

ISLANDS TRUST

2025 OPERATIONAL REVIEW

REPORT TO TRUST COUNCIL

Rueben Bronee
Chief Administrative Officer

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INTRODUCTION

When I joined Islands Trust as its chief administrative officer (CAO), it quickly became apparent to me that the organization faces some significant operational challenges. Based on my initial observations and feedback from staff and trustees, issues identified include but are not limited to:

- Staff workload and capacity in some parts of the organization.
- Staff turnover and retention.
- Not effectively advancing work on some strategic priorities.
- Not delivering some projects within planned timelines.
- Inefficient or outdated administrative policies, procedures and systems.

These issues are interrelated and generally fall into the category of operational challenges, meaning they are outside the political accountability of the elected leadership of Islands Trust Council. But they have a direct impact on delivery of the strategic priorities of Trust Council, on fulfilment of Islands Trust's mandate, and on the public's trust and confidence in Islands Trust. In some cases, the potential actions necessary to start to resolve these issues require direction and decisions from Trust Council.

With the endorsement of Trust Council and within my authority as CAO, I initiated an internal operational review of Islands Trust with two objectives:

1. To assess and validate operational challenges that are impacting Islands Trust's effectiveness, and the factors behind those challenges.
2. To identify and prioritize the most viable and impactful initial options to respond to operational challenges.

This review did not consider questions of the scope of Islands Trust's mandate or the merit of priorities set by Trust Council, Executive Committee and Islands Trust Conservancy Board. Rather this review focused on the extent to which staff are able to deliver on those priorities and the resulting work, in addition to the broader operational work of Islands Trust.

It's important to note from the outset that, while this report necessarily focuses on problems, I am confident that Islands Trust delivers on its core responsibilities on a day-to-day basis. This is thanks in large part to its deeply dedicated professional staff, who work diligently to do the essential work of Islands Trust. Any critical commentary of our performance in a given area should not be seen as a criticism of the staff currently doing their best to deliver that work. The fundamental question for this review is whether and how that work can be done more effectively, particularly in an increasingly complex and more demanding context. Similarly, when I talk about a need to be more effective and efficient in our work, that doesn't necessarily mean we are ineffective or inefficient now. It is simply to acknowledge that there is an opportunity and need for us to improve our performance in some areas.

Senior staff were invited to provide comment on a draft of this report, and the final version reflects careful consideration of their valuable input. However, as CAO I am wholly responsible for the content, conclusions and recommendations provided. A summary of the actions and recommendations was also shared in confidence with all staff prior to presentation of this report to Trust Council.

Trustees and all staff also had an opportunity to provide input into this review (see Appendix 1 for an overview of the approach taken). Their ideas and perspectives were also valuable and fully considered. There is every indication that trustees and staff generally share a recognition of the need to make changes, and a genuine willingness to do so. The problem is making that necessary work a priority amidst the existing demands that are already stretching the capacity of the organization.

In part this challenge can be addressed by seeking out efficiencies in operational processes and procedures, which staff will focus on doing. But ultimately, when the work to be done exceeds the capacity of the people needed to do it, a lasting solution also requires consideration of two primary options:

1. Do less, either by stopping or delaying work and refocusing capacity on a narrower set of priorities.
2. Add capacity through targeted investment in those areas with the most acute pressures.

The most effective path forward is a combination of both of these options. Reducing workload can help free up capacity, especially to help implement solutions to foundational operational issues. But relying solely on this has obvious impacts on the organization's ability to deliver on priorities and meet public expectations. On the other hand, while additional investment can help overcome short-term pressures, spending more money on inefficient ways of operating is an unsustainable band-aid solution that only delays the need for more substantial changes.

The staff actions and recommendations to Trust Council included in this report are chosen in recognition of a need to be focused in the response to the challenges at hand. There are many more opportunities for improvement than are included here. But enabling actual change requires a strategic approach. Effective strategy works by sifting through all the good ideas and focusing resources and energy on those few that will have the most benefit. There is also inevitably a catch-22 aspect in that the solutions to capacity pressures in themselves add more work in the short-term. So careful consideration is also needed of the practical reality of what can be achieved. The actions and recommendations set out at the end of this report are those options assessed to have the most positive potential impact while still being realistically achievable.

I am acutely aware of the responsibility Islands Trust has to be thoughtful and responsible in its budget management. Any recommendations involving a funding increase are only presented where there is no other viable solution within existing resources. When I discussed proceeding with this review with Trust Council, the request was that I bring forward what I believe is actually needed to address current priorities, and so that has framed my approach. In the few cases where I have recommended new investment, nothing I am recommending is a "luxury" option. Rather I am proposing steps that, if supported, would bring Islands Trust to what I view as a minimum level required to be reasonably effective in that business area.

I have not considered staffing reductions as an option for this review given that the primary concerns that gave rise to it were about the lack of capacity to deliver the work assigned to-date by Trust Council, Executive Committee, local trust committees and the Conservancy Board. Nor do I believe Islands Trust is over-staffed in general or in any given department. The staffing and overall budget for Islands Trust expand and contract, in large part, in relation to the aspirations and ambitions of Council. My general assessment is that any significant reduction in staffing in particular would require a significant reconsideration of a number of major projects and, to some

extent, the current interpretation of Islands Trust's core functions and mandate. Should Trust Council wish to consider reducing staffing costs, that would entail a separate review with a different focus. I am prepared to undertake that work if Council provides that direction.

I also acknowledge that ideally this report would have come six months ago to more effectively inform the current budget planning cycle from the outset. So, there may seem to be some disconnect between my recommendations and some of the budget requests coming forward to the same Trust Council meeting as this report. However, there is nothing being proposed for this year's budget that I do not believe is needed to address Council's current priorities and advance vital work. The decision for Council is whether these are all priorities worth funding in the coming year. I hope that my recommendations help make that decision somewhat easier.

There is no simple single action to resolve the operational challenges Islands Trust faces. Doing so will require both commitment and compromise by staff and trustees. My hope is this report serves as a starting point to address some of the most pressing operational issues. Some may never be entirely resolved to everyone's satisfaction, and other new ones will inevitably arise over time. But there is a path that can help put Islands Trust on a more sustainable operational footing, so we are better able to meet our responsibilities now and adapt to changes in the future.

THE CORE ISSUE: CAPACITY

This report responds a number of operational challenges that impact Islands Trust's work. But issues like not advancing work at the pace desired, inefficient processes, outdated policies and staff turnover are symptoms of something more fundamental. Underlying and compounding all these challenges is one clear issue: there is not sufficient capacity to do all the work that is currently expected and needed.

At its most basic level, this issue is a combination of two factors – staffing and volume of work. For that reason, this report is not organized around the organizational department structure. Rather I have devoted the first section to a discussion of Islands Trust's human resources context, with some selected examples of workload pressures. Then I provide an overview of the issues in core areas of work I believe pose the most acute risk. However, the underlying issue impacts all parts of the organization. For example, while there is not a section dedicated to financial management, that function is affected by many of the broader operational and administrative issues identified.

I give credit to the current Trust Council for supporting requests in recent years for some needed investments, particularly in staffing and technology improvements. That some of those investments have not yet been fully implemented because staff haven't had the time to do so is, in itself, an indication of the extent of the challenge at hand. Despite recent investments, in some key areas there remains a lack of adequate staff capacity contributing to a range of other problems that are undermining organizational performance.

Operational issues are often hard to resolve precisely because they are just that: operational issues. The solutions and their benefits aren't always publicly visible, may require net new investment, and can take time to be fully achieved. They inevitably require making difficult choices between public-facing priorities and improving internal performance. But it's essential to keep in mind that improving internal performance enables more effective delivery on those public-facing priorities.

Having worked for much of my career on public service renewal initiatives and through several major organizational reviews, I know from experience these issues aren't unique to Islands Trust. Any public sector organization must navigate a complex balancing act between its legislated responsibilities, political priorities, public expectations and responsible use of public funds. There will almost always be more work than there is available time, money and staff to complete it. If not managed appropriately, this can have a range of impacts, including:

- Work is delayed or does not get completed.
- Work that does get done may be of sub-par quality because it is rushed and inadequately resourced.
- Staff are over-worked, resulting in high turnover, absenteeism and decreased productivity, further impacting organizational performance.
- Core operational functions (e.g. records management) are overlooked in favour of supporting higher priority work.
- All of the above impede the organization's ability to effectively adapt and respond to changes in its broader operating context – both those we can foresee and the unexpected.

I believe all these impacts are currently at play within Islands Trust's operations to some degree. If left unaddressed, over time these challenges tend to become increasingly serious and all the more difficult to eventually resolve. The need to make changes is not just to improve performance today but also to ensure Islands Trust is operationally better able to meet and respond to future demands.

These challenges are also not new. In my research I reviewed a number of previous reports that examined aspects of Islands Trust's operations and performance over the last 20 years. Despite these reviews and any changes that were made as a result, some enduring issues persist. For example, a 2006 Neilson-Welch Consultants review of Corporate Services notes:

"The insufficiency of staff resources relative to Council's demands has certain consequences for the Trust, many of which are already being realized. The first is that not all of Council's demands are being met...A second and related consequence is that the items which are receiving attention are not being addressed to anyone's satisfaction.

*There is a clear and almost unanimous perception on the part of trustees and staff interviewed that the organization's work on many items...is less than stellar, simply because of the lack of resources available to do the kind of work that the organization wishes to do and is capable of doing. Put simply, the resources that are available to handle the variety of Council's demands are spread too thinly to achieve the desired results."*¹

While the Neilson-Welch report was focused on one division of Islands Trust at the time, I believe it is accurate to say the exact same issues remain today across the organization, almost two decades later. If anything, they have only become more acute.

¹ *Islands Trust Corporate Services Review Report*, Neilson-Welch Consulting Inc., 2006, pages 3-4

HOW WE GOT HERE

AN EVOLVING CONTEXT

Like any organization, Islands Trust operates against a backdrop of shifting social, economic and political dynamics that influence its work for better or worse. This ever-evolving operating context is inevitable, but it is becoming increasingly complex.

Broad external factors that impact Islands Trust (and governments agencies at all levels) include but are not limited to:

- Rapidly changing technology, which has the potential to allow for operational improvements but is also radically reshaping public expectations of transparency, service delivery, communications and engagement.
- Changing expectations of government institutions, including a prolonged and continued decline in public trust and confidence. Public attitudes toward government agencies are far different now than they were even a decade ago, let alone when Islands Trust was created in 1974.
- Shifting demographics, both generally and within the Trust Area. With these changes come different and sometimes competing ideas and aspirations for the future of Trust Area communities, which in turn impacts public expectations of Islands Trust.
- The recognition of the need for real and lasting reconciliation and relationship-building with Indigenous Peoples, and related legislative and policy obligations.
- A general trend toward greater social and political polarization and the resulting impact on policy development.
- The impact of local, provincial and national economic trends and challenges, such as the pressure for affordable housing solutions.

Layered onto these dynamics is the practical reality of a four-year local election cycle, with each Trust Council bringing its own priorities and perspectives on Islands Trust's role. Changing political priorities at the provincial level can also impact Islands Trust, introducing new expectations and accountabilities. This has been seen in recent years in significant legislation and policy changes related to reconciliation, housing and accessibility.

Internal factors also have a profound impact on the operating context of Islands Trust. Many of these are discussed in more detail in sections of this report, particularly in the case of human resources.

ORGANIZATIONAL INERTIA AND ENTROPY

In his influential book *Good Strategy Bad Strategy*, consultant Richard Rumelt writes about the dynamics of organizational inertia and entropy. These can be helpful metaphors for how organizations do or do not adapt and evolve to their operating context.

In science, Newton's first law of motion says that inertia is the tendency of a body at rest to remain at rest or, if in motion, to remain in motion unless acted on by a sufficient external force. Entropy is a measure of a system's level of disorder. And the second law of thermodynamics says that, if left unchecked, the level of entropy or disorder in a closed system tends to increase over time.

Organizational inertia describes the organization's unwillingness or inability to adapt to the changing context around it. Organizational entropy represents the tendency of an organization, if not carefully and intentionally managed, to become less focused and less organized over time (and consequently less effective).

To the extent these dynamics may apply for Islands Trust, my assessment is that any inertia at play operationally is more due to inability than unwillingness to change. The current Trust Council may have demonstrated a desire to adapt and respond to our external context, for example in the work to update the Policy Statement. But operationally, the lack of available resources, direction and a cultural imperative to adapt has only made it harder to evolve how the organization functions on a day-to-day basis. The opposing force needed to counter the inertia of the status quo only becomes greater over time.

Organizational entropy may be more of a factor in that, because so many operational issues have gone unresolved for some time, the organization is experiencing a trend toward diminishing effectiveness and efficiency. As the foundational building blocks of operations become increasingly out of date, they become impediments rather than enablers to the greater changes needed to improve performance. As a simple and practical example, it is hard to improve the process for managing and preparing meeting materials if the technology applications that support that work are not fully functional.

An effectively managed organization recognizes and acts on the need for continual maintenance of its foundational processes, practices, systems and infrastructure. It is fair to say there has been a recognition of this at Islands Trust in recent years by both staff and trustees. But, as detailed elsewhere in this report, it is the action that has been missing – again, due in large part to limited capacity.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

There is also an aspect of the current pressures resulting from the organizational culture I found when I started as CAO. Islands Trust staff have a deep commitment to its mandate and the communities they serve. They consistently demonstrate a willingness to go above and beyond to strive to meet the needs and expectations of trustees. And in my experience trustees regularly express their appreciation for that commitment and effort.

In my conversations with staff, however, some problematic aspects of the prevailing organizational culture have emerged that do a disservice to staff and Council – and by extension to the public.

For example, in developing business cases as part of the annual budget cycle, historically the staff priority appears to have been minimizing the potential cost of a project, including being overly optimistic in the assessment of the resourcing and time needed to deliver. While this is undoubtedly well-intentioned, the feasibility of any given project needs to be based on a real-world assessment of the operating context, rather than a best-case scenario. Fiscal responsibility is important, but there is more to it than presenting the lowest possible cost. True fiscal responsibility means accurately and realistically estimating the true cost of delivery from the outset, thus enabling more effective decision-making and better longer-term budget planning and management.

Similarly, there appears to have been a general reluctance or lack of empowerment on the part of senior staff to say no to new projects, even when it is clear they would be difficult to deliver with available resources. A positive and service-oriented mindset is a good thing. But again, it becomes a negative influence if it leads to unrealistic expectations that can't be met. This only results in disappointment and frustration on the part of the public, trustees and staff themselves.

This issue seems to have arisen, at least in part, from a leadership expectation that staff would simply work whatever hours were needed to deliver on the direction of Islands Trust's decision-making bodies and a reluctance to acknowledge or meaningfully address workload pressures. To be clear, I do not believe this necessarily stems from the expectations of the current Council. On the contrary, trustees have repeatedly expressed concerns to me about staff workload and an acknowledgement that, as one trustee commented, it is unrealistic to expect a "hero level" of staff work to become the standard operating practice. That level of expectation creates a very real risk of staff burnout and increased staff turnover that, as discussed later in this report, ultimately undermines performance.

It is entirely appropriate, and my expectation, that staff make every effort to be responsive to Trust Council's direction and to do so in as timely and cost-effective a manner as possible. But it would also be a disservice to Trust Council and the public to not provide an objective and realistic assessment of what is really needed to deliver the work. It is staff's role, particularly my role and that of senior staff, to tell trustees not what they want to hear, but what they need to know to ensure they make fully informed decisions.

Of course, that also requires a willingness on the part of trustees to hear that advice for what it is and not see it as staff resistance or opposition. I acknowledge staff have a key role in ensuring that is not the case. When I reference staff saying no to projects, it is my expectation that any such response would be accompanied with a clear rationale and viable options for how Council's

desired outcome might otherwise be achieved. The more staff demonstrate they are providing well-thought-out advice and options, the more confident trustees can be in that advice and in their decision making.

Staff have also highlighted the need for greater collaboration across the organization. There is generally a collaborative and highly collegial culture within Islands Trust, but this doesn't always translate into the daily practice and delivery of work. I believe this is another symptom of limited capacity. In the pressure created by high workloads, there is not always sufficient time and attention given to ensuring collaboration and coordination across all the teams that will be impacted by a given project or initiative.

It is easy to see how these problematic cultural dynamics may have evolved from a positive "can do" mindset. But it reached a point where a delivery-at-all-costs expectation has clearly taken its toll on organizational performance. In my work with senior staff, we have begun to work on shifting this mindset to retain the positive aspect while also building a culture that sets realistic and achievable expectations and enables continuous improvement to operational fundamentals.

PART 1: HUMAN RESOURCES CONTEXT

In the first part of this report, I provide an overview of aspects of the human resources context of Islands Trust because it is the foundation of our operations and also a key component of the challenges we face.

