



Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda
Wednesday, February 25th, 2026
7:30 AM to 9:00 AM
Regional District of Central Okanagan, Woodhaven Boardroom
1450 K.L.O. Road, Kelowna

Workforce Profile & Strategy, Presentation of Findings

Opening Remarks – Paula Quinn, Chair	7:30 am
Land Acknowledgement The RDCO acknowledges our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded t̓m̓x̓w̓úlaʔx̓w̓ (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.	
Previous Meeting Minutes January 28, 2026, meeting minutes approval	
Workforce Profile & Strategy <i>Kristiana Powell, Principal/Director of Business Development, Deetken Insight</i> <i>Jen Kanters, Senior Consultant, Deetken Insight</i> <i>Julian White, Partner, Deetken Insight</i>	7:35 am
New Business	8:50 am
Adjournment	9:00 am

**Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 28th, 2026, 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:

X	Quinn, Paula, Chair
X	Hughes-Geekie, Sharon, Past Chair
✓	Malcolm, Ryan, Vice-Chair

✓	Nagy, Angela

Advisory Committee:

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

✓	Farr, Brandon
✓	Ferreira, Christina
X	Friesen, Jason
✓	Gatzke, Alan
X	Gratz, Derek
A	Harper, Shauna
X	Ireland, Blair
X	Jones, Garrett
X	Kam, Michelle
X	Labrecque, Cory
X	Lake, Brea
✓	Metvedt, David
X	Molina, Tonja
✓	Mullings, Dale

X	Rezania, Sepideh
X	Robinson, Heather
✓	Rubadeau, Devin
X	Schlosser, Joanna
X	Selby, Robert
X	Spencer, Sandra
X	Sulentich, Ruth
✓	Threlfall, Rich
X	Walker-Matthews, Ellen
✓	Wall, Jonathan
✓	Wang, Bill
X	Widmer, Larry
✓	Wong, Roger
✓	Wylie, Taylor

Staff and Consultants:

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

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

X	Stark Leader, Myrna

Guests:

Jensen, Tyler
Wood, Sarah

1. Call to Order

Vice-Chair Ryan Malcolm called the meeting to order at 7:30 am.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Chair acknowledged our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded *tḥxʷúlaʔxʷ* (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 November 26, 2025, unanimously approved.

4. Introduction of New Advisory Committee Members

Krista introduced Brandon Farr of Level up Strategies and Goodfinity, and Taylor Wylie of Anodyne Electronics Manufacturing.

Councillor Randey Brophy joined the committee as the District of Peachland representative.

5. iGen (Innovation Generation) Challenge

Tyler Jensen, iGen Teacher Lead, Central Okanagan Public Schools

Sarah Wood, Career Consultant, Central Okanagan Public Schools

Tyler introduced the program educating us about its reach as a high school business plan pitch competition. They are always thankful for mentors who participate and there are sponsorship opportunities. Sarah and Tyler shared poignant stories of meaningful results the program and students have achieved over the years in our vibrant entrepreneurial communities. iGen partners with post-secondary institutions and community businesses to provide career exploration and experiences. They also run Advanced iGen, which is an online e-school course with 12 weekly evening sessions.

See contacts and opportunities attached.

6. COEDC 2026 Update

Krista Mallory, Manager, COEDC

- Review of the Advisory Committee – COEDC is a service of the RDCO and has a mandate for region-wide economic development to foster the development of a healthy, dynamic and resilient community economy, by supporting existing businesses and encouraging new business investment in the Central Okanagan from Peachland through Lake Country. We collaborate with local governments and business stakeholders. Our regional model is recognized as a best practice for economic development organizations in BC, taking advantage of economies of scale. We work with Federal, Provincial and Regional organizations in multiple layers of supportive partnership. We are accountable to the RDCO Board and have this Advisory Committee of elected officials, partner organizations and

- industry sector representatives who bring valuable input to our meetings that funnels into the work we do.
- 2025 accomplishments – We launched the Roadmap to Resiliency Strategic Plan to 2030, held a Navigating Trade Challenges public panel and private industry roundtables, worked with experts to develop the Okanagan Manufacturers Database for Osoyoos to Salmon arm, supported small food and beverage manufacturers through a tradeshow and delegation pilot within Canada, the EDC Workforce Profile and Strategy development is coming along and we'll be able to share results in February, check these out on our website!
 - 2026 in store – Workforce Profile and Strategy, enhanced Business Resource Hub with AI updates, trade show attendance to Grocery and Specialty Foods West and Canadian Health Food Association East, Web Summit, an event associated with FIFA, CANSEC via Trade Commissioner Service, Southern Interior Horticultural and Make it Safe conferences.
 - There will be input given to the RDCO Planning department and received regarding the Regional Growth Strategy and Regional Employment Lands Strategy. The region has grown 40% since the previous iteration.
 - Myles Bruns commented that from the Province's perspective, the COEDC is so important and effective in the Province and the Region. There has been a trend of local governments and Regional Districts pulling back from economic development and the COEDC is the best regional government delivered economic development service in the province. Local leadership support from the communities that participate in the COEDC is strong, and the management of the COEDC has balanced the contributions to both smaller and larger communities in the region. Every time the province has an initiative, Myles knows he can count on the COEDC to be a part of it, in fact the COEDC often reaches out to the province first by inviting them to participate.
 - Vice-Chair Ryan Malcolm encouraged committee members to reach out to Krista or members of the Executive, who are a bridge between staff and the business community, if members have additional questions or ideas outside of the meetings as well.

