

Member FAQs

Updated: February 18, 2021

The Boards of Directors and senior leaders of Columbia Valley, East Kootenay Community, Grand Forks, Heritage, Kootenay Savings and Nelson & District Credit Unions are exploring the possibility of building one stronger, united credit union.

It's been an exciting opportunity to see what credit unions in the Boundary, Kootenay and Columbia Valley regions could do better, together. What we create must be in the best interests of our most important assets; our members, employees and communities.

Our Boards and senior leadership teams are committed to sharing our progress as we explore this possibility. Below we answer some of the questions you may have about a merger.

Q) Why are we considering combining these six credit unions?

A) These six credit unions have been working together for several years. We have partnered on projects and are jointly involved in subsidiaries such as insurance, risk and wealth management. With the rapid pace of change in our industry, we saw opportunities to share resources and expertise across the region. Our business case supports our desire to enhance the future value for members, employees and communities.

Q) Why not just continue with the current alliances and partnerships?

A) Our partnerships have served our six credit unions well. The question, "What if we combine all six operations?" was the next logical step in our collaboration. The Boards of Directors for the six credit unions see the potential of such an initiative and believe it is our responsibility to explore this opportunity on behalf of our members, employees and communities.

Q) How would combining operations benefit members?

A) We are developing an extensive business case that identifies and defines the potential benefits to members, employees and our communities. Later this year, we will make available an Information Guide to explain more about the potential of how we can be better as one new credit union.

Q) Has a decision already been made?

A) This is an exploration process. No decision has been made.

We're exploring the idea of building one stronger, unified credit union. A very thorough due diligence process is being completed from which a comprehensive business case is being developed. This business case forms part of our application for consent to the provincial regulators. Our collective six Boards of Directors believe it's in everyone's best interests to proceed to apply for consent and we are in the process of doing that. Should we receive consent from both the British Columbia Financial Services Authority (BCFSA) and the Competition Bureau, you – the members – will make the final decision on this opportunity in a membership vote.

Q) What is the timeline?

A) We are currently in the process of submitting our application for consent to the regulators. The timing is dependent on the complexity of our application and will follow the BCFSA's and Competition Bureau's standard service timelines and regulatory processes. However, we anticipate beginning robust member engagement later this year and are committed to continually providing updates on next steps as soon as they can be better defined.

Q) What will happen to the employees?

A) One of the principles adopted by the six Boards of Directors is that any combined new credit union has the capacity to employ all of our current employees. The business case supports and illustrates this approach.

Q) Which credit unions are involved in these discussions?

A) The six partners are:

1. Columbia Valley Credit Union
2. East Kootenay Community Credit Union
3. Grand Forks Credit Union
4. Heritage Credit Union
5. Kootenay Savings Credit Union
6. Nelson & District Credit Union

Q) How will my credit union keep its representation?

A) The proposed rules of a new credit union, which will be recommended to the membership for approval, would include three seats on the inaugural Board of Directors for each of the current credit unions participating.

Q) What happens if we don't combine operations?

A) This initiative focusses on how a collaborative partnership could create competitive advantages. No matter the outcome, all six credit unions will remain partners and neighbours in support of each other.

The boards have identified the challenges facing credit unions and other financial services organizations today, and agree it will become increasingly difficult to succeed with a traditional approach.

Q) Why is combining operations necessary? Can't we gain the same benefits through collaboration?

A) While the six credit unions are operating efficiently today and have made the most out of existing partnerships, we recognize we duplicate many processes and efforts. With changes in technology and the need to provide better products and services to our members, we think this could be an opportunity to be nimbler and more responsive.

Q) Have any Credit Unions left this conversation so far?

A) The original discussions involved seven credit unions. Since then, the Board of Directors from Creston and District Credit Union have removed themselves from the project. We now have six credit unions exploring the opportunity of building a new, united credit union.

Our six credit unions will continue to work with Creston on various partnerships that already exist.

Q) Where can I find more information?

A) Visit your credit union's website or www.exploringstrengthandunity.ca for updates.