ISLANDS TRUST EMPLOYMENT CONTEXT

In B.C., the *Public Service Act* sets out the foundation for employment in the provincial government and a range of agencies, boards and commissions, including Islands Trust. As an agency under the *Public Service Act*, Islands Trust and its employees are subject to the policies of the BC Public Service Agency (PSA), including compensation and classification. It also means Islands Trust is able to have many core human resource functions administered by the PSA, such as staff payroll, labour relations and aspects of recruitment. This allows Islands Trust to support its human resource operations with one dedicated staff person and a related administrative support position.

In addition to the operational benefits of falling under the *Public Service Act*, employees benefit from being part of the BC Public Service because it provides access to career opportunities within core provincial government, provincial employee pension plan and benefits, and inclusion in the provincial government's collective agreements with applicable unions.

But there are also drawbacks. Islands Trust employee compensation follows the provincial government pay and classification framework. While Islands Trust holds a unique position different from local governments in many respects, from a talent perspective we tend to compete mostly with other local government employers. In general, local governments in B.C. often pay more for similar roles. Pay increases negotiated by the PSA, particularly for unionized staff, are typically funded for government ministries. Because Islands Trust staff costs are not provincially funded, it is obligated to cover the cost from within its own budget even though we have no influence in collective bargaining. And, while employees benefit from being able to move seamlessly into jobs within core government, this ease of mobility also impacts retention for Islands Trust.

There are also challenges created by the reality of Islands Trust being a relatively small organization. A single employee departure in Islands Trust has a more substantial operational impact than it might in a larger organization. With the limited exception of the planning team, we are "one deep" for most roles, meaning there is only one person capable of doing each job. When an employee retires, resigns, or takes a temporary assignment in core government, there is often nobody who can easily pick up the work until the vacancy is filled.

I have been asked if it would be possible to reassign existing staff to support new priority work or fill vacant positions. As a small organization with many highly specialized roles requiring specific skill sets and experience, there is limited opportunity for this. We cannot, for example, simply reassign a planner to fill a financial position. There are also labour and collective agreement limitations that need to be carefully considered. What we can do more easily is reassign positions that become vacant to other higher priority work when they arise. This is something I will consider depending on final decisions on the budget and recommendations in this report, and as an ongoing practice.

Our small size and structure also mean there are limited development and career advancement opportunities for staff, which provides a further incentive for them to pursue opportunities with other employers. While employees can easily access opportunities within the provincial government, provincial pensions are also transferable to the municipal pension plan, local government benefits are comparable, pay is often higher, and local governments are often larger organizations and therefore offer greater advancement potential. And the work with a local government is often more focused despite the broader scope of services they deliver. For planning staff, for example, working for a local government can provide better pay with work that is focused on a single official community plan, rather than doing planning across multiple local trust areas. For some staff, this diversity of experience is attractive. But for others it can be a deterrent.

The very nature of the work we ask staff to do in Islands Trust is also necessarily more complex in other aspects. Planning staff take on a range of tasks that comparable positions in local or provincial government typically do not do. For example, they serve as the primary staff liaison for local trust committees, doing not just planning but also administrative, broad policy and operational support for local trust committee meetings. And they have a higher degree of public exposure and interaction.

As a result, they sometimes find themselves navigating complex and highly contentious environments. They are also sometimes subject to direct, personal and public criticism of their work in a way that is less likely to happen in larger government organizations. This can give rise to very real concerns about our ability to ensure a safe and respectful workplace for staff, as well as trustees. While related incidents are isolated, they nonetheless present a risk for the employer and can also have a profound impact on staff that does not help with our recruitment and retention.

There is a related and broader dynamic in how Islands Trust staff and trustees interact. In provincial and most local government contexts, elected officials do not have anywhere near the same level of day-to-day interaction with staff. In many cases, outside of formal meeting settings, local elected officials only interact directly with the CAO. In others, that interaction may extend to the director-level, but even there it is typically only with the awareness of the CAO.

In Islands Trust, trustees regularly interact with staff at virtually every level of the organization, often without any awareness of senior staff. This is a practical necessity given the unique structure of Islands Trust and how it functions, particularly with regard to local trust committees. With 13 local trust committees, a 26-member Trust Council, and the Conservancy Board, it isn't viable to require trustees to only advance inquiries and requests through the CAO or a relevant director.

However, I do believe there is still a need to establish some more structure and guidance around the trustee/staff relationship than currently exists. I don't want to impede effective engagement between staff and trustees, and I am not aware of any instances since I joined Islands Trust where the existing dynamic has created serious issues. But I nonetheless do worry about the potential risks of the current level of informality and familiarity in some situations. These risks can include the potential for conflicts of interest, inappropriate influence on decision-making, and interpersonal issues emerging from an unbalanced power dynamic.

The respective codes of conduct that apply to professional staff and elected trustees can help mitigate these risks. However, while a direct and informal level of interaction may benefit both staff and trustees on a daily basis, there is also a very valid reason for the separation that exists in most

government environments. For the purposes of this discussion of our employment context, I also believe this level of staff exposure to elected officials is a potential barrier to recruitment and retention of capable staff who may be more accustomed to and comfortable with a more traditional public service environment where the staff and political levels are more siloed.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Trustees and staff have raised concerns about staff retention and turnover, and this is not just a perception issue. In fiscal year 2024/25, Islands Trust had a head count of 65 staff. During that year there were eight voluntary departures of staff leaving Islands Trust, plus an additional seven staff who left for permanent positions elsewhere in the BC Public Service. This equates to an exit rate of 23% last year alone. The number of staff departures was even higher in the previous fiscal year. By comparison, the exit rate within the core provincial government is approximately 8.5%. And global HR consultant Mercer reports the average exit rate for Canadian employers in 2024 was 12%.

Each exit has a profound ripple effect on the organization. Studies estimate that each departure costs approximately half that position's annual salary when considering the cost of recruitment, lost productivity and the impact on organizational performance. So, while it is a rough estimate, the cost of the 15 employees who left Islands Trust in 2024/25 would equate to an impact of approximately \$500,000.

This may also be a conservative estimate because several key hiring processes in the past year have taken more than six months to complete. Factors behind this include the time-consuming classification process administered by the PSA, the workload of the hiring managers simply not affording them enough time to focus on completing recruitment, and a lack of suitable applicants. The challenge of filling vacancies in a timely manner was one of the top operational issues identified by staff in my engagement with them for this review.

In total, Islands Trust had 87 staffing changes in fiscal 2024/25, despite having just 65 staff. This includes not just exits, but also onboarding new hires, temporary assignments (both outgoing and backfilling the resulting vacancies), and internal organizational changes. And this does not include the impact of instances of extended staff leave, which may arise for a variety of reasons.

As noted above, turnover can have a disproportionate impact on some functions more than others given the lack of organizational depth. For example, the Information Services team had two of its three positions vacant for an extended period this past year due to a combination of circumstances. This had a significant impact on a range of projects and support for day-to-day work that rippled across the organization.

One of these two vacancies has since been filled, with the other nearing resolution. But just the process of filling the vacancies has taken months because of the hiring supervisor's limited time, a highly competitive labour market for these types of jobs, and the time-consuming PSA process to have updates to job descriptions processed. As a consequence, we had to rely on increased support from contracted service providers, which has a budget impact.

The volume of staff movement creates significant instability and reduced productivity while staff get up to speed in new roles. It also impacts the productivity of supervisors and other team members who spend time orienting and training new hires. We see this impact particularly in the case of the Salt Spring Island office and ongoing staffing pressures there. While recent moves have started to bring some staffing stability to the Salt Spring office, there nonetheless is clearly a challenge there that we need to seek to resolve.

For many staff the opportunity to work in and with the diverse communities across the Trust Area is a very appealing part of their jobs. And there is great value in Islands Trust having a physical presence on the islands in the form of the Gabriola Island and Salt Spring Island offices. However, the location of these offices can be a potential barrier to recruitment and retention. Attempts to recruit staff who live on the islands have had limited success, particularly in recent years. This shouldn't be surprising given that, even for Salt Spring, the islands offer a very limited labour pool. Consequently, a significant number of staff in the two island offices do not currently live on the islands.

This means they must travel, at their own expense, to attend the office. Islands Trust's implementation of flexible work-from-home arrangements, which I fully support, helps mitigate this issue to some degree. But it still presents one more obstacle to recruiting staff to those two offices, just as any sort of commute factors into the decision for candidates in accepting any job. Similarly, the need for travel for many staff to support local trust committee meetings and other operations is a potential barrier given the distance often to be travelled and issues like infrequent ferry service. The option of virtual attendance again helps in some cases. But the travel requirements, and corresponding long hours, for some planning, bylaw enforcement and Conservancy staff during fieldwork season are much more than what would be expected in a typical local government setting in the region.

If there is an upside to high turnover, it is that it creates opportunity for advancement for other staff. But there are challenges with this as well. For every employee we promote, we provide them an opportunity to develop their skills and also likely help retain them for longer. But there are also concerns that we are sometimes accelerating development of staff who may not possess all the necessary skills for a more advanced role – and arguably without the necessary training support. This also only serves to perpetuate staff shortages because each internal promotion just leaves another vacancy to fill. Often the person who was promoted ends up doing both their new and old jobs for several months while we recruit their replacement.

Finally, in recent years, several longtime employees have retired, taking with them their depth of experience and expertise. Several more retirements from key roles are expected within the next two years. While this creates the potential benefit of bringing in new staff with fresh ideas and skill sets, it is also a loss of institutional memory and experience that is hard to replace.

STAFFING LEVELS AND COSTS

Islands Trust has approximately 65 staff² (see the organizational chart in Appendix 2). This has been relatively consistent over the past five fiscal years. Longer term, since 2016 we have seen growth in the total number of staff – from an average headcount of 55 in 2015/16 to 63 in the current fiscal year. This represents a 15% increase in staffing. For comparison, employment in B.C.’s overall public sector has grown by 55% since 2017, including a 45% increase in provincial government headcount. Of course there are broader considerations at play in the provincial context, but the comparison at least provides some general perspective on the modest growth in Islands Trust staffing over time. Comparable data for local government employment is not readily available.

When we look across the departments within Islands Trust, staffing levels include:

- Planning Services (including Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement): 36
- Trust Area Services (including Islands Trust Conservancy): 17
- Financial and Employee Services: 6
- Legislative and Information Services: 7
- Executive Office: 3

The staffing allocation to some extent reflects the evolution of the organization over its history. When it was established, Islands Trust was first and foremost a planning agency and this is reflected in the predominance of planning staff. While planning remains a core business function today, what has changed over time is the growing need to support Trust Council and its broader strategic agenda. It is in this latter aspect that resourcing arguably hasn’t kept pace with the scope of work.

This is illustrated in one basic way by looking at the Follow-Up Action Lists for Trust Council and Executive Committee. In both cases, the vast majority of projects on those lists are assigned to Trust Area Services to action, often related to Council’s highest priority areas such as advocacy, reconciliation and the Policy Statement. But, outside the Conservancy, that team has only five staff in addition to the director. As a consequence, many of the projects are unactioned or delayed.

Of Islands Trust’s 69 positions, four positions are currently vacant and two are temporary co-op jobs that typically work for only a four-month term over the summer. The budget for the 2025/26 fiscal year included funding for all 69 positions.

Since 2016, salary and benefit budgets have increased by about 66% for the Islands Trust, while the total budget has increased about 54%. However, despite this increase, staffing costs have remained relatively consistent as a share of the total Islands Trust budget, averaging 60% over the last decade (see Appendix 3 for details). This shows that, generally speaking, Islands Trust has

² There are different and distinct ways to count staffing:

1. Headcount: the number of individual actual employees at any given time, which may fluctuate as staff leave or join the organization.
2. Positions: the number of "boxes on the org chart" - some of which may be vacant at any given time. Each employee is assigned to a position.
3. FTEs (Full-Time Equivalents): used in budget documents, this represents a measurement that quantifies employee capacity by converting various work hours into standardized full-time units. But one FTE can equate to more than one position or individual employee. For example, three co-op student positions of four months duration equal one FTE.

increased spending on staff in proportion to the growth in overall expenditures. It's important to note that not all of the increase in staff spending is the result of adding new positions. Much of it comes from annual increases under the collective agreements negotiated with representative unions and from PSA's annual guidance on salary increases for excluded (non-union) employees – over which Islands Trust has little to no influence.

More than 80% of all Islands Trust staff are unionized. The recently ratified new collective agreement with BC General Employees Union (BCGEU) provides for a 3% annual increase for each of the next three fiscal years. Assuming the PSA recommends a similar range of increase for excluded staff, and considering other impacts of the new collective agreement, at current staffing levels total salary and benefit costs will see a cumulative increase over the next three years of roughly 10%.

I have considered the potential for changes to the organizational structure of Islands Trust and have opted not to implement any significant changes at this time. In my experience, reorganizations often cause more disruption than benefit if there is not a clear business rationale. However, it is something I may revisit with senior staff pending Trust Council's decisions on this report's recommendations and confirmation of staffing and budget for next fiscal. Structural changes may also emerge out of ongoing work to identify efficiencies in our administrative processes. But they are rarely, if ever, an effective solution in and of themselves.

WORKLOAD

As I noted in the introduction, the capacity issue is a combination of staffing levels and workload. I appreciate that, from the outside, it can be easy to look at a staff complement of 65 people and wonder why this is such an issue. But it's important to consider how much time is required to deliver on the day-to-day work of Islands Trust. In this section, I will share some examples of the workload pressures at play. These are illustrative examples, primarily chosen because they are areas where we have some level of data to quantify the challenge. I don't want to leave the impression these are the only areas where workload pressures impede performance. Rather the capacity issue applies across the entire organization to some degree.

Planning Services

Islands Trust's Planning Services team, including bylaw compliance and enforcement staff, comprises about 55% of Islands Trust's workforce. This makes sense given that land use planning and related activities are a core function of Islands Trust. This team also provides the majority of the frontline support for local trust committees. Given the size of the current planning staff complement, I do not believe there is sufficient justification for additional planning staff at this time. But continued vacancies and turnover, in addition to workload pressures, are impacting performance.

This is particularly evident with the Salt Spring Island office. A September 2025 report to the Salt Spring Local Trust Committee highlighted that the volume of development planning applications per available staff person was more than triple what it is for the other two offices. Part of that is likely due to backlogs resulting from staff turnover, but there is also a significant workload pressure in serving the largest island in the Trust Area. This is only made more challenging by things like the lack of administrative capacity to manage the recent Salt Spring office renovation. This fell to the regional planning manager to oversee – adding significantly to their workload and taking time away from their core duties.

Across the planning function, we see evidence that the workload of supporting 13 local trust committees exceeds the available capacity. In his project feasibility assessment prepared for the 2026/27 budget planning cycle, the director of planning services identified the regional planning team has an estimated 4,050 hours in the year to support major projects identified by the Regional Planning Committee and local trust committees. But the actual estimated staff time required to support those projects is 4,700 hours. Therefore, the demand exceeds the expected supply of staff time by 650 hours, or about 16%. And this is an assessment of the applicable staff hours just to support local trust committee projects. It does not include time those same staff may be needed to contribute to Trust Area-wide projects.

Given this forecast deficit in available planning staff time to allocate to local trust committee projects, there is a clear need to reassess the viability of all planned projects and consider deferring some or all of those that are not already underway. While it is understandably difficult to choose some local projects over others, not delivering on all planned and funded projects will only further drive frustration and disappointment for local trust committees, the public and staff. It would be more prudent to prioritize completing the work of projects already underway before initiating new ones that we may not have the capacity to deliver.

Notably, the 2026/27 planning feasibility assessment marked a shift in approach from previous years. Reflecting the optimism bias mentioned earlier in this report, in previous years the assessment was based on a best-case scenario of 100% staff hours being available. But practically speaking that is never a realistic assessment. Even without staffing vacancies, there will always be a percentage of staff time lost to factors such as unexpected leaves, emerging new priorities, or, as we have experienced this fall, labour disruptions. So, I commend the director of planning services for taking a more pragmatic approach to forecasting actual staff availability for next fiscal that reflects the shift in organizational practice and culture needed across the organization.

I do see potential for improved efficiency in how planning operates and allocates resources. I know this is an ongoing conversation with the team's leadership and it is something the director and I have discussed as well. I expect we will advance this discussion as part of the staff actions flowing from this report.

Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Services

Bylaw compliance and enforcement currently has three bylaw enforcement officers, reporting to the bylaw enforcement manager and supported by a dedicated administrative assistant. Caseload data shows that in 2019, there were 337 open bylaw files. There were 601 open files in 2024, representing a 78% increase. During that time period, Islands Trust did hire the third officer, which increased capacity to process but also open more files. A range of other factors have also contributed to the increase in open case files, including the change to enforcement of short-term rentals in some local trust areas, and extended leaves for two officers.