See presentation attached.

7. Building a Regional Business Ecosystem

The effectiveness of the committee is dependent upon understanding the broad spectrum of expertise, experience and perspectives of different members. Attendees participated in Speed Networking and had engaging dialogue about:

- the biggest opportunities in their industries or communities this year,
- how the COEDC and Advisory Committee could support those,
- what they have learned from the Advisory Committee that has impacted their businesses.

Action Items for Advisory Committee: consider sponsorship, mentoring and/or presenting to iGen classes.



8. New Business

- Congrats to our colleagues at the City of Kelowna on the opening of the new terminal at YLW.
- WFN has a State of the Nation luncheon with Chief Robert Louie and the Greater Westside Board of Trade on February 11th.
- Next meeting February 25th

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 8:46 am.



**Central Okanagan Economic
Development Commission**
Advisory Committee
January 28, 2026



**CENTRAL
OKANAGAN**
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION



Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission

Service of the RDCO and provides economic development services to:

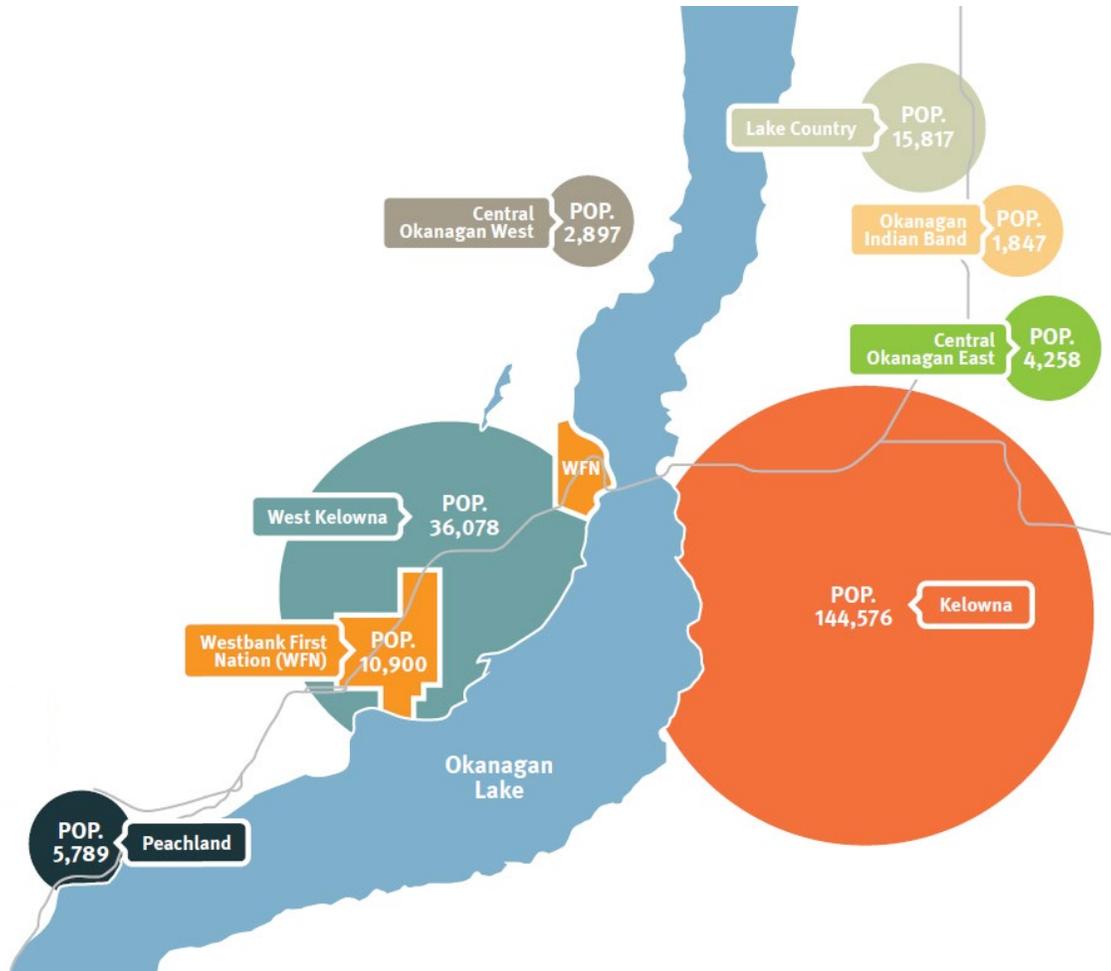
District of Peachland
City of West Kelowna
Westbank First Nation (WFN)
City of Kelowna
District of Lake Country
Central Okanagan East and West



Mandate

The COEDC works to foster the development of a healthy, dynamic and resilient community economy by supporting existing businesses and encouraging new business investment in the Central Okanagan.

