

Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 26th, 2025, 7:30 AM
Regional District of Central Okanagan, Woodhaven Boardroom
1450 K.L.O. Road, Kelowna

✓ = attended

X = Absent

* Not required

A = Alternate Attended

Advisory Committee Executive:

✓	Hughes-Geekie, Sharon, Chair
✓	Larson, Janice, Past Chair
✓	Malcolm, Ryan

✓	Nagy, Angela
✓	Quinn, Paula, Vice-Chair

Advisory Committee:

X	Alluri, Rama
✓	Balkwill, Katie
✓	Berrie, Carla
✓	Bowles, Ron
✓	Bruns, Myles
X	Burleigh, Mark
✓	Cannan, Ron
X	Carnio, Alex
✓	Coble, Jordan
X	Collins, Dave
X	Dawn, Jeremy
✓	DeVeer, Cassidy
X	Douglas, Laurel
X	Dyas, Tom
X	Friesen, Jason

X	Ferreira, Christina
✓	Gatzke, Alan
X	Gratz, Derek
X	Harper, Shauna
X	Ireland, Blair
✓	Jones, Garrett
✓	Kam, Michelle
X	Labrecque, Cory
✓	Lake, Brea
X	Metvedt, David
X	Molina, Tonja
✓	Mullings, Dale
X	Popoff, Chantel
X	Rezania, Sepideh
A	Robinson, Heather

X	Rubadeau, Devin
X	Schlosser, Joanna
X	Selby, Robert
✓	Spencer, Sandra
X	Sulentich, Ruth
X	Threlfall, Rich
X	Walker-Matthews, Ellen
✓	Wall, Jonathan
✓	Wang, Bill
X	Widmer, Larry
X	Wolf, Mike
X	Wong, Roger

Staff and Consultants:

✓	Mallory, Krista
✓	Lesack, Sascha
X	Rambe, Mohana
X	Ververda, Brianne

✓	Walraven, Jen
X	Weston, Eva
X	Foster, Jodie
X	Ginter, Sally

X	Miller, Tory
✓	Stark Leader, Myrna

Guests:

Corcoran, Lisa
Ballantyne, Lisanne

1. Call to Order

Chair Sharon Hughes-Geekie called the meeting to order at 7:30 am.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Chair acknowledged our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded t'mxʷúla?xʷ (land) of the syilx / Okanagan people who have resided here since time immemorial. We recognize, honour, and respect the syilx / Okanagan lands upon which we live, work, and play.

3. Adoption of Minutes

Minutes of October 22, 2025, unanimously approved.

4. COEDC Pilot Project Update: Grocery Innovations Canada Delegation

Krista Mallory, Manager, Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission

Krista Mallory provided background information related to our Manufacturing Database, the Market Diversification Program, and Strategic Plan Alignment to grow export focused industries. She shared an overview of the opportunities and results including potential for future participation.

Transportation and infrastructure are larger barriers for most of the smaller food producers than any interprovincial regulations, except for restrictions on alcohol. This show provided some connections to help solve these challenges. Regarding refrigeration systems, it can be easier to deal with the US Federal regulations than each individual Canadian Province's requirements for certification. We are evaluating now if this is something we'll invest in again re: staff time, budget, results, etc., and if we'd do it with partners.

See presentation attached.

5. UNESCO City of Gastronomy Update and Discussion

Lisa Corcoran, Director of Communications, City of Kelowna

Lisanne Ballantyne, CEO, Tourism Kelowna

In addition to the two presenter organizations above, the four founding partners include Okanagan College along with endorsement from Westbank First Nation.

Questions for Consideration:

- *What opportunities come to mind now that Kelowna has secured this designation?*
- *What do you see as being different after five or ten years as a City of Gastronomy (what are the outcomes, for what industries/sectors)?*
- *What needs will we have from a workforce perspective to be successful (skills, training, resources, etc.)?*
- *What questions do you have about the UNESCO designation and network - what more do you need to know?*

- The public needs a fulsome definition of Gastronomy – including the fact that there's a whole ecosystem involved leading to pride of place, quality of life and food security.
- There are 8 UNESCO categories and there are only 3 cities in North America (Tucson, San Antonio and Kelowna!) designated for Gastronomy, so this is a highly regarded recognition. These cities are committed to knowledge sharing to help develop a Working Group, Communications and Governance structure. For example, chef, food and technology exchanges. Additionally, the other Canadian UNESCO cities in different categories have shared about governance and implementation.
- Our bid was about our strong connection to the land, things that have been grown and harvested here for generations, the culture of wine, beverages, markets, festivals, and that we're all working together.
- There's an entire spectrum of gastronomy that includes technology, suppliers, vendors, etc. that all contribute to the economic development of the region.
- We want to get the message out about what this designation means as soon as possible.
- UNESCO feedback is pending; we must create a multi-year action plan and report every 24 months to maintain this designation.
- There has already been significant news coverage across Canada and internationally.
- As a result of this designation, we have been able to secure a national food conference for 2027 and will be able to utilize the Okanagan College Centre for Food, Wine and Tourism.
- As Canadians we need to become stronger at sharing our stories. We can use this recognition as "permission" to promote our regional strengths from an outside perspective.
- It's hard to know at this point how other Regional communities can help but the working group will be developing these ideas over the next couple of months.
- Governance and focus on sustainability are of the utmost importance with respect to agriculture. We need chefs to support and represent the small farmers toward our preferred future. There has been a move toward more export and fewer small farmers associated locally, and that may not be ideal for sustainable agriculture.
- A weakness identified through self-reflection was connectivity. There are communication gaps and there could be more links between associations.

See presentation attached.

Action Items for Advisory Committee: Tourism Kelowna has a UNESCO database registration area on their website if you'd like to sign up for updates.

6. New Business

- The Workforce Profile quantitative analysis has been received, consultations and focus groups are mostly completed, and will be compiled into a list of recommendations and brought back to the Advisory Committee for re-engagement.
- Retention, Recruitment and Skills development focus results are anticipated in late January/February. Please self-select for one of these groups to participate.
- Downtown light up on November 29th



- Facilitation is needed for seasonal labour visitor work visa extensions, as well as a mechanism to apply for a work visa when visitors are already here
- West Kelowna EcDev Corporation is up and running
- December 3rd Holiday Luncheon at the Harvest can accommodate a few more
- Thank you to COEDC Past Chair Janice Larson for her insights and contributions over the years
- Next meeting January 28th

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 am.