The caseload on Salt Spring Island in particular exceeds the regular capacity of the officer dedicated to that island and often requires reassignment of one of the other two officers to provide additional support. This, of course, then impacts the ability to support enforcement on other islands.

While a limited sample, the 2026/27 Pre-Budget Survey found an identical share of respondents (26%) supported either increasing or decreasing funding for bylaw services. It is understandable that there are strong opinions in support of and opposed to bylaw enforcement. Comments on the survey raised a number of concerns about either the extent or lack of enforcement, and how enforcement is undertaken by officers.

Bylaw compliance and enforcement is challenging work. It inherently involves conflict and, like any enforcement or compliance process, the outcome will in many cases be unsatisfactory to one party or the other to some degree. I have full respect for the difficulty of the work undertaken by bylaw staff. But it is also clear there is a need for Islands Trust to improve its approach to enforcement and compliance. Recognition of this gave rise to the extensive updates proposed for Islands Trust's Bylaw and Enforcement Policy, which were endorsed by Trust Council at its September 2025 meeting.

The proposed changes have the potential, if approved and implemented effectively, to have a significant positive impact on both how enforcement is undertaken and also understood by the public. It remains to be seen if these changes have an impact on the volume of bylaw files, either increasing or decreasing them. But implementation of the policy changes themselves will

necessarily consume some time from the bylaw compliance and enforcement team in the year ahead. At this time, I am not recommending any other operational changes to bylaw compliance and enforcement. The priority should be to focus energy on implementing the policy changes, assuming they are approved by Trust Council. It will be essential that staff are provided the time, support and space to effectively and fully implement these updates.

Islands Trust Conservancy

Islands Trust Conservancy is the largest regional land trust in B.C. and is, in many ways, a remarkable success story. However, it also has capacity challenges.

The Conservancy currently is responsible for managing and monitoring a total of 115 properties and conservation covenants spanning more than 1,380 hectares across the Trust Area. There is one dedicated staff person responsible for monitoring the 81 covenants, and a second responsible for monitoring and overseeing management of 34 nature reserves. As a consequence, the Conservancy has been approaching limits in its ability to take on new properties because of challenges associated with fulfilling its responsibilities for the properties currently in its portfolio.

To help address this pressure, the Conservancy has proposed a new hybrid monitoring delivery model for the 2026/27 monitoring season. Under this model, the majority of protected areas would be monitored by a qualified external contractor and local island conservancy partners. This approach would allow the Protected Areas Management Team to focus its efforts on a select number of high-priority sites that require direct Conservancy involvement. Details of this approach are contained in the Conservancy's budget submission for next fiscal year. I commend staff and the board for identifying a creative solution to this growing workload challenge without additional staffing.

The Conservancy has also, at times, been overly optimistic in the assessment of the resourcing and time needed to deliver on initiatives. This has been especially true with regards to the development and updating of board policies, introduction of new technologies and development of a new Five-Year Plan, which involves engaging all First Nations in the Trust Area. The Five-Year Plan project, required by legislation, has been essentially stalled for three years due to the lack of a dedicated project manager and key staff turnover, and it is still somewhat inadequately resourced.

Meeting Administration

Council, committee, local trust committee and Islands Trust Conservancy Board meetings are the core of how decisions are considered and advanced in a transparent and responsible manner. It is vital that staff support this essential work.

I asked administrative staff to estimate how much time is spent supporting trustees in their various committee, Council and Conservancy Board meetings and found that in 2024:

- Staff supported a total of 189 meetings, including Trust Council, its committees, the Conservancy Board and local trust committees. This isn't an unusual amount for Islands Trust. Over the past five years, there have been an average of 175 meetings per year.
- The total amount of time spent by only administrative staff in preparing for those meetings is 4,342 hours – the equivalent of more than three full-time positions.

That estimated 4,342 hours is just to manage the logistics, preparation of meeting agenda packages, and minutes. It doesn't include the time spent by other staff in preparing and reviewing materials for meetings. While it is only an estimate, I believe conservatively that the preparation of materials by non-administrative staff is at least an equivalent number of hours.

In addition, there is the actual time spent by staff attending those 189 meetings, which represent 640 hours of meeting time – or more than 18 work weeks. In most cases, multiple staff attend each meeting in whole or in part. When we factor in staff time attending the meetings themselves, plus required travel time where they attend in-person, in total I estimate that staff spend close to 12,000 hours annually supporting Trust meetings.

Again, this is necessary work. But when we consider that 12,000 hours equates to approximately 10 full-time positions worth of time each year dedicated to meetings, if nothing else it underscores the need for both staff and trustees to ensure we are maximizing the value of that investment of time and resources.

I note some consideration is being given during the current budget cycle to switch at least some of Trust Council's quarterly meetings to a fully electronic format. While this would not reduce the time needed to prepare agendas and materials, a preliminary estimate is that each electronic meeting would save at least two full weeks of administrative staff time required to plan logistics of an in-person Council meeting.

Staff will be looking at if and how we can streamline some of that preparation work through process changes, and I give thought later in this report to other considerations for Trust Council in relation to governance issues. There is also active work underway with the Governance Committee to review and update Trust Council policies, including those related to meeting procedures.

[Election Planning](#)

We are now less than a year away from the October 17, 2026 election. In any election cycle, this creates an additional workload for staff across the organization. This year, trustees and staff have identified a need to better support the onboarding and orientation of an incoming Council. Work on this is now beginning, and there is a substantial foundation to build on from previous elections. But I expect making improvements will require a significant investment of time in the early part of fiscal 2026/27, particularly from senior staff. So, election preparation and transition should be appropriately viewed as an additional major project for the coming year.

Practically speaking, there will be a period from the time of the election through to early 2027 where staff across the organization will be heavily engaged in onboarding and orientating the incoming Council and preparing trustees to assume their roles, including on local trust committees. During that same period, there is also limited ability to secure political direction and decisions, which inevitably may impede the progress of some projects.

I mention this here only to acknowledge that the impact of an election year should be considered in assessing what, if any, net new projects Trust Council may wish to initiate next fiscal. Similarly, it will impact how much existing work can also be advanced.

THE STAFF PERSPECTIVE

The perspectives I have shared on some of the human resources challenges and other issues addressed in this report are not based solely on my own assessment. They are also informed by what I have heard from staff across the organization.

In March 2025, for the first time since 2019, all employees were invited to complete a staff survey to share their perspectives on the experience of working at Islands Trust. Eighty-two per cent of staff completed the survey. The results found that:

- 66% of employees said they are satisfied with Islands Trust as an employer. While the BC Public Service uses a different survey methodology, as a point of reference their 2024 survey of engagement across the core provincial government found 62% of staff were satisfied with the BC Public Service as an employer.
- 71% of employees would describe Islands Trust as a good place to work. By comparison the BC Public Service equivalent score is 65%.
- Almost 76% of employees say the purpose of Islands Trust makes them feel their job is important.

The areas with the lowest scores tend to be more focused on operational issues, including:

- Inefficient access to information needed to do work effectively.
- The need to eliminate unnecessary work to improve efficiency.
- Ineffective and inefficient policies and procedures.
- Lack of opportunities for advancement.
- Lack of effective tools and technology.

These themes were reinforced at an all-staff engagement session in June 2025 to get employee input into priorities and ideas for improvement to inform this operational review. That session also highlighted a desire among staff to improve the systems and practices that support engagement with First Nations, improve internal and external communication, fill vacant positions more quickly, and reduce the volume of meetings across the organization. These themes have also been consistent across one-on-one conversations I have had with many individual staff in the last year.

Following on the staff survey, a volunteer staff working group was established in the summer of this year. That group is tasked with bringing forward recommendations to me and the leadership team for how Islands Trust could address some of the issues highlighted in the survey results. While their work was delayed by the recent strike action and so was not available to incorporate into this report, I nonetheless look forward to receiving their recommendations in the near future.

Early in this review, I asked senior staff to provide an assessment of the scope of current required and discretionary work within their respective accountabilities. Having considered that assessment, it is clear that almost all the work currently being done is either necessary under legislation or policy, or directly relates to Council's identified priorities. In short, we are not doing much that we shouldn't be doing in our current context.

Where there may be latitude to stop work, it is primarily administrative and would not free up enough capacity to significantly impact the overall pressure. Staff will nevertheless look at options to reduce or eliminate some of this administrative burden as a continuous improvement practice.

PART 2: PRIORITY ACTION AREAS

In Part 1, I addressed the human resources and staffing capacity challenge faced by Islands Trust, including in some core operational areas. In Part 2, I address some of the core areas of work where I believe our capacity issues create a level of risk across the organization that requires action.

RECONCILIATION

The need to meaningfully engage with First Nations and Indigenous Governing Bodies is one of the priority areas of work under the most pressure at Islands Trust. There can be different perspectives on how this work should be done, but it is not optional.

The introduction of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) and its subsequent and still-evolving impact on provincial and local governments is a prime example of how the scope of the changing legislative, social and political context impacts Islands Trust's day-to-day work. While DRIPA is provincial legislation and may not directly impose obligations on Islands Trust, there is nonetheless a clear requirement for Islands Trust to address issues related to reconciliation. And, as DRIPA continues to be implemented and reshapes provincial legislation, the impact may become more direct over time.

The *Islands Trust Act*, in the statement of the Object, explicitly requires Islands Trust to work in cooperation with First Nations. This was reinforced in the April 2025 letter from the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs to the Chair of Trust Council, which stated:

“Over the balance of their term of office, I will need the Trust Council to take particular care to ensure that engagement with the public and First Nations on the bylaws put before me for approval, including amendments to Official Community Plans and the Trust Policy Statement, are undertaken in a manner that demonstrates mutual respect and builds towards consensus.”

Similarly, the minister provided clear direction to Islands Trust Conservancy regarding expectations of its engagement with First Nations on its overdue Five-Year Plan before it will be considered for ministerial approval. In January 2024, the minister called on the Conservancy to continue to lead the way, in cooperation with First Nations in the Trust Area, to develop a Conservancy Plan that aligns with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

So, there is a clear mandated and legislated requirement for Islands Trust to effectively deliver on its responsibilities in ways that support meaningful, respectful cooperation and knowledge-sharing. Acknowledgement of this obligation is reflected in the reconciliation declarations adopted by Trust Council and the Islands Trust Conservancy Board in 2019.

This work is inherently complex and influenced by a multitude of factors, not the least being the continually and rapidly evolving legal context – particularly in regard to land use issues. The complexity and uncertainty warrant thoughtful and considered progress in our work related to reconciliation, but it does not render the work optional or justify unreasonable delays.

Reconciliation also must be seen as more than just another project. If done well, it is something that can and should change almost every aspect of Islands Trust's work to some degree.

Despite Trust Council's public commitments, most trustees and staff and many First Nations indicate that the reconciliation efforts undertaken to-date are inadequate. Through the commitment and effort of staff and trustees, there are success stories where relationship-building and creative solutions are yielding genuine progress. But there is no consistent, coherent approach to relationship-building with First Nations and meaningful integration of Indigenous knowledge and values into the decision-making of Trust bodies. The result is frustration expressed by some First Nations, as well as by staff and trustees.

While I don't doubt the sincerity of Trust Council's commitment to reconciliation, this is one major area of work that we have not yet adequately resourced as a priority. Admittedly this is in part because we are still, like most jurisdictions, working to fully understand the breadth and scope of the implications of the provincial direction. And the legal and political grounding for this work is rapidly shifting – which is all the more reason why investment is needed to try and keep up with the evolving expectations.

Trust Council has invested in one dedicated staff position in the existing senior Indigenous relations advisor. But it is not realistic to expect one position to carry the amount of work required. Incremental investments have also been made, primarily through provincial grant funding, to pilot provision of capacity funding grants to support Indigenous engagement in specific projects. The lack of sufficient investment risks becoming a growing impediment to Islands Trust's ability to advance not only its commitment to reconciliation but also much of its core work.

For comparison, there is one regional district that now allocates approximately \$25,000 annually in capacity funding grants for each of the First Nations within their jurisdiction – many of which are also within the Trust Area. This serves essentially as an annual budget to cover collaboration on priority topics of mutual interest. As other jurisdictions begin to consider this kind of funding model, it creates a new baseline that we may increasingly be expected to meet. While the same model may not be appropriate or viable for Islands Trust, there is not currently any sustainable budget for capacity funding that is managed in a consistent manner.

The need for a coherent policy on capacity funding has been acknowledged by staff. But, ironically, the lack of staff capacity has prevented the development of a policy. Similarly, staff have also not yet been able to finalize a draft for an updated Reconciliation Action Plan, as requested by Trust Council. There remains no consistent approach for coordinating engagement with First Nations across all the work of Islands Trust, including Islands Trust Conservancy. Some nations have noted that this lack of coordination and consistency in itself is undermining engagement because it results in duplication of effort and shows a lack of responsiveness to previously received feedback.

It is clear that Islands Trust needs to get its own internal operations more in order to support effective relationship building. This will be even more important to support the direction set out in the current draft Policy Statement and the reconciliation priorities identified in Trust Council's Strategic Plan. But we have not yet adequately invested in building our own internal capacity in terms of appropriate staff and trustee training, effective technology and administrative processes, and consistent policy approaches to support advancing reconciliation.

Ultimately, Islands Trust will likely need to make significant future investments to advance reconciliation and relationship-building. The related recommendations offered in this report are a moderate first-step to move toward a more considered, coherent and consistent approach to Indigenous relations that will help deliver this vital work in a more effective and efficient manner.

INFORMATION SERVICES AND SYSTEMS

While its staff have access to some core provincial government technology tools, Islands Trust operates largely on its own independent technology infrastructure and systems. To support this, Islands Trust relies on three Information Systems (IS) staff, and two additional staff dedicated to supporting Geographic Information System (GIS) technology essential to planning across the Trust Area and to the work of Islands Trust Conservancy. Further support is provided through contracted services.

There has been significant staff turnover and challenges within the IS and GIS team in the last year, resulting in a greater than usual reliance on contacted services and delays in advancing some projects. In recent years, Trust Council has supported budget allocations for key technology upgrades, including adoption of the CityView software suite, time-tracking software, and a new customer relationship management application. All of these projects are behind schedule to varying degrees.

In all cases, the primary challenge has been a lack of staff capacity, and not only in terms of direct support from the IS team. Project planning for IS projects has often underestimated the time required of other staff to fully support project planning, procurement, implementation, training, project management and change management. There is a need for greater collaboration across the organization in planning for technology projects to ensure the full scope of the work is understood and able to be accommodated within a realistic implementation timeline.

Similarly, staff capacity has limited our ability to advance some GIS work. Islands Trust Conservancy Board, Executive Committee and Trust Council have all flagged GIS enhancements as a priority for the 2026/27 budget. In response, a business case has been put forward for additional GIS staffing. The proposed Trust Area Resilience Assessment is intended to bring together projects in Trust Council's Strategic Plan related to Trust Area data acquisition, including mapping data, and ecosystem health and community resiliency indicators. While it is broader than just a GIS and technology initiative, it is expected to require significant GIS involvement.

The initial draft budget for 2026/27 also includes submissions for new protected area management software for Islands Trust Conservancy, and a new electronic document management solution. In addition, there is an identified need to address several other technology issues, including:

- Updates and fuller implementation of the existing agenda preparation software tool.
- Resolving ongoing issues with a number of the custom applications used by Islands Trust to support some key activities.

In my engagement with staff and trustees for this review, the need to improve or replace various technology tools was also a frequent issue cited as a priority, including website improvements. The need for all these things is valid. But each one is a project requiring an investment of money and time to achieve.

At this time, Islands Trust doesn't have a clear model for prioritizing one technology project above another. Nor do we have a long-term plan for how we might modernize our systems and digital infrastructure – let alone plan for how we deal with emerging related issues like artificial intelligence. While I support the intent of the technology projects put forward for consideration as

part of the budget cycle, I have significant concerns about our ability to successfully implement them in the absence of a thoughtful plan to fully assess current and future technology needs and what is required to successfully address them.

Any such plan should also look not just at information technology, but information management. By that I mean ensuring we have not just the tools but also the policy foundation to appropriately create, capture, organize, store, retrieve, and dispose of documents, information and data. Islands Trust is generally subject to provincial information management legislation and policies in many respects, such as the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. But we have gaps in our internal policies and procedures to ensure we are meeting these responsibilities as effectively as we should.

For example, while one is now in development, Islands Trust has not had a clearly established and communicated policy for records management. This does not mean we don't have practices in place to manage records. But a proper guiding policy will ensure this is done more consistently and appropriately across the organization and over time. In the absence of a clearly and consistently understood policy, what often happens is organizations actually end up storing more records than they need to or are required to. This can result in very real costs for electronic and physical storage of records and data. And it creates inefficiency by increasing the time and effort needed for staff to find data and information on a day-to-day basis.