Regional Model



Recognized Best Practice

- Highly integrated regional economy
- Economies of scale
- National and global positioning
- Strategic alignment

Our Team



Krista Mallory

Manager



Eva Weston

Economic Development Officer



Sascha Lesack

Business Development Officer



Brianne Ververda

Business Development Officer



Mohana Rambe

Research and Marketing Coordinator



Jen Walraven

Administrative Assistant

Contracted Program Specialists



Myrna Stark Leader

Agriculture Program Specialist



Advisory Committee

Government Elected Officials and Staff Liaisons

- District of Lake Country | Mayor Blair Ireland, Ruth Sulentic, Manager Comms & Government Affairs
- City of Kelowna | Councillor Ron Cannan, Michelle Kam, Director, Partnerships Office
- Westbank First Nation | Councillor Jordan Coble, Bill Wang, Manager of Economic Development
- City of West Kelowna | Councillor Jason Friesen, Ron Bowles, CAO
- District of Peachland | Councillor Randey Brophy, Cory Labreque, Special Projects Coordinator
- Regional District of Central Okanagan | Mayor Tom Dyas
- BC Ministry of Jobs and Economic Growth | Myles Bruns, Senior Regional Mgr, Thompson-Central Okanagan-Shuswap

Partner Organizations

- Accelerate Okanagan | Brea Lake
- Business Development Bank of Canada | Rama Alluri
- Canadian Home Builders Association | Cassidy DeVeer
- Community Futures of the Central Okanagan | Larry Widmer
- Economic Trust of the Southern Interior | Laurel Douglas
- Greater Westside Board of Trade | Heather Robinson
- Kelowna Chamber of Commerce | Derek Gratz
- Kelowna International Airport | Tonja Molina
- Lake Country Chamber of Commerce | Johnny B Good
- Okanagan College | Devin Rubadeau
- Peachland Chamber of Commerce | Jonathan Wall
- Tourism Kelowna | Katie Balkwill
- University of British Columbia Okanagan | Dale Mullings
- University of British Columbia Okanagan | Sandra Spencer
- WeBC | Shauna Harper



Industry Sector Representatives

Alexandra Carnio

Productivity Co-Founder & CEO
Education

Carla Berrie

Vitalis | VP of Revenue
Clean Tech

Mark Burleigh

Northside Industries | President
Manufacturing

Alan Gatzke

Gatzke Orchards | Owner
Agriculture

Garrett Jones

Delphi | Vice President
Professional Services/Sustainability

Jeremy Dawn

SNFLWR Investment Corporation | CEO
Construction/Development

Sharon Hughes-Geekie

JumpStart Communications
Health Care

Christina Ferreira

Impact Events and Brand Management
Arts & Culture

Janice Larson

Muse&Effect Consulting
Professional Services/Life Sciences

Ryan Malcolm

Emil Anderson Properties | Director
Construction/Development

Angela Nagy

GreenStep Solutions Inc.
Clean Tech/Environmental Services

David Metvedt

Swift Aerial Surveys | CEO
Tech/Agriculture

Paula Quinn

Consultant
Aerospace

Sepideh Rezanja

Unrooz Solutions | Owner
Technology & Professional Services

Robert Selby

TigerCat Industries | District Manager
Manufacturing

Rich Threlfall

Housing Okanagan Foundation | CEO
Construction/Development

Joanna Schlosser

Niche Wine Company | Co-Founder & CEO
Viticulture

Roger Wong

Intrigues Wines | Owner
Viticulture

Brandon Farr

Level Up Strategies | Executive
Sustainable Construction

Taylor Wylie

Anodyne Electronics Manufacturing | GCOO
Manufacturing

A photograph of three women sitting around a round table in a cafe or office setting. The woman on the left is wearing a brown long-sleeved shirt and blue pants, looking towards the woman on the right. The woman in the middle is wearing a dark blue shirt and dark pants, looking down at a notebook on the table. The woman on the right is wearing a dark blue dress and is looking towards the woman on the left. The table has a small potted plant and a glass of water. The background features a stone wall with framed pictures, a large window with a view of greenery, and a patterned armchair.

2025 Highlights

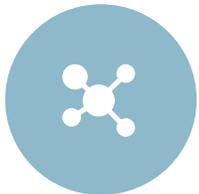
Roadmap to Resiliency

Strategic Directions



Drive Economic Resilience

Support businesses in adapting to a changing landscape.



Promote Innovation

Promote innovation to boost labor productivity and resource efficiency



Build a Skilled Workforce

Foster a skilled regional workforce by focusing on talent development, attraction, and retention.



Grow Export-Focused Industries

Strengthen export base by attracting high-value companies, supporting market expansion, and building regional supply chains.



Navigating Trade Challenges Roundtables and Panel



Okanagan Manufacturing Database

25 ▾ entries per page

COMPANY ▾ PRODUCT DESCRIPTION ▾ KEY INPUTS/RAW MATERIALS ▾

Search:

