Chair – Katherine Scouten, Initiatives Prince George;
Roy Spooner, Innovation Resource Center;
Sharon Cochrane, UNBC;
Ray Gerow, Aboriginal Business Development;
Carla Seguin, District of Mackenzie;
Al Frederick, Village of McBride;
Jim Savage, City of Quesnel

Where can we go for more information?

Contact 16-97 Economic Alliance Coordinator
Fraser Deacon (250) 564-1697

Cluster information is also available at
www.1697economicalliance.ca



we are stronger working together



JULY 2007

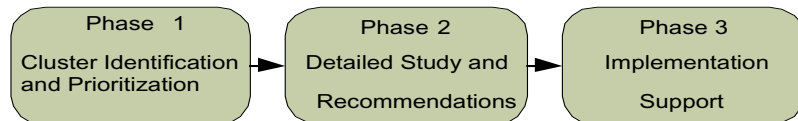
Frequently asked questions

What is an industry cluster?

A group of companies within a region that is made up of both competitors and suppliers. What they have in common is that they serve an industry where the primary customers are from outside of the region. By both doing business and competing, the group of companies in an industry cluster gain a competitive advantage which attracts wealth and spending into the region.

What is the industry cluster project?

The 16-97 Economic Alliance has hired Meyers Norris Penny (MNP) to identify and prioritize competitive industry clusters with potential for economic growth in the north central BC. Phase one of the project was launched in April 2007 and will be completed in November 2007. Phases two and three will result in the development and activation of cluster teams. Cluster teams will bring the major players, including competitors, together to collaboratively approach shared problems and address common barriers that are restricting innovation within the industry.



How will MNP identify industry clusters for our region?

MNP are looking at trend data on the types of businesses in the region and the number of people employed in order to identify what clusters we currently have and how strongly they are represented compared to the Canadian economy overall. They will take the initial list of existing and potential clusters and then through one-on-one interviews and focus groups identify what our short-list of priority emerging clusters might look like. This conversation will help identify new clusters the data may have overlooked. MNP will also backstop the community's needs with their own expertise and knowledge of industry trends to advise us on our selection.

How can studying clusters improve our economy?

Clusters often emerge spontaneously. However it has been found that 'clusters' are only competitive if there continues to be innovation within that cluster. Innovation requires ongoing collaboration between key partners including industry, education institutions and government. This project will start the process of developing collaborative teams aimed at growing key industry clusters in the region. Growth of new clusters will diversify our economy. Collaboration through the work of the cluster teams will attract investment aimed at creating jobs and circulating wealth in the region.

What are examples of industry clusters?

The 16-97 region today is a major exporter of lumber to global markets. What has contributed to the competitiveness of our region is the 'clustering' of companies such as milling, trucking, logging, machine shops, engineering and construction, technology development, financial companies, etc.

In Edmonton, the transportation and logistics cluster has attracted investment by new and existing businesses. Many other examples of cluster development can be found in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. It can take many years for new clusters to develop to the point of becoming competitive internationally.

The Inland Container Opportunity Study was a collaborative project that identified key issues driving the development of a transportation and logistics cluster in Northern BC. By working together, CN, Prince George Airport, Prince Rupert Port Authority, government and industry helped define the business case for intermodal services in Northern BC that arise from our wood products manufacturing sector.

Why does the 16-97 Alliance think this is an important project?

Our region's greatest economic risk is our dependence on a very few industry clusters, some of which are no longer creating jobs at the same rate as they have in the past. The economic developers driving this project believe strongly that cluster development is a real and practical way of developing new competitive clusters because they have seen it work in other places similar to Northern BC.