The proposed electronic document management system project would provide a much-needed tool to aid in effective information management. But layering new technology over an inconsistent process will yield limited benefits, or even make the existing inefficiencies worse. If that project proceeds, it will be important that the new records management policy is in place in advance, that it is being applied and that files on the existing management system are reviewed in alignment with that policy before they are migrated to the new platform.

Another aspect of information management is data management. Islands Trust manages a large amount of data, primarily in its GIS work and related systems. There is significant potential for us to access and more effectively use other data – and more current data – to inform decision-making and planning. The proposed Trust Area Resilience Assessment initiative would, in part, look at that potential and how it might be addressed. But again, it would benefit from being undertaken in the context of a broader overall data and information management plan, which does not currently exist and will itself be a significant project.

ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

The communications function is essential to providing transparent and accurate information to the public, and to improving understanding and awareness of Islands Trust and its work. In doing so, it can help address the significant reputational challenge faced by Islands Trust.

Effective communications and engagement practices play an essential role in shaping public trust in any government organization. Research shows that public trust and confidence in governments at all levels has steadily declined over the past several decades. It also shows this trend is generally due, in part, to a perceived lack of transparency, lack of awareness and understanding of government roles and processes, and the rise of misinformation and disinformation.

The lack of trust in an institution creates a real and significant barrier to its ability to secure the social licence needed to advance its work. Effective communications and engagement can help reduce the friction in the relationship between a government organization and the communities it serves, thereby supporting improved organizational performance. It can also help ensure the organization itself has a better understanding of the community and other interests, which leads to better decisions making.

Islands Trust currently has one communications specialist dedicated to supporting the communications and public engagement needs of Trust Council and 13 local trust committees. A second communications specialist is dedicated to providing similar service to the Islands Trust Conservancy Board.

I believe the Conservancy is adequately supported by its dedicated position, delivering a high quality of communications that, by the nature of the work, tends to be less issues driven and more positive in its message. Although there is an opportunity to more clearly position the role of the Conservancy within Islands Trust's broader public profile.

Practically speaking, maintaining day-to-day communications support for core functions and major projects like the Policy Statement Amendment Project consumes all of the available capacity of the other communications specialist. This leaves very limited capacity to support local trust committees and to effectively and more proactively address emerging communications needs.

The primary gap in our communications is one of missed opportunity. With additional capacity, there would be more opportunity to:

- Better support local trust committees in communicating about their projects and priorities so the public could be more informed and more likely to participate.
- Improve awareness and understanding of Islands Trust and its role through more proactive and strategic communications.
- Address public feedback about issues like difficulty of finding information on the website.
- Better support staff and trustees in providing more accurate, transparent and timely information about projects and priorities.

With some major projects, such as official community plan updates, Islands Trust relies on contractors to provide the communications and engagement function, with support from the communications specialist. This makes sense as a measure to augment staff capacity for projects

with a sufficient communications need. We similarly contract some functions, such as graphic design for major publications.

Public and partner engagement is a complementary but distinct discipline from communications. While supported to some extent by communications, engagement activities on planning initiatives are often led by local planning staff, who may have limited experience or expertise in this area. The program coordinator position with Trust Area Services has also recently begun supporting some engagement work related to major projects. However, Islands Trust does not currently have a centralized approach to engagement, does not coordinate the different planned and on-going engagements activities, and lacks the strategy, systems, templates and staff coordination that would support a planned, coordinated, organized, and efficient approach to engagement on projects.

In 2021, staff prepared a business case for a dedicated engagement planner position, noting that:

“Currently, engagement is planned and implemented independently by Trust Area Services and Local Planning Services staff working on projects. There is no overall coordination of engagement resulting in a lack of efficiency and consistency. Each time a local trust committee undertakes an engagement process they often start from scratch and develop their own methods and materials with little reference to past initiatives and little coordination with other departments in terms of timing of other events/surveys. The Trust does not collect information in a standardized way that would support analysis of engagement processes or public satisfaction. Also, the Trust has been challenged to reach hard-to-reach audiences.”

In my assessment, these same issues prevail today. Ideally, Islands Trust would have a consistent approach to how it undertakes engagement. This would provide consistency for the public in how it interacts with Islands Trust, including the Conservancy, and would allow more effective monitoring, analysis and reporting of the results of engagement activities across projects and over time to help inform decision making.

Recommendation 12 of the 2022 Governance Review Report suggested that:

“A communications and engagement strategy should be developed as part of the annual corporate plan, and in support of the priorities identified therein.

The strategy should support the Preserve and Protect Object of the Trust, focusing on two goals: 1) strengthening the Islands Trust brand by increasing awareness and support for the Trust with relevant stakeholders, policy-makers and decision-makers; 2) improving communication between the Trust and trust area residents, in line with Trust Council’s emphasis on transparency and consultation.”

In its September 2025 consideration of that report’s recommendations, Trust Council opted to defer action on this recommendation in the category of “will be undertaken when prioritised by Trust Council.” I generally agree with recommendation 12, and expect it may and should be a priority for the next Trust Council post-election.

In recent years, Trust Council has approved an annual communications strategy, with the expectation that a companion Islands Trust engagement strategy will also be developed at a later date to support engagement on projects. I do not believe our current single staff person is sufficient to realize the full value from the annual communications strategy. And we do not currently have the capacity to develop and effectively implement an engagement strategy. The draft 2026/27 budget includes a request for \$10,000 to contract support to draft an engagement strategy. But there is still insufficient capacity to implement that strategy once developed.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCESSES

Like any government organization, Islands Trust's day-to-day work is heavily informed by the cascade of applicable legislation, bylaws and policies that govern it. In addition to those that govern Trust Council, its committees, local trust committees and Islands Trust Conservancy, there are also a host of internal administrative policies, procedures and processes that underpin the operational side of the organization's performance.

When organizational capacity is strained, these operational administrative foundations often get neglected while resources are, appropriately, directed to support the priorities of Trust Council and public-facing service delivery. That is clearly the case within Islands Trust today.

In 2023, staff undertook an assessment of the procedures included in Islands Trust's Operations Manual. These are the procedures that govern how we manage and operate the organization, including implementation of policies. They should not to be confused with the policies of Trust Council, local trust committees and the Conservancy. The staff assessment concluded that of the 88 operating procedures in the Operations Manual, 55 were out of date or completely obsolete. Most have still not been updated or repealed since. In fact, staff have also identified a need for at least 50 additional procedures that don't currently exist.

This is what happens when the day-to-day urgency of priorities consumes the full operating capacity of the organization – some of the underlying fundamentals get neglected. That creates the risk of ineffective practice, or multiple different approaches and work arounds, rather than consistent and sound practice across the organization.

I don't believe there is any imminent or substantive exposure resulting from these administrative issues. But if left unaddressed, the risk of a substantive impact will only continue to grow over time. While outdated administrative procedure issues may seem trivial, collectively they create a level of inefficiency that only serves to exacerbate the capacity problem we face. If nothing else, this is a symptom of an organization that is struggling to keep up.

Staff are now actively working to try address this need to update our administrative foundation, where available staff time can be carved out to do so. But finding that time remains the biggest challenge. Addressing these administrative issues is not the responsibility of Trust Council. But it intersects with trustees' work in that reducing other demands on staff time can help free up some capacity to be dedicated to resolving these internal operational issues, which in the long run will also benefit trustees and the organization overall.

PLANNING AND PRIORITIES

This review is intended to focus on the operational side of Islands Trust. Therefore, I intentionally placed Trust Council, its committees and local trust committee priorities, policies and bylaws out of scope. However, it is impossible to completely separate them given the impact Trust Council's priorities and work have on the operational capacity of the organization.

As a result, I have given consideration to two aspects of Trust Council's work that I believe can help address the capacity issue:

1. the corporate planning and priority setting process; and
2. the committee structure.

Corporate Planning and Priority Setting

In March 2025, Trust Council approved a much-delayed new strategic plan setting out their priorities. Helpfully, at that time trustees also agreed on a prioritization of the initiatives in the plan, particularly for the balance of the current council term. This has already proven valuable in helping to focus decisions on allocation of resources and the current budget planning process for next fiscal year. It is slightly problematic that – because it was repeatedly delayed – the plan will apply to more of the term of the next Council than the current one. However, this is mitigated by the fact that Council also has the ability to amend its plan on an ongoing basis.

The bigger concern is that the actual process that led to that strategic plan was, in my opinion, somewhat flawed. I do not want to diminish the amount of time and effort trustees put into the development of the strategic plan. And I acknowledge I was not in this role at the time, so my perspective is not based on firsthand experience of that work. I have, however, reviewed documentation that informed the plan development and discussed the process with senior staff, and I see two particular issues.

The first issue is that the plan appears to have been largely a collection of previously existing projects and priorities retroactively grouped under defined goals and outcomes. To be fair, this sort of “reverse engineering” approach is a common misstep in a strategic planning exercise. And it is also appropriate that to some extent existing work should be captured in a strategic plan. But ideally a truly strategic planning process starts with the higher level of assessment of a vision, goals and outcomes and only then contemplates what initiatives to include. And as part of that latter step, existing work is evaluated on whether or not it truly fits, thereby forcing hard decisions on what actually should be kept. Again, I acknowledge I may be mischaracterizing how the current strategic plan evolved and I invite trustees to correct any misperception.

My second concern with the current plan is that it was developed without significant active involvement or advice from staff. The strategic plan is owned by Trust Council and is intended to be an articulation of its priorities. Appropriately, the decision of what initiatives to include therefore should be made by Council. But it is evident that many of the initiatives contained in the plan were included without any substantive staff assessment of their viability, potential resource requirements or timelines. As a consequence, it is only since the plan has been adopted that some of that advice is being produced and considered.

This isn't to say that every initiative should have had a fully developed project plan and business case completed before being included in the strategic plan. But it appears there was not sufficient advice sought while developing the plan to determine whether the initiatives were the best way to achieve the stated goals, were achievable, or what resourcing was required to deliver. Ideally a planning approach would consider this sort of feasibility assessment of each new initiative being proposed before deciding whether they should be included in a strategic plan.

Similarly, it appears it was only when I presented the plan to council in March that any consideration was given to the timing or sequencing of all the initiatives included. In finalizing the draft strategic plan, I asked senior staff to validate if each initiative could be advanced in the timeline proposed – especially those proposed to be initiated in fiscal 2026/27. The sequencing proposed and approved by Council in March reflected their assessment. But, in hindsight, I believe the optimism bias I noted earlier influenced that input. As a result, I have significant concerns about the organization's capacity to undertake new initiatives beyond the scope of work currently underway.

My concerns about the process should not be interpreted as a criticism of the content of the strategic plan or a suggestion that the initiatives it contains are not worthwhile. But I believe addressing the issues I have noted could have helped deliver a plan that is more truly strategic and that better reflects the operational reality of what it will take to advance some of this work.

All that said, Council did also approve a draft corporate planning process that I believe is worth finalizing as a step to help lead to more effective planning the future. One aspect not contemplated in that draft process is what its actual outcome may be. It references the notion of a strategic plan as one element of corporate planning. I believe there needs to be a clear and tangible output of the process in the form of an overall corporate plan.

There is a useful example of what I mean in the [City of Victoria's current corporate plan](#). Victoria City Council has traditionally produced a strategic plan, not unlike Islands Trust's practice. But in 2024, the city produced its first corporate plan and they intend for this to be their practice in future. The difference is that that the corporate plan incorporates all of council's priorities from their strategic plan, but also includes parallel city organizational and operational priorities. This model provides a more complete picture for the public, for elected officials and for staff of the full scope of work and priorities of the city overall.

As I mentioned when the strategic plan was brought to Trust Council for approval in March 2025, the strategic plan only really captures at best 20% of the work of Islands Trust. It does not reflect the 80% of work in the form of the day-to-day operations, including support for local trust committees and the work of the Conservancy Board. As we work to address some or all of the recommendations put forward in this report, I believe a more complete corporate plan for Islands Trust will be all the more valuable – and the existing draft planning process can help achieve that with the support of the current and next Councils.

In my observations above regarding some challenging aspects of the organizational culture of Islands Trust, I noted the need for staff to provide more accurate and pragmatic advice to trustees on the feasibility of projects. I believe this dynamic has also contributed to some of the issues related to the approach to strategic planning and identification of priorities. So, beyond the planning process, in my recommendations I propose a procedural change that can help by

providing an opportunity and requirement for staff to provide a feasibility assessment before Trust Council directs that work begin on a significant new project.

Council Committee Structure

I have some hesitation about touching on the topic of Council’s committee structure because it is arguably beyond the scope of an operational review. But the work of supporting Islands Trust’s various advisory bodies is also a significant portion of the work of virtually all staff.

The *Islands Trust Act* requires, in addition to Trust Council, that there be an Executive Committee, local trust committees, and the Islands Trust Conservancy Board. Trust Council [policy 2.3.1](#) prescribes the creation of six standing committees in addition to Executive Committee:

1. Regional Planning
2. Financial Planning
3. Trust Programs
4. Governance
5. Accessibility
6. Chief Administrative Officer Performance Evaluation Committee

With the exception of the Accessibility Committee, which is required by the *Accessible British Columbia Act*, these standing committees exist at the discretion of Trust Council. Each has a terms of reference and meets at least four times per year (as required under policy).

A committee system is vital. It would be unrealistic to expect effective governance to be managed solely through a 26-member council that only meets four times a year, or to rely solely on the four-member Executive Committee to govern the organization between those meetings. However, given the resources dedicated to supporting committees, it is incumbent on trustees and staff to ensure the effort is yielding the best benefit. I am not certain the existing committee structure meets that objective.

I agree with the 2022 Islands Trust Governance Review report that committees can and should be the “workshops of Trust Council” to deliberate on policy and other issues in detail. While I disagree with recommendation 2 in that report that the solution is to increase the number of committees, I do agree with recommendation 4 that committees could be more valuable with more focused mandates directly related to Council’s priorities.

At its September 2025 meeting, Trust Council considered the review’s recommendations and placed recommendation 4 in the category of “will be undertaken by staff as appropriate.” I believe it would be wise for staff to consider options related to the committee structure in advance of the 2026 election. One potential solution would be to replace the Governance, Regional Planning, Financial Planning and Trust Programs Committees with select committees with more focused mandates to tackle particular issues or priorities in a defined timeframe.

Alternatively, it may be that the issue isn’t so much structural as it may be a need to more clearly define and adhere to committee mandates. Over time, it appears committees have a tendency to drift from the workplans set out by Trust Council to initiate new projects sparked by committee members’ interests. Council does review and approve committee work plans at every Trust Council

meeting, but with little engagement or discussion. I believe Trust Council could and should take a more direct and active role in setting committee priorities, and revising them as needed.

Finally, there is clear room for improvement in the use of Committee of the Whole. Council adopted the Committee of the Whole function this term to enable in-depth discussion of issues in a more informal and less structured format. I think it is fair to say the use of this model has met with mixed results to-date. Ad hoc scheduling and other barriers have resulted in often limited attendance that doesn't or barely attains quorum. Therefore, discussions that happen in these meetings are often not entirely representative of all of Council, even though the purpose is to allow for discussion and debate amongst all trustees.

However, there is a role for Committee of the Whole to facilitate better decision-making. This may be more achievable by using the format as a more regular part of the Council process. For many local governments, Committee of the Whole meetings are scheduled to alternate with regular Council meetings and used to debate and discuss substantive issues that are planned to come before a full Council meeting for decision. This approach regularizes the function of Committee of the Whole and, in theory, then would allow quarterly Trust Council meetings to progress more efficiently because they would be primarily the venue for decision on items already fully discussed at a preceding Committee of the Whole. As part of the preparation of draft meeting scheduled for next year, staff are already proposing to schedule Committee of the Whole meetings one month in advance of each quarterly Trust Council meeting.

ISLANDS TRUST OFFICES

Islands Trust maintains three office locations (Victoria, Gabriola Island and Salt Spring Island) that are open to the public and serve as the primary work locations for all staff. While it can sometimes be challenging to recruit to the island offices, it is nonetheless valuable for Islands Trust to have a physical presence outside the main Victoria office.

In my first year as CAO, it has been suggested to me by some trustees that we should consider relocating the Victoria office from its current location to one in closer proximity to the Trust Area to make it more accessible to residents and trustees. So, given that interest, I have opted to include a discussion of that proposal in this review.

The potential for this has been explored multiple times over the years. In some cases, relocating entirely to one of the islands of the Trust Area was explored. And most recently, in 2017, there was consideration given to moving to a location outside the downtown core.

I have reviewed the documentation related to the 2017 review, which ultimately led to a decision to keep the current location. Islands Trust subsequently made a significant investment in renovating the current space to meet its needs more effectively. A lot has changed since 2017, not the least being an increased reliance on virtual meetings and the adoption of flexible work-from-home options for many Islands Trust staff, particularly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The current lease for the Victoria office runs to 2029, with an option to terminate the lease early by giving notice by March 31, 2026 and vacating the space by September 30, 2026. This means if there was to be a move, it would need to happen either before September 2026 or prior to the lease expiry in September 2029.