COMPANY	CITY	PRODUCT DESCRIPTION	SECTOR CLASSIFICATION	KEY INPUTS/RAW MATERIALS	WEBSITE
3M Trim-Line	Kelowna	Vehicle decals, store window vinyl graphics, signs, corporate logos	Signage & Printing	Vinyl, adhesives, laminates	https://www.trim-linegraphics.ca/
4AG Robotics	Salmon Arm	Mushroom-picking robots	Machinery & Industrial Equipment	steel, aluminum, electronics, stainless steel	https://4ag.ai/
5th Element Innovation & Manufacturing	Kelowna	manufacture of aluminum, stainless steel and steel products, aluminum boats, truck accessories, construction metals, contract manufacturing	fabricated metal, fishing equipment manufacturing, automotive boats and transport, ag and ag tech, metal fabrication and machining, manufacturing, metal products, sign manufacturing.	aluminum, stainless steel, steel and plastics	https://www.5thelementmfg.com/
6 Beans Coffee Roasting	Salmon Arm	Coffee roasting	Food & Beverage (non-alcoholic)	Green coffee beans	https://6beansroasting.com/
360 Sandblasting and Painting Inc	Penticton	Industrial sandblasting and painting	Industrial Services	Paint, sand, metal	https://www.360blasting.com
A-I Machine & Welding (1986) Ltd.	Vernon	Structural steel supply, custom fabrication, and welding services, machine design and manufacturing	Machinery & Industrial Equipment	Steel, metal components	https://aimachine.bc.ca/
A.A.A. Aluminum Products Ltd.	Summerland	Aluminum products, railings, sunrooms, privacy walls, patio cover, deck cover, pergolas	Metal Products	Aluminum, fabrication materials	https://aaaaluminumproducts.com/
A.J. Machine Works Inc.	Vernon	Precision machining and fabrication. Parts production and modification, prototypes, repairs, custom repairs and projects	Metal Fabrication & Machining	Steel, aluminum, plastic	https://ajmachineworks.com/
A.M.I. Brand Co	Vernon	High-quality textile decoration, including screen printing, direct-to-garment (DTG) printing, embroidery, and custom promotional products; in-house design, production, and fulfillment services	Apparel, textiles, clothing, protective & safety gear	Blank garments (cotton, polyester, tri-blends), water-based and plastisol inks, embroidery threads and stabilizers, pretreatment solutions, heat transfer vinyl, emulsions, and screen mesh	https://amibrandco.com/

“
IT'S BEEN A HUGE
BENEFIT, NOT ONLY
FOR SOURCING BUT
ALSO FOR VISIBILITY

-TAYLOR WYLIE, COO,
ANODYNE ELECTRONICS
MANUFACTURING

<https://www.investkelowna.com/manufacturing-database/>

Scaling Small Food and Beverage Manufacturers



Workforce Profile & Strategy

- **Assess:**
 - Current workforce
 - Future workforce needs
 - Training, education and workforce development supports
 - Gaps
- **Industries:**
 - Aerospace
 - Manufacturing
 - Digital Tech
 - Healthcare
 - Construction & Development
 - Agriculture
 - Tourism

In partnership with:



Selling the Region

- **In-Person**
 - Agri-Tech Innovation and Future Food Summit, San Francisco
 - Web Summit, Vancouver
 - Woodrise, Vancouver
 - Globe Food Forum, Calgary
 - Grocery Innovation Canada, Toronto
 - Trade Commission Service, BC Trade and Invest
- **Delegations**
 - Cherry Buyers Delegation
 - BC Trade and Invest – Chinese Investors
- **Digital**
 - Target: Major Canadian cities + US PNW
 - Impressions: 1.9M+
 - Clicks: 25K



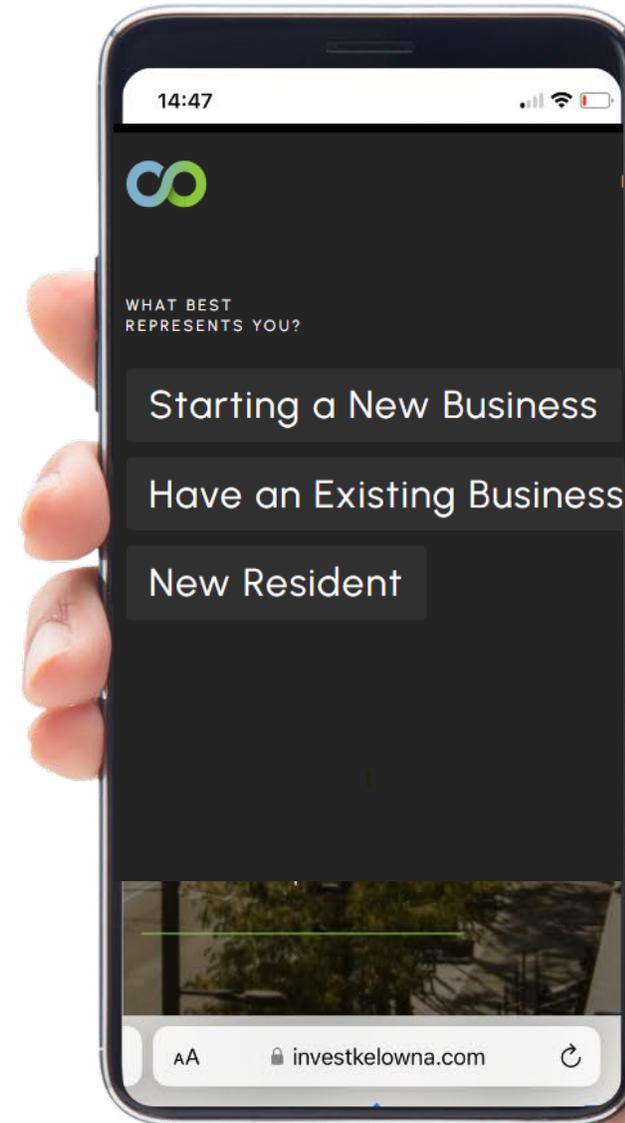


2026: What to Expect

Coming soon

- Workforce Profile & Strategy
- Enhanced AI powered business resources

Loading...



