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New Kootenay Regional Film Sector Study to Explore Attracting Film Production, Establishing Local Film Studio Spaces and Sector Development

Kootenays, B.C. (August 15, 2023) - Work has begun on the new Kootenay Regional Film Sector Study, after being awarded \$35,000 in funding by the [Economic Trust of the Southern Interior \(ETSI-BC\)](#) in July 2023.

Last year, film-related production spending was [\\$3.62 billion](#) in British Columbia, but the majority of that money was spent outside of the Kootenays. [Nelson Civic Theatre Society](#) (NCTS) and [Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association](#) (KRTA) are the partners behind the [Kootenay Regional Film Commission](#) (KRFC) and seek to understand and increase production volume in the Kootenays. Now the KRFC welcomes further collaboration from [Community Futures Central Kootenay](#) (CFCK) to undertake the [ETSI-BC](#)-funded study.

“Attracting film production to the Kootenays means a boost for local hospitality, transportation and tourism businesses, and the hiring of local talent, who often have to travel outside the region for work,” said John Wittmayer, Kootenay Regional Film Commissioner. “This study will explore the challenges and opportunities of it all, and the possibility of turning vacant spaces into studio spaces.”

Jointly conducted by Wittmayer and Ron LeBlanc, Slokan Valley Economic Development Coordinator, the study will investigate opportunities and challenges of attracting motion picture production; establishing local industry assets like film studio space and production offices; managing sector development work; devising a transferable film studio model with design and costs; and leveraging the study to support infrastructure funding requests to partners like the provincial [REDIP](#) program and [Columbia Basin Trust](#). The study will build on insights gained by [Creative BC's 2019 BC Motion Picture Industry Below-the-Line Labour Market Study](#).

CFCK is involved in this project to support the regional film sector, and in doing so help diversify the local economy,” said LeBlanc. “Attracting even one small feature film can bring in significant production dollars, employ local talent, benefit the local economy, and create opportunities in our arts, culture and tech sectors.”

For instance, Wittmayer brought a [Hallmark film](#) to Fernie, BC, in November 2022. The production spent \$1,483,740, with a significant \$932,956 spent on employing local labour (film crew, catering, accommodations, transport), injecting a huge boost into the local economy.

[Kootenay Film](#) comprises two primary components: the KRFC, established in 2021 and funded by the provincial film commission at [Creative BC](#), and NCTS' [Kootenay Screen-Based Industry \(KSBI\) initiative](#), initiated in 2016. NCTS Executive Director, Eleanor Stacey, explains how this study will build on the momentum of these efforts: “The KRFC and KSBI are layered projects working together to create a sustainable film ecosystem in our rural region. While the KRFC seeks to attract projects, the KSBI fosters opportunities to make living and working in film

possible for residents. Both share a common goal to ensure that the region has the tools to accommodate film projects of all sizes and designs. This study will tell us if we have the capacity to develop and maintain more capital industry assets in our rural region.”

Determining the feasibility of establishing local industry assets such as film studio space, production offices and pre-production capability could considerably advance the local film sector’s competitiveness. The KSBI Program Manager, Lynn Trinh, expresses, “The local crew has always demonstrated a desire for more film infrastructure. This research will be valuable in identifying new opportunities to support local talent wanting to take their projects to the next level, while getting to stay in the Kootenays and grow their careers.”

“KRTA has a mandate to foster sustainable growth and development of the tourism economy for the benefits of all tourism businesses and communities in the region,” said Wendy Van Puymbroeck, Director of Industry Development & Destination Marketing at KRTA. “This partnership role in the Kootenay Regional Film Commission is fulfilling that mandate as we work together to attract film productions to the area.”

Further partners and funders of the project include the [Nelson and Area Economic Development Partnership](#) and the [Columbia Basin Trust](#).

The study is expected to be completed by October 15, 2023.

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