A review of currently available lease options in the region shows there may be long-term cost savings to be achieved by relocating to a new location outside the downtown Victoria area. However, any move would require a level of up-front investment. To take advantage of the early termination option, the costs of a relocation would mostly need to be accommodated in the 2026/27 budget. Related costs would include:

- Hiring a new part-time temporary employee to project manage the logistics and planning of the move. The recent challenges with asking an existing staff member to manage the Salt Spring relocation off the side of their desk highlight the need for this, and a Victoria relocation would be a significantly larger project. This would be particularly necessary within the short timeframe to allow for relocation by September 2026.
- The cost of contracted movers to transfer all the existing office furniture and other contents.
- The cost of any improvements needed to the new location. Even if it was an entirely updated space, there would inevitably be some work required to configure and prepare it to meet our needs. For example, we have specific needs for our technology infrastructure that would need to be incorporated.

In total, if the new location required minimal preparation, I estimate the minimum cost would be approximately \$125,000. If it needed more significant renovations and improvements, that figure could be as high as \$500,000. These are very preliminary estimates, but any relocation would require dedicated funding.

Furthermore, there are other considerations beyond the financial cost. First, the simple work required of every member of the Victoria staff to prepare offices, records and other materials for the move would impact some level of productivity at a time when many are already over-stretched by their workload. This would be particularly true for administrative and information services staff. There would also be additional lost productivity, albeit short-term, during the actual move itself. To meet the September 2026 timeline, this would also mean the bulk of the work of a move would be needed at the same time Islands Trust is preparing for the October 2026 election.

I also have no reason to think a relocation would help Islands Trust with its recruitment and retention challenges. In fact, it may only increase the challenge, especially if the office was relocated to Sidney as some trustees have recommended. While a relocation may shorten commutes for some staff, a significant number of Victoria office staff live in closer proximity to the current location, in the Westshore region, or up-island. A commute to a location on the Saanich Peninsula or in Sidney would add significant commuting time and cost for these staff. It has been suggested that this could be addressed by staff working more from home. However, not all staff can or prefer to work from home on a regular basis.

Similarly, it has been suggested that moving to a location closer to the ferry terminal would increase our ability to recruit staff living on the islands. Given the relatively small size of that labour market and the challenges we already have recruiting locally for the Salt Spring Island office, this seems unrealistic. I also note that, other than anecdotal information from some trustees, Islands Trust has not received any significant public feedback regarding the current Victoria office location that suggests a different location would result in significantly more frequent office access by members of the public.

In its current configuration, if Islands Trust adds any additional staff to the Victoria office it will become increasingly challenging to accommodate them. However, it is more viable to make changes to manage this within the existing space than to undertake a wholesale relocation in the short-term.

There may be benefits to a relocation of the Victoria office, primarily in long-term cost savings and a better physical work environment. However, given the required up-front investment of money and staff time, the potential impact on staff retention, and the timing in relation to the 2026 election, I do not support making relocation a priority in the available window for terminating the current lease early.

PART 3: ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

STAFF ACTIONS

The actions outlined here represent the staff-led commitments that I expect to advance regardless of Trust Council's response to the recommendations provided for their consideration below. For the most part, these actions do not require direction or support from Trust Council. Should the recommendation to develop a full corporate plan be endorsed, I expect many or all of these would be reflected in the operational side of that plan.

1. Consider and, where viable, adopt the recommendations of the Staff Survey Results Working Group.
2. Advance updates to the Islands Trust Operations Manual where capacity allows. Those policies and procedures used by most employees will be given priority, with an emphasis on simplifying and streamlining procedures as much as possible.
3. Initiate a collaborative effort between senior leadership and administrative staff to identify ways to streamline the administrative process for Council, committee and Conservancy Board meetings. This aligns with current updates to Trust Council policies being considered by the Governance Committee.
4. In consultation with the BC Public Service Agency, develop and implement solutions to improve recruitment and retention, with the Salt Spring Island office as the priority.
5. Engage with the BC Public Service Agency to explore options to improve Islands Trust access to human resources services and data.
6. Work to ensure greater collaboration and coordination across teams as part of daily operational practice, including with Conservancy staff.
7. Consider the potential for changes to the organizational structure where it might improve operational pressures, and consider reallocating vacant positions to higher priority work as vacancies arise.
8. Conduct the Staff Survey on an annual basis to monitor progress and identify priorities for future action.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO TRUST COUNCIL

As CAO, I fully accept my accountability for effectively managing the operations of Islands Trust and will continuously explore and consider how I and staff can improve operations within the scope of our authority. But a significant amount of the work staff do is directly related to supporting the work and priorities of trustees. Therefore, effectively addressing the operational challenges we have requires a level of support from Trust Council.

As acknowledged in the opening to this report, the following recommendations are chosen because I believe they are both achievable in the near term and likely to have a positive impact in helping address the prevailing operational issues Islands Trust faces. I have also considered the likelihood that Trust Council would accept a recommendation as a determining factor in what is included here. Council may also wish to offer different ideas, and I would welcome its suggestions for additional steps that could be considered.

With regard to workload, in addition to assessing the potential to free up capacity by scaling back administrative and operational work, I have also considered projects already underway at the direction of Trust Council, Executive Committee, local trust committees or the Conservancy Board. I have opted not to recommend stopping any of those active projects, in large part because the negative impacts of cancelling or suspending these projects mid-stream would outweigh the potential benefits. However, if Council believes there are active projects or programs they support stopping, I invite them to provide that direction.

It is, of course, entirely up to Trust Council whether to accept all or any of these recommendations. However, I hope this report has clearly made the point that not taking any action will only serve to perpetuate the status quo. I also don't want to give the impression that these recommendations will fully resolve the issues at play. But I do believe they can set Islands Trust on a more sustainable operational path.

Recommendation 1: Trust Council direct staff not to initiate any projects in the 2026/27 fiscal year that are not already underway or required by legislation or policy, and accept staff recommendations for reducing discretionary budget lines.

I appreciate that accepting this recommendation would be a significant decision. However, the practical reality is that Islands Trust is already challenged to deliver current projects and initiatives. Adding to that workload will only add to the issue. This approach allows work on projects already underway to continue, and improves the likelihood of successful delivery.

Going into an election year provides a good time to pause and refocus inwardly to some extent. As noted above, the election itself adds to the workload for the coming year. But it also constrains, to some extent, the ability to advance net new work. It is also possible that a change in Council will also lead to a change in priorities, although I acknowledge that for some trustees (and staff) that may also be precisely the reason they wish to advance new work prior to the election.

If endorsed, this recommendation has an impact on budget deliberations for fiscal 2026/27 as it will mean some funding requests would be set aside. As part of the budget presentation, staff have already included potential savings options that would align with this recommendation. And at its

November 12 meeting, Financial Planning Committee put forward two recommendations to Council to defer the Trust Area Resilience Assessment project and the electronic document management system, which aligns with this recommendation.

This recommendation also includes accepting the recommendations from the director of planning services on deferral of local trust committee projects for which there is not sufficient staff capacity to deliver. These are noted in the budget material.

Recommendation 2: Trust Council direct staff to prepare a five-year Information Technology and Information Management Plan to be presented to Trust Council for approval, and that no new non-essential³ technology projects be initiated until completion of this five-year plan.

Given the limited capacity within the Information Services team and the delays encountered with previously approved technology projects, it is clear the prevailing approach of approving and advancing individual projects is neither effective nor sustainable. A proper IM/IT plan will support more effective implementation that considers:

- Criteria for determining priority order for technology projects.
- Assessment of true resource requirements and business needs for each major project.
- Previously unidentified or emerging gaps in Islands Trust's technology and information management ecosystem.
- Alignment with relevant policies and procedures.

Development of this plan is contingent on filling the vacant information technology manager position, which is expected to be complete early in 2026. While the proposed five-year plan is in development, staff would focus on advancing and completing projects already underway.

Recommendation 3: Trust Council endorse the transition from the current strategic plan model to a true corporate plan, to be developed with the incoming Council.

This will build on the current draft corporate planning process, approved by Trust Council in fall of 2024. Finalizing that process was identified by Trust Council as a priority for the Governance Committee for the balance of this Council term.

The proposed shift in the format from the current strategic plan to a broader corporate plan does not require significant modification to that draft process. While recommendation 1 would pause work on strategic plan initiatives not already underway, the existing strategic plan content does not need to be reconsidered at this time. But it is reasonable to assume the incoming council will want to review it in their first year in office.

The priority for this year will be to finalize the planning process and implement the next steps in advance of the 2026 election and to inform the budget process for fiscal 2027/28. One of the essential next steps is the introduction of department work plans, which staff currently plan to have in place at the start of the new fiscal year.

³ Projects required to maintain fundamental infrastructure, functionality and security requirements (e.g. operating system or server upgrades) would be considered essential.

Recommendation 4: Trust Council, Executive Committee and the Conservancy Board adopt the practice of not directing staff to undertake any new work without first requesting a project feasibility assessment to determine the operational impacts and preliminary implementation options.

This proposed practice is intended to bring more rigour to the initiation of ad hoc projects at the direction of Trust Council, Executive Committee and the Conservancy Board. Rather than jumping to direction for staff to undertake a significant new project, this practice would see an initial request for staff to provide a feasibility assessment before deciding whether to proceed with direction on the project.

I appreciate this extra step may delay advancement of net new projects. But ultimately it will help inform better decision-making and increase the likelihood of successful project delivery.

I anticipate two circumstances where exceptions to this practice could be accepted:

1. There is an urgent need for action where the time to prepare a feasibility assessment would result in Islands Trust being unable to address a significant and time-sensitive issue. In these instances, it would fall to senior staff to prioritize work accordingly.
2. The request is small enough in scope that staff are confident enough it can be accommodated without significant impact to other work that it does not require a feasibility assessment.

This practice can be adopted immediately, but eventually should be included in the final corporate planning process as a requirement for any new projects not already included in the corporate plan. It should also become a standard part of the corporate planning process to shape the development of initiatives included in any future plan.

Recommendation 5: Trust Council direct staff to work with the Governance Committee to provide Trust Council with options to improve the current committee structure in advance of the 2026 election.

There has been a great deal of discussion regarding committee roles and mandates, particularly in light of the 2022 Governance Review Report. But there may be value in preparing options for consideration of an incoming Council to refresh its committee structure early in its term. Undertaking preliminary work in advance of the election outlining options, implications and required steps to implement changes would facilitate this process for the new Council.

Recommendation 6: Trust Council approve funding to create a new manager of Indigenous relations position in fiscal 2026/27 as a priority to help establish a comprehensive and consistent approach to reconciliation across Islands Trust.

This new permanent position would lead the development of a more consistent, coordinated and coherent model for how Islands Trust will advance its engagement and relationships with First Nations. As noted elsewhere in this report, despite individual successes there remains a lack of coordination across Islands Trust that increasingly risks becoming an impediment to advancing core aspects of our work and mandate.

This role would work with the senior Indigenous relations advisor, and planning and Conservancy staff in particular, to provide a framework that enables consistency, while also allowing for flexibility where needed to advance individual projects. The manager would serve as “air traffic control” for the overall coordination of reconciliation, relationship-building, referrals, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. Alongside the existing senior Indigenous relations advisor, they would serve as a liaison and advisor in building and sustaining effective, respectful and productive relationships between Islands Trust and First Nations.

I note the current budget proposals from the Conservancy Board include a request to fund a part-time Indigenous relations advisor. If approved, I expect this position would report to the proposed manager to enhance coordination between the Conservancy’s First Nations engagement work and that done across the rest of the organization.

The total estimated cost for the manager position in fiscal 2026/27 is approximately \$115,000 subject to confirmation of classification and compensation by the PSA. (See the business case attached in Appendix 4.)

Recommendation 7: Trust Council increase the proposed budget for the Reconciliation Program for fiscal 2026/27 by adding \$100,000 targeted to support capacity funding grants.

With provincial grant funding running out and the need for ongoing engagement and referrals to First Nations as a regular course of operations, I recommend an initial commitment of \$100,000 in new funding dedicated to capacity funding grants that can be used to support development of relationship agreements and support project activities that promote knowledge-sharing. This should be subject to delivery of a draft capacity funding policy for Trust Council consideration at its March 2026 meeting.

The longer-term requirement for a dedicated capacity funding budget would be something to be confirmed as part of the work of the proposed manager of Indigenous relations to deliver a defined model for Islands Trust engagement with First Nations/Indigenous Governing Bodies. But it will be important to have some level of interim funding to support continued cooperation on existing projects.

I acknowledge that the Conservancy Board has also requested a similar amount of funding in 2026/27 to support capacity funding. However, this is dedicated to support the high level of engagement needed to deliver the Conservancy’s Five-Year Plan and ensure it secures ministerial approval. Longer-term, the policy and model for engagement will ensure consistency of funding model and approach across all Islands Trust bodies.

Recommendation 8: Trust Council approve funding to create a new engagement and communications lead position to enable a more effective and strategic approach to public engagement and communications in support of Trust Council, the Conservancy Board and local trust committees.

As with Indigenous relations, the current approach to public engagement and communications is inconsistent and not as effectively supported as it could be to appropriately advance the work of Trust Council and local trust committees. The current staffing level is insufficient to develop, let

alone deliver on, the proposed annual engagement strategy intended to support project engagement.

This recommendation is for a new more senior position, likely supervising the coordinated work of the two current communications specialists and the program coordinator. By taking the lead on coordinating engagement projects and planning, this role would also help free up and augment existing capacity to provide more communications support across the organization.

This role will not entirely replace the need for contracted support for major projects. But it will ensure those projects are delivered in a way that aligns with strategic priorities and provides a more consistent engagement experience for the public.

The total estimated cost for this new position in fiscal 2026/27 is approximately \$95,000 subject to confirmation of classification and compensation by the PSA. (See the business case attached in Appendix 5.)

Recommendation 9: That no consideration be given to the potential relocation of the Victoria office until closer to the 2029 end of the current lease.

While the current lease would allow for early termination in 2026, I do not see any sufficient rationale for undertaking the cost and effort required to relocate the Victoria office by September 2026. A relocation could yield long-term savings, but not without a potentially significant upfront investment in the current and next fiscal year, and a very real risk of further adding to our recruitment and retention challenges.

CONCLUSION

My goal with this review was to identify the most substantive operational challenges faced by Islands Trust and propose realistic actions to begin to address them. The issues described are real and are impacting organizational performance. All indications are they have become increasingly problematic over time, and they will continue to do so if nothing is done to address them.

Nothing I have proposed here is particularly radical. In fact, I suspect some trustees may have hoped for more aggressive actions. But a more ambitious reform of our operations would require stopping work on a number of current projects already underway at the direction of Trust Council. So, the approach I have taken respects that work and direction, while also seeking to address the most pressing gaps and setting some foundational pieces in place to support a more sustainable operational future. This is not about a major transformation of how Islands Trust operates, but rather the beginning of a process and commitment to shore up the foundations for ongoing improvement over time.

Although I have limited the recommendations that involve additional new funding, I acknowledge what I have proposed nonetheless will add a significant cost to the fiscal 2026/27 budget if adopted. There are other areas of the organization that would undoubtedly benefit from additional resourcing. But I have limited my recommendations to those that are of the most value at this time. There are already several other budget requests coming before Council related to additional staffing next year, and I have prepared this report with consideration of those requests. Every one of them, including those I have recommend in this report, aligns with and supports the expressed priorities of Council. In the end, it is up to Council to decide on which, if any, of those priorities warrants the proposed investment at this time.

As CAO, regardless of what Council may decide on these recommendations, my focus will continue to be on implementing whatever improvements we can within my responsibility for the operations of Islands Trust to make the organization more effective and efficient. I will work with senior staff to find creative ways to address our staffing challenges. All staff within Islands Trust will share in the effort to make it an even better place to work. We will work to shift the culture to move beyond some of the problematic dynamics of the past and ensure we provide the best advice possible to Council and all Trust governing bodies.

The variable is the extent to which Council will choose to aid in those efforts. If the recommendations I have made are not supported, the work of Islands Trust will of course continue – it will just continue to be harder and less effective in some cases than it could otherwise be. If the recommendations are all adopted, it won't free up enough capacity to adequately resolve the core issue. But it would provide the opportunity to at least and at last make a start.

I am grateful to Trust Council for its openness to this review and consideration of this report.

APPENDIX 1: REVIEW APPROACH

Goals

The long-term goals of the recommendations resulting from this review are to help ensure:

1. Resources are appropriate and aligned to better deliver on strategic and operational priorities.
2. Employee engagement and retention improve over time.
3. Practices and processes enable more effective decision making and service delivery.
4. Islands Trust is better able to respond and adapt to its current and future operating context.