Scaling Food Manufacturers

Partners



Supports



Tradeshows



Regional Initiatives

- Regional Growth Strategy
- Regional Employment Lands Strategy



Questions?



Krista Mallory

Manager | Central Okanagan Economic Development
Commission

250-469-6283

kmallory@investkelowna.com

LOOKING FOR:

- General information?
- Statistics?
- Quarterly Economic Indicators?
- Industry-specific profiles?
- Export advice?
- Local government connections?
- Workforce sourcing?
- Housing prices?
- Business development assistance?



Innovative Generation Challenge (iGen)

What Is iGen?

School District 23's Premier Entrepreneurship Competition (Business Plan Pitch Competition)
Student Driven Product & Service Businesses (Start-Ups To \$10,000 In Revenue)
Participation From All 5 High Schools (20+ Classes, 500 Students)
2026 Finale On June 11th @ KF Centre For Excellence (Top 8 SD23 Teams)
Over \$15,000 In Cash Prizes Funded By Community Sponsors
This Year Is iGen's 33rd Annual Competition

Current Community Sponsors

Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC)
5th Avenue Properties
Vantage West Real Estate
Accelerate Okanagan (AO)
Okanagan College (OC)
MNP
Doak Shirreff Lawyers
Rotary Club of Kelowna (Ogopogo)
KF Center For Excellence
WeBC
Economic Trust of the Southern Interior (ETSI)



iGen
CHALLENGE

iGen Contacts

SD23 Lead: Tyler Jensen (tyler.jensen@sd23.bc.ca)
Sponsorships: Sarah Wood (sarah.wood@sd23.bc.ca)
Website: igc23.com

Advanced iGen 2026

4 Credit Course

Why Take Advanced iGen?

Opportunity to learn from impressive entrepreneurial mentors
Gain valuable, authentic business insights
Improve iGen Competition start-ups
Flexible class times (E-School)
Receive 4 Credits in a SD23 Course



iGen
CHALLENGE

Previous Mentors

Dan Martell: Podcaster & Saas Academy (Founder & CEO)
Trent Kitsch: SAXX Underwear & Kitsch Winery (Founder)
Shea Weber: NHL Defensemen (Retired)
AJ Hazzi: Vantage West Real Estate (Founder)
Tori Wesszer: Fraiche Living (Owner & Internet Personality)
Blair Stevens: Wok Box & Chopped Leaf (Founder)
Sarah Oughtred: Lululemon (Senior VP Finance)
Kris Courtoreille: Joe & Sons Concrete (Owner)
Greg Evtushevski: Chevy Source For Sport (Founder & Owner)
Christy Lovig: Lawyer (Doak Shireff)
Dan Allen: Professor (OC) & Serial Entrepreneur
Johannes van Leenen: 5th Avenue Properties (Founder & Owner)
**** Last year's Mentors had a cumulative net worth of 1 Billion Dollars!**

Course Schedule

Classes occur via Zoom ONCE per week. If you cannot join the Zoom class, NO WORRIES! All classes are recorded, so you can complete assignments when you have time & are able.
**** The 1st class will be held in Mid-February, 2026**

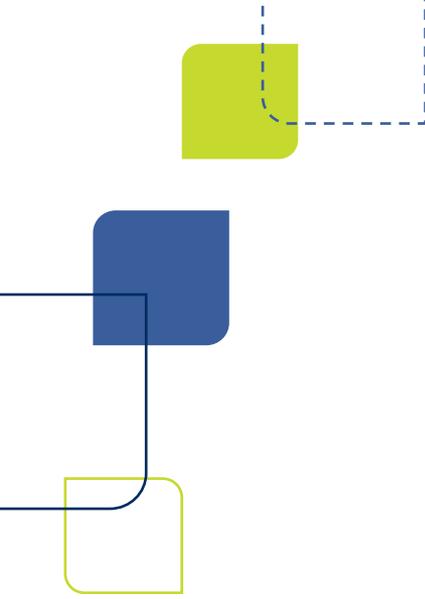
Topics Covered

The Innovative Generation Challenge (iGen)	Indigenous Perspectives (Local Economy)
Social Media & Its Impacts	Product & Service Ideation
The Art of Persuasion & Influencing People	Social Media Content Creation
The 4 Ps of Marketing & Target Marketing	Failure & Resiliency
Careers In Online Marketing & Social Media	Pitching Ideas

Join Advanced iGen Today!