Principles

The following principles informed the design of the review process:

1. The operational review will be designed and undertaken with intention to:
 - Be objective and evidence-based.
 - Draw on past experience but be forward-looking.
 - Produce recommendations that are ambitious but achievable.
 - Challenge existing norms and organizational inertia where appropriate.
2. The review will focus on organization performance, and not the performance of individual staff or Trust governing bodies
3. The review will consider the broader fiscal and economic context in which the Islands Trust works, and the intersection with the 2022 Governance Review and other relevant existing reports.
4. The review will be internally focused, but may draw on external data and benchmarks where available and relevant.
5. While it may identify opportunities to redirect existing resources and improve efficiency, the review is not a budget reduction exercise.

In-Scope

The review considered:

- Alignment between the Islands Trust's mandate and operational capacity.
- Overall HR performance (including staffing levels, succession risks, recruitment, retention, training and knowledge transfer).
- Administrative/operational policies and procedures, and core operational functions.
- Technology tools and systems.
- Interface between "headquarters" and regional operations.
- Interface between staff and trustees.
- Alignment between the Islands Trust Conservancy and the rest of Islands Trust operations.
- Financial overview and procedures.

Out-of-Scope

The review intentionally did not consider:

- Actions that would require legislative change.

- Trust Council priorities, policies and bylaws, although in some cases related suggestions are made that Trust Council may want to consider.
- BC Public Service Agency policies and services, except where possible changes to access to services may improve Islands Trust operations.
- Issues addressed through collective agreement provisions.
- Relationships with external agencies and partners, although recommendations may result in subsequent engagement with external partners.

Inputs

The review considered the following:

- Operational data where available.
- A selection of relevant previous reports and reviews undertaken in the last 20 years.
- Input from the 2025 Staff Survey and an engagement session with all Islands Trust staff.
- Input from a survey of all trustees and meetings with individual trustees in early 2025.
- External benchmarks and comparators where available and applicable.
- Input and analysis provided by senior staff.

For the staff engagement session, at a June 2025 meeting all staff were invited to participate in a collaborative session where they provided answers to the following questions:

1. What work, if any, do you think Islands Trust could stop doing?
2. What is the most important thing Islands Trust should do more effectively?
3. What is the most time-consuming procedural or process issue that you would like to improve?
4. What would be your biggest priority to improve our technology tools?
5. What do you need more time to do in your job?

Staff who were unable to attend the in-person session had the option of submitting their responses in writing to the CAO.

For the trustee survey, all trustees were invited to answer the following questions:

1. What work do you think Islands Trust does most effectively?
2. In what area of its work, if any, are you most concerned that Islands Trust is not adequately meeting its operational obligations?
3. In relation to the work you highlighted in question 2, what do you think are the main reasons Islands Trust is not meeting its obligations?
4. What practical operational steps could be taken to improve Islands Trust's performance in the work you highlighted in question 2?
5. What work, if any, do you think Islands Trust should stop doing or do less of?
6. How effectively do Islands Trust staff support your Local Trust Committee?
7. What, if any, practical operational steps could be taken to improve support for your Local Trust Committee?
8. What is the most time-consuming operational procedure or process that you would like to see improved?
9. What would be your biggest priority to improve Islands Trust's technology tools?

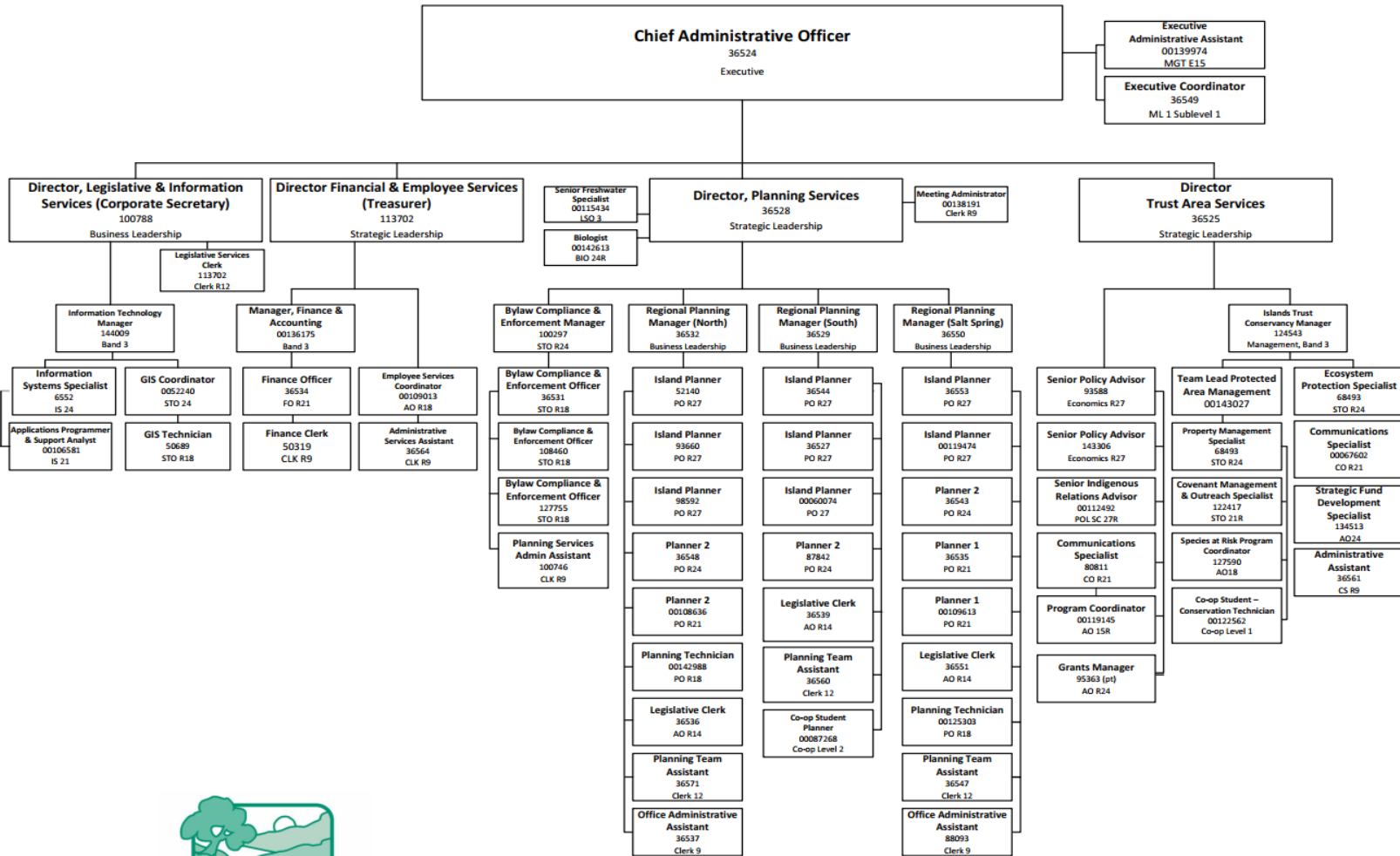
For the senior staff engagement, all department directors were asked to complete a template providing more detailed analysis of:

- Work streams in their department that Islands Trust is required to undertake by legislation or policy, with an assessment of how effectively these are performed.
- Work streams in their department that are discretionary, with an assessment of whether that work could be reduced or stopped and the related impacts.
- Potential work streams they believe Islands Trust should be undertaking but that it is not.
- Any potential organizational structure changes they would recommend.

This report does not include full data for the above, but key themes and results are noted throughout where relevant.

APPENDIX 2: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Islands Trust Staff Organization Chart



APPENDIX 3: STAFFING LEVELS 2016-2026

As detailed in the table below, Since 2016:

- Islands Trust’s approved budget has grown by approximately 54%
- The total budget for salaries and benefits has grown by 66%.* This includes increases in the number of paid staff, but also classification changes, increase benefit costs, and any annual salary increases under negotiated collective agreements or, for excluded staff, determined under direction from the BC Public Service Agency.
- Spending on salaries and benefits as a total share of the budget has remained relatively constant, averaging 60% and ranging from a low of 57% to a high of 64%.
- The annual average employee headcount** has grown from 55 to 63, although it has been relatively stable over the past five years.

ITEM	FISCAL YEAR										
	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Total Budget	11,198,731	10,979,219	9,745,209	9,302,357	9,093,119	8,194,811	7,939,886	8,126,134	7,768,511	7,357,008	7,254,445
<i>Budget increase Year over Year (\$)</i>	219,512	1,234,010	442,852	209,238	898,308	254,925	(186,248)	357,623	411,503	102,563	
<i>Budget increase Year over Year (%)</i>	2.0%	12.7%	4.8%	2.3%	11.0%	3.2%	-2.3%	4.6%	5.6%	1.4%	
Total Salaries & Benefits Budget	7,080,962	6,632,424	6,229,223	5,461,757	5,524,160	5,097,171	4,852,374	4,604,496	4,412,800	4,350,912	4,256,505
Salaries & Benefits Budget as a % of Total Approved budget	63%	60%	64%	59%	61%	62%	61%	57%	57%	59%	59%
<i>Salaries & Benefits growth year over Year</i>	448,538	403,201	767,466	(62,403)	426,989	244,797	247,878	191,696	61,888	94,407	
<i>Salaries & Benefits growth year over Year - %</i>	6.8%	6.5%	14.1%	-1.1%	8.4%	5.0%	5.4%	4.3%	1.4%	2.2%	
BCGEU wage increase in year	Pending	3.00%	6.75%	4.00%	2.00%	2.00%	3.00%	1.50%	1.50%	0.50%	1.00%
Benefit rate charged in year	25.40%	25.40%	25.40%	25.40%	25.40%	25.40%	25.40%	24.80%	24.80%	24.34%	24.80%
Average headcount	63	65	62	61	64	59	62	58	55	53	55
<i>Headcount change YoY</i>	-2	3	1	-3	5	-3	4	3	2	-2	
<i>% growth in 10 year</i>	15%										

Notes

* Salary budgets for fiscal 2025/26 were based on a forecasted 2.5% general wage increase for included staff and do not reflect the 3.0% negotiated collective agreement that, at the time of this report writing, was still not ratified.

** “Headcount” refers to the actual number of individuals employed. Headcount can fluctuate throughout a fiscal year depending on the number of temporary employees who may be included at any given point (e.g. short-term co-op staff employed for four-month terms).

APPENDIX 4: MANAGER OF INDIGENOUS RELATIONS BUSINESS CASE



Islands Trust

**Budget Funding Request
Short-Form Business Case**

Completion of this form initiates a request to the management team, FPC, and ultimately Trust Council for allocation funding in the next fiscal year budget. The form is to be completed and submitted at the start of the decision making process. The business case forms part of the Annual Budget Process (refer to Islands Trust Council Budget Process Policy 6.3.i).

TO BE COMPLETED BY INITIATOR	
<p>Requested by (Committee or Operational Unit): CAO</p>	<p>Budget Source (select all that apply):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Specific Project Funding (select all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Third Party Contractors <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Travel Expense <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Overtime Expense <input type="checkbox"/> New Staff Member – Temporary for project <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Hardware/Software <p><input type="checkbox"/> Furniture & Equipment</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Computer Hardware/Software/Supplies</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> New Staff Resources (see Staff Costing Tool)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permanent <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Temp Duration: _____ <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other – please describe: _____</p>
<p>Department: Trust Area Services</p>	
<p>Name of Request: Manager of Indigenous Relations</p>	
<p>\$ Value of Request (indicate by fiscal year and total if project is multi-year):</p> <p>Estimated salary and benefits: \$110,000* Travel: \$1,500 Training: \$1,000 Laptop: \$2,500 Total: \$115,000</p> <p>*Prorated for July start and subject to PSA classification review. Assumes Excluded Band 3 classification.</p>	
<p>Date of Submission to Finance:</p>	<p>Funding Required for (date range): July 1, 2026-March 31, 2027</p>
<p>TIE TO ISLANDS TRUST GUIDING DOCUMENTS: (Indicate how the proposed project/activity/work ties to Trust Council's strategic plan, Policy Statement directives, Council Bylaws, work programs, the Trust's object, etc. Provide a copy/paste of the relevant reference, along with hyperlinks to external documents where available.)</p>	

The proposed Manager of Indigenous Relations supports the reconciliation declarations adopted by Trust Council and the Islands Trust Conservancy in 2019. It will also play a key role in responding to the direction from the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs that Islands Trust must demonstrate a commitment to collaborating with First Nations to work toward consensus in its bylaw and policy work.

The manager will also lead work to deliver on the strategic initiatives set out in Trust Council's Strategic Plan under the focus area of First Nations Relations and Reconciliation.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY: *(What issue are you trying to resolve with this initiative, or what opportunity has been identified that would benefit Islands Trust by undertaking this initiative? What are the future needs? What organizational objectives are being addressed? Include background information that decision makers will need to properly assess this request.)*

As described in the CAO's 2025 Operational Review, despite efforts and successes to-date, Islands Trust lacks a coordinated, coherent and consistent framework for how it advances its engagement with First Nations and to fulfil its mandate. This lack of consistency and coordination presents an increasing risk to relationship building, and has been noted as a barrier by some First Nations.

The work required exceeds the already strained capacity of the existing Senior Indigenous Relations Advisor role and the Director of Trust Area Services. Multiple other staff work to support reconciliation as part of their ongoing project work. But there is a need for additional dedicated capacity to more effectively support those projects and deliver on related priority policy work.

The Manager of Indigenous Relations will be tasked with working across the organization to design and implement a consistent and coordinated approach to support Trust Council's Indigenous relations priorities. This role would work with Planning Services and Islands Trust Conservancy staff in particular – not to direct their work but to provide a framework that enables consistency while also allowing for flexibility where needed to advance individual projects. The manager would serve as “air traffic control” for the overall coordination of all Indigenous relations initiatives.

PROJECTED RESULTS/DELIVERABLES: *(How does this address the issue/opportunity described above? Indicate how results of this work will impact decision-making by trustees or staff. Will this work result in better decisions, more efficient decision-making, more efficient completion of work, better public perception, etc. Consider all possible results from undertaking this work.)*

The priority for this Manager in their first year will be to collaborate with staff across Islands Trust in developing a new framework to ensure a coordinated, consistent approach to First Nations relations across the organization, including the Islands Trust Conservancy. In delivering this framework, they will also play a key role advising on:

The delivery and implementation of a new Reconciliation Action Plan

Advancing agreements with First Nations

The implementation of a new capacity funding policy

Advancing work on the First Nations referral project

Trust Council's related Strategic Plan initiatives.

Islands Trust Conservancy's Five Year Plan development and related initiatives

Alongside the Senior Indigenous Relations Advisor, the Manager would serve as a liaison and advisor in building and sustaining effective, respectful and productive relationships between Islands Trust and First Nations.

RISK ASSESSMENT: *(List and discuss potential risk factors associated with this work, if identified. List and discuss the options that exist to mitigate identified risks.)*

Hiring a new staff resource to support Indigenous Relations comes with very little, if any, risk to the organisation. Identified risks with hiring a new FTE would be those associated with the hiring of any position, such as the inability to find or retain suitable candidates. The risk of not supporting this new position is greater than the risks of supporting it, as described in the Issue/Opportunity section of this report.

Adding to Islands Trust's capacity to advance relationship building with Indigenous Governing Bodies will play an important role in mitigating the growing risk that Islands Trust is not able to achieve its policy objectives if it does not effectively and respectfully engage in meaningful reconciliation efforts.

As with the addition of any new position, as a permanent hire this position requires an ongoing budgetary commitment.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: *(What other options/alternative courses of action were considered? List and discuss each alternative separately. Each option must be supported by a succinct and realistic presentation of the benefits, risks, financial implications, resource requirements and other implications to allow for an informed decision among the options. One option should reflect the status quo - i.e. do nothing - and the anticipated results of that action.)*

Option 1: Hire the Manager of Indigenous Relations as proposed

Benefits – Provides the opportunity to establish the proposed Indigenous relations framework, provides additional capacity to support broader work to advance Trust Council's reconciliation priorities, and allows for more productive relationship building with First Nations.

Risks – As above.

Financial implications – Does require an ongoing increase in the staffing budget (\$140,000).

Resource requirements – Staff time to complete a hiring competition and onboard successful applicant.

Option 2: Contract the development of the framework

Benefits – Provides the opportunity to establish the proposed Indigenous relations framework without a permanent staffing commitment.

Risks – Does not resolve the capacity challenge Islands Trust will face to adequately support its related goals and obligations. Does not allow for establishing long-term staff relationships with key Indigenous Governing Body partners.

Financial implications – Given the scope of the work required, the anticipated cost for fiscal 26/27 would be at least the same as the cost of hiring the Manager position.

Resource requirements – Does not provide staff capacity to support the broader duties proposed for the Manager position.

Option 3: Hire a new position but at a lower classification and salary

Benefits – Provides the opportunity to establish the proposed Indigenous relations framework and some additional staff capacity for the ongoing work.

Risks – Unlikely to attract a candidate with the appropriate level of experience and expertise to lead the development of the proposed framework or provide the level of advice to other staff that is required.

Financial implications – Depending on the classification level, potential salary and benefit costs may be approximately \$20,000 lower.

Option 4: Status Quo - not dedicate any additional staff capacity to support reconciliation

Benefits – No budget increase for 26/27

Risks – Islands Trust will continue to be unable to fully meet its commitments to establish and maintain mutually-respectful relationships with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples and Trust Council will need to reconsider its expectations for what can be achieved in that area.

As has happened with the Conservancy Five Year Plan, insufficient engagement with First Nations during development of bylaws risks having them returned. The Ministry is expecting the Islands Trust to undertake robust engagement with the Nations in the development of bylaws to ensure that proposals can be heard from Nations early, considered by the relevant Trust body(ies) and, modifications or adjustments made.

Financial implications – No budget increase for 26/27.

Resource Implications – The CAO may consider reallocating a vacant existing FTE to support Indigenous relations, which would reduce staff capacity in another department thereby impacting the ability to advance other work.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS: *(What related factors have been identified that are important to the success of completing this work/initiative? Which of these factors are considered critical to the success of this initiative? Discuss outcomes if critical success factors are not met.)*

Successful recruitment of a suitably qualified candidate with the level of experience and expertise to advance the required work at an appropriate level.

Collaboration and engagement from staff across Islands Trust with a willingness to buy into a more coordinated and consistent approach to reconciliation work.

Support from Trust Council and management to support ongoing work with adequate long-term resourcing and consistent political and policy guidance.

RECOMMENDED OPTION: *(State your recommendation, referencing the options discussed earlier, and summarise why you chose it over others.)*

Option 1: Hire the Manager of Indigenous Relations as proposed

Islands Trust is not in a position to fulfil its obligations and goals related to Indigenous relations with existing staff capacity. Without the proposed Manager position, efforts will continue to lack a coordinated and consistent approach, which will continue to impede progress and relationship-building with First Nations.

The Manager position will provide additional capacity at a level of experience and expertise that can effectively and professionally engage with internal and external partners to establish a new framework to advance Indigenous relations at Islands Trust and enable effective delivery of the mandate.

COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS: *(Discuss both quantitative and qualitative considerations of this initiative. Quantitative discussion should include financial costs as well as benefits (savings). Qualitative considerations include non-quantifiable costs and benefits.)*

The ongoing annual cost of hiring a permanent Manager of Indigenous Relations will still be less than contracting services to provide a similar level of work. It will also help free up capacity for the Senior Indigenous Relations Advisor and Director of Trust Area Services to focus on other priorities. Both staff and trustees have identified the need to more effectively advance work related to reconciliation, which has been impeded by the limited staff capacity to-date. The Manager's work will help lead to greater coordination of these efforts across Islands Trust, resulting in a more coordinated experience for First Nations in their engagement with Islands Trust. This in turn should enable the more efficient and effective advancement of policy, bylaw and other referrals and related engagement.

PURCHASING PROCEDURE: *(Describe any purchasing processes that will be needed to support this initiative (ie. Direct Award, RFP, ITQ to qualified vendor) if goods or services need to be procured for the work. If this is for new staff hiring, indicate likely hiring method (ie: external competition, government-restricted internal competition, etc.)*

The Manager position would be filled through a competition open to external and internal applicants in accordance with standard Public Service Agency hiring process and practices.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY: *(What are the specific features of the "roll-out" of the recommended solution? What is the timeline and anticipated date of completion for this initiative?)*

Subject to Trust Council endorsement of the related recommendation in the Operational Review Report, staff will work to finalize the draft job description and submit it to the Public Service Agency for approval.

Once final budget approval is secured in March 2026, the competition will be posted with the goal of an early July start date.

STAFF RESOURCING: *(What staff resources will be needed to achieve success on this initiative? Estimate how many hours of staff time will be required, by staff level/role. Comment on the reasonability of expected staff hours when assessed in conjunction with other work underway or planned.)*

Pre-hiring activities:

- Director, Trust Area Services – draft job description for new staff, screen applicant resumes, prepare and mark written assessment for applicants, conduct interviews, conduct reference checks, conduct offer – estimated 50 hours
- Employee Services Coordinator – administer job posting/resume collection/administer written assessments and interview scheduling, prepare offer letter, file for criminal record check – total 15 hours
- Interview Panellists (DTAS + likely 2 others) – conduct interviews and post-interview discussions, 2 hours/interviewee per panellist.

Post-hiring activities:

- Director, Trust Area Services – training/orientation with new staff, 2-3 months
- Employee Services Coordinator – process new hire paperwork, schedule/deliver basic new hire orientation and on boarding sessions – total 15 hours
- Others across organisation – orientation to other departments and relevant processes – 1 week

CHANGE MANAGEMENT/COMMUNICATIONS/COLLABORATION: *(Discuss proposed change management requirements, communications needed, involvement with others. Are there any concerns related to these? If so, how will these be addressed? Have other stakeholders been identified?)*

Internal communications to staff once approved and competition posted.
Competition posted by the BC Public Service Agency

Attachment: Draft Job Profile

Requested by: Trust Area Services

Prepared by: CAO, November 5, 2025

Reviewed by Director, Trust Area Services

**JOB PROFILE****TITLE:** MANAGER, INDIGENOUS RELATIONS**CLASSIFICATION:** TBC**MINISTRY:** ISLANDS TRUST,
MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS**WORK UNIT:** TRUST AREA SERVICES**SUPERVISOR TITLE:** DIRECTOR, TRUST AREA SERVICES**SUPERVISOR POSITION #:** 00036525**PROGRAM**

Located in Coast Salish territory, the [Islands Trust](#) is a special purpose government responsible for protecting the unique amenities and environment of more than 450 islands and surrounding waters in the southern Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound. Created by the Province via the *Islands Trust Act*, Islands Trust plans and regulates local land use, coordinates with other level of government and First Nations on key issues impacting the area, and protects land through the Islands Trust Conservancy.

JOB OVERVIEW

The Manager of Indigenous Relations leads the design and implementation of a coordinated and collaborative approach to intergovernmental relationships among Islands Trust bodies and First Nations in the Islands Trust Area, as well as regional districts, and provincial and federal agencies. The Manager of Indigenous Relations also plays a key role in the development of productive relationships and innovative reconciliation and engagement strategies.

KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

- Leads the coordination of Islands Trust's approach to relationship building with First Nations, Indigenous groups, and Indigenous community members to ensure a consistent experience across multiple projects.
- Provides expert policy advice to staff and elected officials to help ensure Islands Trust's policies, procedures and practices reflect effective approaches to relationship building and the prevailing legal context.
- Serves as a lead advisor in negotiations, supporting project teams in obtaining mutually beneficial agreements (both short, and long-term) with Indigenous Governing Bodies.
- Represents Islands Trust priorities and operations in intergovernmental dialogue with First Nations and other governments.
- Coordinates and communicates First Nations' requests and interest to Islands Trust staff and trustees and Trust bodies, and works collaboratively with all parties to respond to requests and address issues raised including, but not limited to, opportunities for information sharing and cooperation.

- Leads and oversees referrals to First Nations on Islands Trust projects.
- Supervises the coordination of government-to-government meetings between First Nations and Trust bodies.
- Attends meetings of elected officials to provide advice on matters pertaining to intergovernmental relations.
- Oversees the drafting, management, and monitoring of protocol and coordination agreements with First Nations and other governments.
- Leads the implementation of Islands Trust policies and procedures regarding capacity funding to support projects across the organization.
- Exercises a high degree of judgement, tact and diplomacy in dealing with issues that may involve communication of information that could have a significant impact on the image and credibility of the Islands Trust, including responding to enquiries from the media.
- Other duties as requested by the Director, Trust Area Services.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Education and Experience Requirements

- A Master's degree in community, land use, or rural planning, social sciences, public administration, or related field, OR
- A Bachelor's degree in the above disciplines plus five years' of related experience including consultation with First Nations regarding land use planning and resource management.
- Minimum five years' experience in intergovernmental or interagency relations, including relationship building with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples.
- Demonstrated experience working collaboratively with commissions, councils, committees, elected officials, senior staff and/or community partners to deliver results.
- Minimum three years' experience supervising staff.
- An equivalent combination of experience and continuous learning may be considered.

Preference may be given to candidates with any of the following:

- Supervisory experience in a unionized public sector employment environment.
- BC local government land use planning experience.
- Experience engaging First Nations regarding land use planning and/or natural resource management.
- Demonstrated experience working with Indigenous Peoples and First Nation governments in the Salish Sea region.
- Demonstrated senior level leadership experience fostering change and building awareness.

PROVISOS

- Some overnight travel is a requirement of this position.
- Possession and maintenance of a Class 5 BC Drivers' License.
- Criminal Record Check is required.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- Knowledge of social, environmental, political, economic, and land use planning issues relevant to the Islands Trust Area and its residents.
- Demonstrated knowledge of the Local Government Act, Community Charter, official community plans and land use planning bylaws, regulations and other legislation.
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience with First Nations government interests that intersect with local government interests in British Columbia, particularly as they relate to land use planning and regulation; familiarity with relevant legislation and case law.
- Exceptional diplomacy, tact, and communication skills.
- Strong supervisory skills with a focus on building strong staff engagement and a collaborative working environment.
- Contract management and project management skills with the ability to manage multiple projects with diverse objectives and deadlines.
- Significant attention to detail, ability to identify emerging issues and prioritize appropriately to meet deliverables, outcomes and deadlines.
- Demonstrated ability to quickly identify and analyse implications for the Islands Trust's reputation and operations as the basis for recommending options and responses to senior staff and Islands Trust bodies.
- Demonstrated ability to use initiative to respond appropriately to unanticipated issues with creative and innovative solutions using strong business and political acumen.
- Ability to work independently under pressure with minimal supervision.
- Demonstrated sensitivity to political issues and impacts.
- Ability to establish and maintain constructive working relationships with a wide range of public officials and managers, and general public.
- Demonstrated oral and written communication skills.

BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCIES

Leadership implies a desire to lead others, including diverse teams. Leadership is generally, but not always, demonstrated from a position of formal authority. The “team” here should be understood broadly as any group with which the person interacts regularly.

Fostering trust involves knowledge and skills to build and sustain trust in an organization and between the leader and his/her colleagues, through integrity, concern for others and consistent behaviour, following through on commitments and open communications.

Problem Solving/Judgement is the ability to analyze problems systematically, organize information, identify key factors, identify underlying causes and generate solutions.

Improving Operations is the ability and motivation to apply one's knowledge and past experience for improving upon current modes of operation within the Islands Trust. This behaviour ranges from adapting widely used approaches to developing entirely new value-added solutions.

Teamwork and Co-operation is the ability to work co-operatively within diverse teams, work groups and across the organization to achieve group and organizational goals. It includes the desire and ability to understand and respond effectively to other people from diverse backgrounds with diverse views.

INDIGENOUS COMPETENCIES

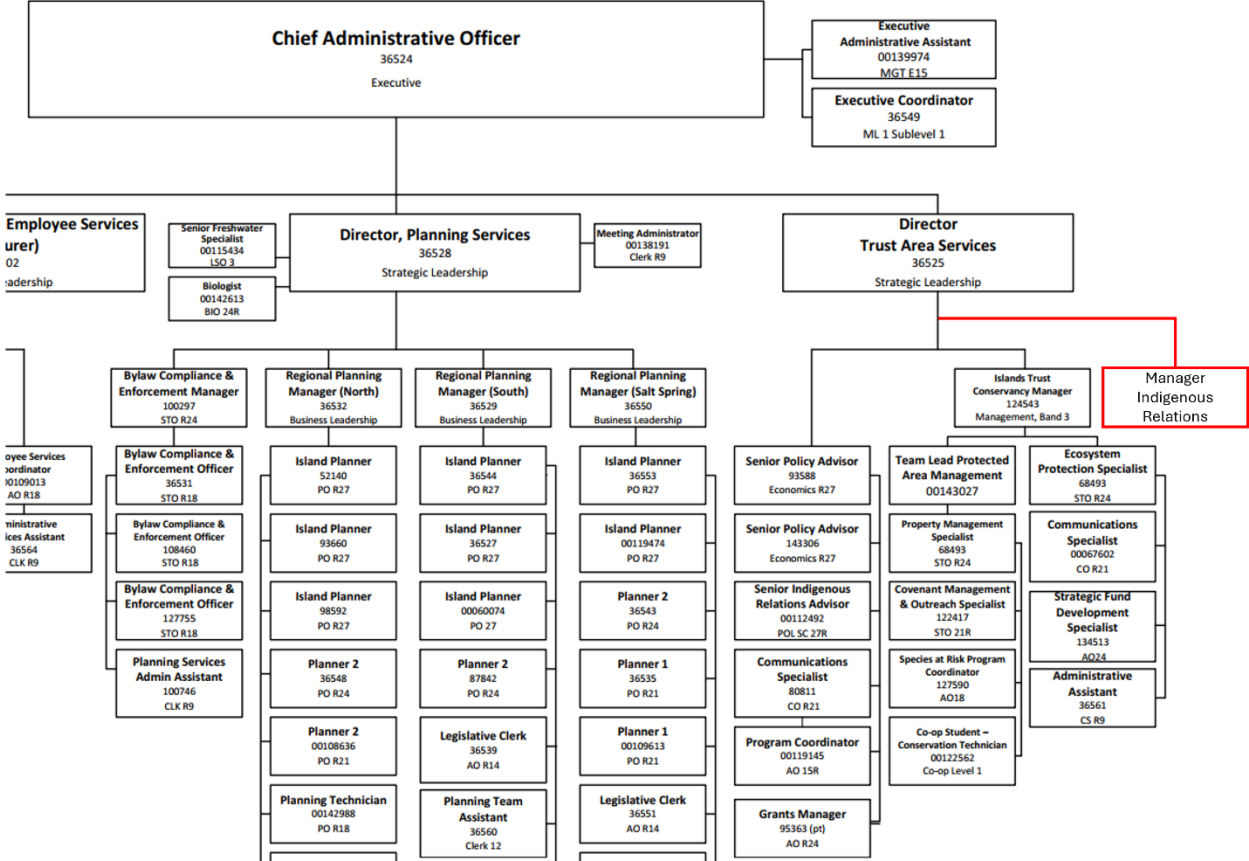
Cultural Agility is the ability to work respectfully, knowledgeably and effectively with Indigenous people. It is noticing and readily adapting to cultural uniqueness in order to create a sense of safety for all. It is openness to unfamiliar experiences, transforming feelings of nervousness or anxiety into curiosity and appreciation. It is examining one's own culture and worldview and the culture of the BC Public Service, and to notice their commonalities and distinctions with Indigenous cultures and worldviews. It is recognition of the ways that personal and professional values may conflict or align with those of Indigenous people. It is the capacity to relate to or allow for differing cultural perspectives and being willing to experience a personal shift in perspective.

Strategic Orientation is the ability to link the long-range vision of Indigenous self-determination to daily work, ranging from a simple understanding to a sophisticated awareness of the full impact of thinking and actions. It is the ability to think and operate broadly, with the goal of sustainability, to further the goals of Indigenous peoples in a way that meets the collective public interest. This also means taking responsibility to collaboratively design and implement steps to redress past harms and set frameworks in place to prevent their recurrence.

Change Leadership is championing the achievement of intended, real change that meets the enduring vision of Indigenous self-determination in British Columbia. It involves collaboratively developing and implementing ideas to achieve positive change from anywhere in the BC Public Service. The change leader learns from other leaders and elders, models the vision, and encourages members of the public service to commit to and champion the vision. The change leader inspires others into new ways of thinking and doing business. The change leader routinely energizes the change process and removes barriers to change.

Building a Trust-Based Relationship requires a fundamental understanding that "relationship" is the foundation from which all activities happen, and that building a good relationship takes time and commitment. It is a willingness to build a personal relationship in addition to a professional one, participating in open exchanges of experiences and culture. It requires a genuine, non-controlling approach and relies upon demonstrated integrity and transparency. Building a trust-based relationship requires a high level of consciousness of the experience of Indigenous people with Crown relations. It assumes that strengths abound in Indigenous people, cultures and communities.

Islands Trust Staff Organization Chart



APPENDIX 5: ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS LEAD BUSINESS CASE



**Budget Funding Request
Short-Form Business Case**

Completion of this form initiates a request to the management team, FPC, and ultimately Trust Council for allocation funding in the next fiscal year budget. The form is to be completed and submitted at the start of the decision making process. The business case forms part of the Annual Budget Process (refer to Islands Trust Council Budget Process Policy 6.3.i).