Google Classroom Code: **zeqneq2r**

Any Questions? Email: Tyler.Jensen@sd23.bc.ca



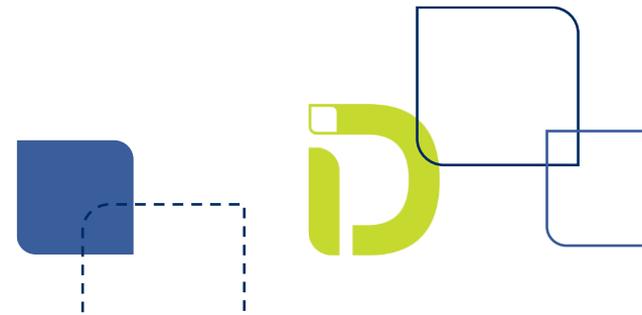
Central Okanagan Workforce Development Strategy

Presentation to the COEDC Advisory Committee

25 February 2026

Agenda

1. Meeting Objectives
2. Project Overview
3. Workforce Profile Summary
4. Strategic Workforce Pillars & Cross-Industry Priorities
 - Recruitment
 - Retention
 - Skills Development



Objectives of Today's Meeting



The **objectives** of today's meeting are to:

- Share the cross-industry priorities developed through engagement, workshops and analysis
- Discuss the role of the COEDC in supporting these priorities
- Brainstorm support that other partners could provide

Reminder: The priorities presented in this Workforce Development Strategy are **cross-industry priorities**, i.e., they apply to more than one in-scope industry:

- aerospace
- agriculture (fruit growers, wine growers)
- construction and development

- digital tech
- healthcare
- manufacturing
- tourism



Project Overview

The project included three main phases for identifying and building out evidence-based workforce development priorities.

Phase	Objectives	Status
Data Analysis & Research	Developed a Workforce Profile of the region - employment, business composition, education requirements and demographics by sector.	Completed
Industry & Partner Engagement	Held interviews and focus groups with representatives of industry and partners (> 40 people) to identify workforce challenges, potential solutions and best practices/models. Workshopped potential solutions with the COEDC and converted these to draft workforce priorities, including potential roles for the COEDC.	Completed
Advisory Committee Validation	Validated workforce priorities with the COEDC Advisory Committee and gathered additional insights. (completed) Present full strategy to Advisory Committee (25 Feb) (today) Present the full strategy to the Board (19 March)	Jan – March 2026

Workforce Profile Summary

The region's economy is driven by small businesses and diverse sectoral dynamics.

Small firms underpin the regional labour market

- The seven sectors of interest make up approximately **half** of all businesses and employment in the region.
- Across all seven focus sectors, **98.5% of businesses have fewer than 100 employees**, demonstrating the region's dependence on small and micro-enterprise ecosystems.
- The region has 64 medium-sized firms (100–499 employees) and just two large employers (> 500 employees), both in Aerospace, underscoring the absence of strong large-firm anchors.

Sectoral composition reflects varied labour intensity

- Construction has the most businesses (~1,700) but modest employment per business (~9 workers on average).
- Tourism employs similar total numbers as Construction through fewer but larger firms (~24 workers per business on average).
- **Healthcare** is projected to have the largest job growth (+17%) between 2024 and 2030, while **Agriculture** shows the slowest job growth (+5%) in the same period.



Workforce Profile Summary

The region's economy is driven by small businesses and diverse sectoral dynamics.

Gender distribution varies significantly across sectors

- Healthcare is predominantly female (~78%), while Construction and Aerospace are heavily male-dominated.
- Digital Tech and Tourism display the most balanced gender ratios, reflecting more inclusive occupational mixes.

Income and education patterns highlight opportunity divides

- Digital Tech workers earn the highest incomes relative to the other sectors of interest, aligning with their highest percent share of university-educated employees (41%).
- Tourism, dominated by youth and seasonal work, reports the lowest earnings and lowest education requirements (60% workers with only a high school degree or less).



Cross-Sector Trends

Workforce dynamics across sectors reveal sharp contrasts in employment stability, skill requirements, and demographic composition, highlighting both succession risks and opportunities for cross-sector skill alignment.

Employment stability and seasonality diverge sharply

- Tourism exhibits the greatest instability, with roughly three-quarters of workers not employed full-year full-time.
- Manufacturing, Aerospace, and Digital Tech maintain the highest full-year employment stability.
- Healthcare shows the highest share of full-year, part-time employment, indicating flexible but steady staffing models (e.g., shift work)



Cross-Sector Trends (continued)