TO BE COMPLETED BY INITIATOR	
<p>Requested by (<i>Committee or Operational Unit</i>): CAO</p>	<p>Budget Source (select all that apply):</p>
<p>Department: Trust Area Services</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Specific Project Funding (select all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Third Party Contractors <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Travel Expense <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Overtime Expense <input type="checkbox"/> New Staff Member – Temporary for project <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Hardware/Software
<p>Name of Request: Engagement and Communications Lead</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Furniture & Equipment</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Computer Hardware/Software/Supplies</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> New Staff Resources (see Staff Costing Tool)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permanent</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Temp Duration: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other – please describe: _____</p>
<p>\$ Value of Request (<i>indicate by fiscal year and total if project is multi-year</i>):</p> <p>Estimated salary and benefits: \$90,000* Travel: \$1,500 Training: \$1,000 Laptop: \$2,500 Total: \$95,000</p> <p>*Prorated for July 1 start and subject to PSA classification review.</p>	
<p>Date of Submission to Finance:</p>	<p>Funding Required for (date range): July 1, 2026-March 31, 2027</p>

TIE TO ISLANDS TRUST GUIDING DOCUMENTS: *(Indicate how the proposed project/activity/work ties to Trust Council's strategic plan, Policy Statement directives, Council Bylaws, work programs, the Trust's object, etc. Provide a copy/paste of the relevant reference, along with hyperlinks to external documents where available.)*

The proposed Engagement and Communications Lead would support:

[Strategic Plan](#) initiative 1.2.2: explore new engagement models (virtual and in person forums) to reach more community members.

Trust Council [Policy 6.10.2: Communications](#)

In recent years, Trust Council has approved an annual communications strategy, with the expectation that a companion Islands Trust engagement strategy will also be developed at a later date to support engagement on projects. To-date, limited staff capacity has not allowed for development of that engagement strategy.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY: *(What issue are you trying to resolve with this initiative, or what opportunity has been identified that would benefit Islands Trust by undertaking this initiative? What are the future needs? What organizational objectives are being addressed? Include background information that decision makers will need to properly assess this request.)*

Islands Trust and some local trust committees have been criticized for a perceived lack of communication and engagement in relation to various projects and initiatives. Maintaining day-to-day communications support for core functions (social media and website content, media relations, publications etc.) and major Trust Council projects like the Policy Statement Amendment Project consumes all of the available capacity of the one Communications Specialist supporting Trust Council and local trust committees. This leaves very limited capacity to support local trust committees and to effectively and more proactively address emerging communications needs. While the position is currently vacant, the second Communications Specialist position (currently vacant) dedicated to the Islands Trust Conservancy also has been at full capacity.

With staff additional capacity, there would be more opportunity to:

Better support local trust committees in communicating about their projects and priorities so the public could be more informed and more likely to participate.

Improve awareness and understanding of Islands Trust and its role through more proactive and strategic communications.

Address public feedback about perceived issues like the difficulty of finding information on the website.

Better support staff and trustees in providing more accurate, transparent and timely information about projects and priorities.

Currently, public engagement is planned and implemented largely independently by Trust Area Services and Planning Services staff working on projects. There is no overall coordination of engagement resulting in a lack of efficiency and consistency. Each time a local trust committee undertakes an engagement process they often start from scratch and develop their own methods and materials with little reference to past initiatives and little coordination with other departments in terms of timing of other events/surveys. The Trust does not collect information in a standardized way that would support analysis of engagement processes or public satisfaction. Also, the Trust has been challenged to reach hard-to-reach audiences.

The current Program Coordinator position has begun devoting some of their time to support engagement practices, but there is still a lack of capacity to develop and implement a more

coordinated and consistent engagement approach. The draft budget for fiscal 2026/27 includes a request for \$10,000 to hire a consultant to develop an engagement strategy. The proposed Engagement and Communications Lead would still be needed to support full implementation of that strategy. This new role could also potentially take on development of the strategy and the budget request for the \$10,000 could be withdrawn.

PROJECTED RESULTS/DELIVERABLES: *(How does this address the issue/opportunity described above?*

Indicate how results of this work will impact decision-making by trustees or staff. Will this work result in better decisions, more efficient decision-making, more efficient completion of work, better public perception, etc. Consider all possible results from undertaking this work.)

The priority for this Manager in their first year will be to develop a new framework to ensure a coordinated, consistent approach to communications and engagement across the organization, including the Islands Trust Conservancy. In delivering this framework, they will also play a key role advising on:

Improved capacity to support communications on both Trust Council and local trust committee projects and priorities in a more strategic and proactive manner.

Improved, more consistent approach to public engagement, supported with a strategic annual engagement plan.

Regularly and consistent reporting to Trust bodies, Bowen Island Municipality and the public about engagement to inform decision making.

Improved analytics and measurement of communications and engagement activities.

Improved alignment and coordination between Trust Council, local trust committee and Islands Trust Conservancy communications and engagement.

RISK ASSESSMENT: *(List and discuss potential risk factors associated with this work, if identified. List and discuss the options that exist to mitigate identified risks.)*

Investing in engagement and communications staff can sometimes be perceived as a lower priority than investments in direct service delivery. However, improving communications and engagement support for the work of Islands Trust and the Islands Trust Conservancy will help reduce risk and improve delivery of projects across the organization.

As with the addition of any new position, as a permanent hire this position requires an ongoing budgetary commitment. However, it may allow for some reduction in funding for contractors to support engagement and communications on major projects.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: *(What other options/alternative courses of action were considered? List and discuss each alternative separately. Each option must be supported by a succinct and realistic presentation of the benefits, risks, financial implications, resource requirements and other implications to allow for an informed decision among the options. One option should reflect the status quo - i.e. do nothing - and the anticipated results of that action.)*

Option 1: Hire the Engagement and Communications Lead as proposed

Benefits – As outlined above, this new position provides the opportunity to improve coordination and delivery of engagement and communications across the organization, including the Islands Trust Conservancy. It will also reduce some of the workload for the Director of Trust Area Services, who is already over-stretched in their responsibilities.

Risks – As above.

Financial implications – Does require an ongoing increase in the staffing budget (estimated \$115,000 annually), although it could eliminate the requested \$10,000 for a consultant to develop an engagement plan and longer-term contracting costs for some projects.

Resource requirements – Staff time to complete a hiring competition.

Option 2: Status Quo – no additional staff capacity for engagement and communications.

Benefits – No budget increase for 26/27

Risks – Staff will continue to have limited capacity to support communications and public engagement for some projects. Islands Trust will lack capacity to fully implement an effective engagement strategy.

Financial implications – No budget increase for 26/27.

Resource Implications – The Director of Trust Area Services will continue to need to dedicate a portion of her limited capacity to support engagement and communications.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS: *(What related factors have been identified that are important to the success of completing this work/initiative? Which of these factors are considered critical to the success of this initiative? Discuss outcomes if critical success factors are not met.)*

Successful recruitment of a suitably qualified candidate with the level of experience and expertise to advance the required work at an appropriate level.

Collaboration and engagement from staff across Islands Trust with a willingness to buy into a more coordinated and consistent approach to public engagement.

RECOMMENDED OPTION: *(State your recommendation, referencing the options discussed earlier, and summarise why you chose it over others.)*

Option 1: Hire the Engagement and Communications Lead as proposed

Without additional capacity, public engagement and communications activities will continue to struggle to meet the needs of Trust Council and Local Trust Committees. This sustains the risk of further degradation of the reputation of Islands Trust, which undermines the organization's ability to advance its mandate and policy work.

The additional capacity provided by this role will support a more consistent engagement experience for all Islands Trust and Islands Trust Conservancy projects, which will provide a more positive experience the public and inform better decision making for trustees and board members.

COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS: *(Discuss both quantitative and qualitative considerations of this initiative. Quantitative discussion should include financial costs as well as benefits (savings). Qualitative considerations include non-quantifiable costs and benefits.)*

While major projects will likely still require some contracted engagement and communications services, bolstering internal capacity can help reduce that. Any contracted services will be able to use the engagement and communications framework used for all Islands Trust work, which should reduce some of their costs and also maintain a more consistent experience for the public.

Additional capacity will also allow Islands Trust to be more proactive in its communications activities, which will better meet the public desire for better, more transparent communications, and it will support trustees in being more effective in their work.

PURCHASING PROCEDURE: *(Describe any purchasing processes that will be needed to support this initiative (ie. Direct Award, RFP, ITQ to qualified vendor) if goods or services need to be procured for the work. If this is for new staff hiring, indicate likely hiring method (ie: external competition, government-restricted internal competition, etc.)*

The Engagement and Communications Lead position would be filled through a competition open to external and internal applicants in accordance with standard Public Service Agency hiring process and practices.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY: *(What are the specific features of the “roll-out” of the recommended solution? What is the timeline and anticipated date of completion for this initiative?)*

Subject to Trust Council approval, staff will work to finalize the draft job description and submit it to the Public Service Agency for approval.
Once final budget approval is secured in March 2026, the competition will be posted with the goal of an early July start date.

STAFF RESOURCING: *(What staff resources will be needed to achieve success on this initiative? Estimate how many hours of staff time will be required, by staff level/role. Comment on the reasonability of expected staff hours when assessed in conjunction with other work underway or planned.)*

Pre-hiring activities:

- Director, Trust Area Services – draft job description for new staff, screen applicant resumes, prepare and mark written assessment for applicants, conduct interviews, conduct reference checks, conduct offer – estimated 50 hours
- Employee Services Coordinator – administer job posting/resume collection/administer written assessments and interview scheduling, prepare offer letter, file for criminal record check – total 15 hours
- Interview Panellists (DTAS + likely 2 others) – conduct interviews and post-interview discussions, 2 hours/interviewee per panellist.

Post-hiring activities:

- Director, Trust Area Services – training/orientation with new staff, 2-3 months
- Employee Services Coordinator – process new hire paperwork, schedule/deliver basic new hire orientation and on boarding sessions – total 15 hours
- Others across organisation – orientation to other departments and relevant processes – 1 week

CHANGE MANAGEMENT/COMMUNICATIONS/COLLABORATION: *(Discuss proposed change management requirements, communications needed, involvement with others. Are there any concerns related to these? If so, how will these be addressed? Have other stakeholders been identified?)*

Internal communications to staff once approved and competition posted.
Competition posted by the BC Public Service Agency

Attachment: Draft Job Profile

Requested by: Trust Area Services

Prepared by: CAO, November 6, 2025

Reviewed by Director, Trust Area Services

**JOB PROFILE**

TITLE: ENGAGEMENT AND
COMMUNICATIONS LEAD

CLASSIFICATION: TBC

MINISTRY: ISLANDS TRUST,
MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

WORK UNIT: TRUST AREA SERVICES

SUPERVISOR TITLE: DIRECTOR, TRUST AREA SERVICES

SUPERVISOR POSITION #: 00036525

PROGRAM

Located in Coast Salish territory, the [Islands Trust](#) is a special purpose government responsible for protecting the unique amenities and environment of more than 450 islands and surrounding waters in the southern Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound. Created by the Province via the *Islands Trust Act*, Islands Trust plans and regulates local land use, coordinates with other level of government and First Nations on key issues impacting the area, and protects land through the Islands Trust Conservancy.

JOB OVERVIEW

The Engagement and Communications Lead will play a key role in defining and delivering public engagement and communications activities to advance the priorities and work of Islands Trust, Trust Council and local trust committees. To be successful in this work, the Engagement and Communications Lead will combine strong relevant experience and skills, a current awareness and understanding of issues and audiences in the communities Islands Trust serves, and a strategic mindset to inform effective advice to senior staff and elected officials.

KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

- Provide effective strategic engagement and communications advice to the CAO, senior staff and elected officials that supports organizational priorities and enhances the reputation of the Islands Trust, including the Islands Trust Conservancy.
- Lead the development of the annual communications plan and engagement plan for Islands Trust to help advance strategic priorities and support delivery of high-profile projects, with a focus on using analytics and metrics to assess and improve performance.
- Lead the development and implementation of a public engagement framework to provide a more consistent and effective approach to public engagement on diverse projects that enables greater transparency and more effective decision making.
- Lead and deliver public engagement plans and activities, including public events, surveys and related tactics.

- Work collaboratively with all staff to ensure Islands Trust’s communications, branding and engagement standards and policies are consistently applied.
- Oversee the writing, design and production of print and digital communications content and materials to ensure accuracy, consistency of messaging, and alignment with strategic goals and priorities.
- Build and maintain positive relationships with media outlets to support communications objectives.
- Support the CAO and leadership team to deliver effective internal communications.
- Other duties as requested by the Director, Trust Area Services.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Education and Experience Requirements

- Post-secondary degree, diploma or certificate in Communications, Journalism, Public Relations, English or a related discipline.
- Minimum five years’ experience delivering strategic communications in a public sector context, including communications planning, issues management, social media and digital communications, and media relations.
- Demonstrated experience applying public engagement best practices (e.g., IAP2) to community-based project planning.
- Demonstrated experience working collaboratively with elected officials, senior staff and/or community partners to deliver results.

Preference may be given to candidates with any of the following:

- Supervisory experience in a unionized public sector employment environment.
- Experience working in a BC local government.
- Experience engaging First Nations and diverse communities.

PROVISOS

- Some overnight travel is a requirement of this position.
- Possession and maintenance of a Class 5 BC Drivers’ License.
- Criminal Record Check is required.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- Knowledge of social, environmental, political, economic, and land use planning issues relevant to the Islands Trust Area and its residents.
- Knowledge of effective digital communications practices and tools, including website development.
- Exceptional oral and written communications skills.
- Exceptional diplomacy, tact, and communication skills.
- Ability to prepare professional communications strategies, briefing notes and official correspondence, often on short notice, in order to maximize public awareness and understanding.

- Contract management and project management skills with the ability to manage multiple projects with diverse objectives and deadlines.
- Significant attention to detail, ability to identify emerging issues and prioritize appropriately to meet deliverables, outcomes and deadlines.
- Demonstrated ability to quickly identify and analyse implications for the Islands Trust's reputation and operations as the basis for recommending options and responses to senior staff and Islands Trust bodies.
- Demonstrated ability to use initiative to respond appropriately to unanticipated issues with creative and innovative solutions using strong business and political acumen.
- Ability to work independently under pressure with minimal supervision.
- Demonstrated sensitivity to political issues and impacts.
- Ability to establish and maintain constructive working relationships with a wide range of public officials and managers, and general public.

BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCIES

Fostering trust involves knowledge and skills to build and sustain trust in an organization and between the leader and his/her colleagues, through integrity, concern for others and consistent behaviour, following through on commitments and open communications.

Concern for Image Impact is an awareness of how one's self, one's role and the organization are seen by others. The highest level of this competency involves an awareness of, and preference for, respect for the organization by the community.

Problem Solving/Judgement is the ability to analyze problems systematically, organize information, identify key factors, identify underlying causes and generate solutions.

Improving Operations is the ability and motivation to apply one's knowledge and past experience for improving upon current modes of operation within the Islands Trust. This behaviour ranges from adapting widely used approaches to developing entirely new value-added solutions.

Teamwork and Co-operation is the ability to work co-operatively within diverse teams, work groups and across the organization to achieve group and organizational goals. It includes the desire and ability to understand and respond effectively to other people from diverse backgrounds with diverse views.

INDIGENOUS COMPETENCIES

Cultural Agility is the ability to work respectfully, knowledgeably and effectively with Indigenous people. It is noticing and readily adapting to cultural uniqueness in order to create a sense of safety for all. It is openness to unfamiliar experiences, transforming feelings of nervousness or anxiety into curiosity and appreciation. It is examining one's own culture and worldview and the culture of the BC Public Service, and to notice their commonalities and distinctions with Indigenous cultures and worldviews. It is recognition of the ways that personal and professional values may conflict or align with those of Indigenous people. It is the capacity to relate to or allow for differing cultural perspectives and being willing to experience a personal shift in perspective.

Strategic Orientation is the ability to link the long-range vision of Indigenous self-determination to daily work, ranging from a simple understanding to a sophisticated awareness of the full impact of thinking and actions. It is the ability to think and operate broadly, with the goal of sustainability, to further the goals of Indigenous peoples in a way that meets the collective public interest. This also means taking responsibility to collaboratively design and implement steps to redress past harms and set frameworks in place to prevent their recurrence.

Change Leadership is championing the achievement of intended, real change that meets the enduring vision of Indigenous self-determination in British Columbia. It involves collaboratively developing and implementing ideas to achieve positive change from anywhere in the BC Public Service. The change leader learns from other leaders and elders, models the vision, and encourages members of the public service to commit to and champion the vision. The change leader inspires others into new ways of thinking and doing business. The change leader routinely energizes the change process and removes barriers to change.

Islands Trust Staff Organization Chart