Skill and credential patterns reveal complementary strengths

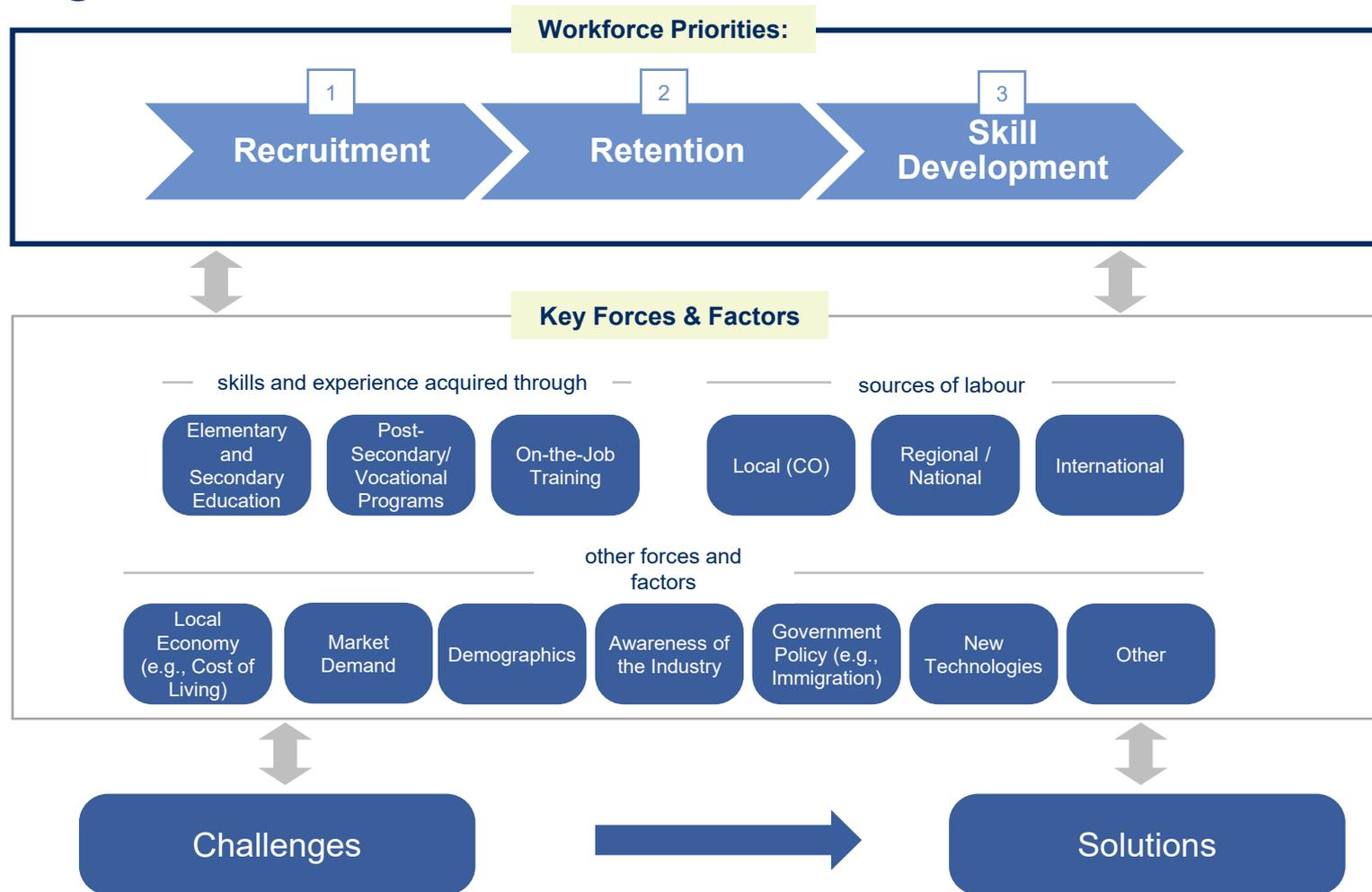
- Construction depends primarily on apprenticeships and trades training.
- Manufacturing and Aerospace have relatively even distributions across apprenticeship, college, and university, showing a mix of skills required.
- Digital Tech and Healthcare require formal degrees, indicating an emphasis on the professionalized skill tracks.

Demographic compositions vary across sectors

- Tourism's workforce is 41% aged 15–24, the highest youth share region-wide, relative to other sectors.
- Aerospace (34% aged 55+) and Agriculture (33% aged 55+) rely heavily on older workers nearing retirement relative to other sectors.
- Immigrants represent 13–19% of all sectoral workforces, with inflows rising most in Healthcare and Tourism since 2010.

Strategic Workforce Priorities

Findings from the Workforce Profile shaped engagement questions, which focused on workforce priorities and key driving forces and factors.





Recruitment – Main Challenges

Main Challenges:

- Limited local talent, particularly for onsite roles
- Foundational skill gaps among local applicants
- Declining early exposure across K-12 pipeline
- Limited availability of appropriate entry- and mid-level roles
- Significant immigration barriers and limited adjacent supports
- Low visibility of full career landscape
- Limited access to recruitment opportunities for small and mid-sized employers

Workforce Enablers:

- Cost of living and housing
- Transportation and mobility barriers



Recruitment – Workforce Priorities

Cross-Industry Workforce Priorities

1. Increase early exposure and skills development through enhanced engagement with the K-12 education system and students
2. Enhance immigration-adjacent supports & expand immigration pathways for international workers
3. Develop a more diversified talent attraction campaign
4. Strengthen PSI-Industry relationships to support recruitment



Recruitment – Workforce Priorities

1. Increase early exposure and skills development through enhanced engagement with the K-12 education system and students

a) Pursue a regional cross-sector approach to engaging with the K-12 education system and students

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bridge / connector between industry and School Districts• Engage directly with School Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mobilize industry• Leverage K-12 Career Connections and Dual Credit Initiative and other opportunities

b) Encourage the education system to prioritize applies skills development & to align career development initiatives to regional opportunities

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect industry with School District & the Province, as needed• Share labour market information to inform career development materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Influence career-related training and education• Share experiences and information about opportunities



Recruitment – Workforce Priorities

2. Modernize and expand immigration pathways for international workers & enhance immigration-adjacent supports and initiatives

a) Scale, evolve and secure resources for the COEDC Connector Program and provide additional related concepts

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expand the COEDC Connector Program*Support employer training / knowledge sharing on cross-cultural onboarding & workplace integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enhance wrap around supports for newcomers, create sense of welcome and belonging

***The COEDC Connector Program** helps newcomers and trailing spouses build local professional networks through structured one-to-one connections, supporting integration and family retention.

Recruitment – Workforce Priorities



b) Develop a coordinated regional advocacy agenda with a focus on a number of immigration pathways

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand the RCIP* to the Central Okanagan• Create convening opportunities for industry & partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirm advocacy agenda with employers and others• Identify champions and advocacy approach

*The **Rural Community Immigration Pilot (RCIP)** in the North Okanagan–Shuswap provides a community-led pathway to Permanent Residency and offers a potential model for targeting immigration for in-demand occupations.

Note: COEDC does not have a mandate to lead advocacy related to immigration policy. Its role would be limited to convening cross-industry discussions and consolidating industry input to support research or policy discussions led by appropriate authorities.



Recruitment – Workforce Priorities

3. Develop a more diversified talent attraction campaign

a) Explore options to develop regional workforce marketing and career visibility initiatives

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add workforce-related dimension to OKGo (Okanagan Go), a regional place-marketing initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a region-specific careers guide



b) Lead targeted attraction of high-demand U.S. talent

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relaunch and expand the 2016 ex-pat outreach campaign• Collect and share employer / employee success stories about returning ex-pats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share employer / employee success stories about returning ex-pats with COEDC



Recruitment – Workforce Priorities

4. Strengthen PSI-Industry relationships to support recruitment

a) Build or expand PSI-employer relationships to support recruitment and experiential learning, particularly for small businesses

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bridge / connector between industry and PSIs• Create convening opportunities for industry and PSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness around job fair opportunities, clarify how to participate



Recruitment Questions

1. Are there additional roles that COEDC could play in supporting these recruitment priorities?
2. What roles could / should other partners (industry, PSIs, etc) play?
3. Do you see additional opportunities to apply these learnings?
4. Is there anything else you'd like to share for consideration?



Retention – Main Challenges & Priorities

Main Challenges:

- Seasonality and cyclical employment
- Engagement challenges and burnout
- Mismatch between workplace norms and employee expectations
- Uneven supervisory capacity
- Work-life balance priorities
- Structural career-pathing constraints

Cross-Industry Workforce Priorities:

1. Support greater industry collaboration and cooperation around retention
2. Support adoption of a leadership model that helps to retain young talent



Retention – Workforce Priorities

1. Support greater industry collaboration and cooperation around retention

a) Support coordinated reverse-season talent-sharing across industries

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gage overall interest among employers• Create convening opportunities for employers• Share / disseminate best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Host job fairs for interested employees• Collect best practices

b) Expand cross-industry seasonal accommodation-sharing models

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create convening opportunities• Support efforts to generate funding or other solutions for providing transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify best practices / lessons learned from existing models or previous attempts• Explore opportunities to fund / provide transportation



Retention – Workforce Priorities

2. Support adoption of a leadership model to retain young talent

a) Provide cross-industry support to adopt coaching-based and relationship-centred leadership models

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine interest among employers and younger workers• Create opportunities for employers and young workers to convene / discuss (e.g., the OYP*)• Explore options for further brainstorming and knowledge sharing among employers• Disseminate best practices and useful resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect and share best practices and useful resources• Share experience / best practices around different leadership models

*The **Okanagan Young Professionals (OYP) Collective** is an COEDC-led networking initiative that supports the attraction and retention of young and early-career professionals in the Central Okanagan.



Retention Questions

1. Are there additional roles that COEDC could play in supporting these retention priorities?
2. What roles could / should other partners (industry, PSIs, etc) play?
3. Do you see additional opportunities to apply these learnings?
4. Is there anything you'd else like to share for consideration?

Skills Development – Main Challenges & Priorities



Main challenges:

- Foundational skills gaps among new entrants
- Misalignment between post-secondary training and workplace needs
- Limited experiential learning opportunities
- Training and mentorship capacity challenges
- Accelerating technology pressures

Cross-Industry Workforce Priorities:

1. Strengthen PSI-industry collaboration for skill development
2. Support training, development and capacity-building opportunities, particularly for small and medium-sized companies

Skills Development – Workforce Priorities



1. Strengthen PSI-industry collaboration for skill development

a) Strengthen PSI-industry collaboration to shape practice-ready training pathways

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect industry and PSIs• Support (not lead) efforts to lobby / advocate with government around curriculum (pace of change, labour force needs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create program advisory committees with industry and faculties• Identify priority curriculum and other program adjustments• Lobby/advocate for curriculum adjustments



b) Expand flexible, industry-aligned micro-credential programs

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convening function for PSIs and industry to identify training needs• Support efforts to coordinate / calibrate demand for training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify viable micro-credential topics and other modular or short-term training courses



Skills Development – Workforce Priorities

1. Strengthen PSI-industry collaboration for skills development

c) Make experiential learning more feasible for smaller companies

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gauge interest among employers for a fractional co-op model*• Provide a bridging function between regional PSI co-op and internship programs and employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore options, requirements and a plan for scaling a fractional model, including focus, funding, administration, etc.

***Accelerate Okanagan (AO)** is piloting a fractional co-op model that allows small and mid-sized employers to participate in experiential learning without hosting a full-time student. AO provides centralized mentorship and coordination by employing co-op students directly and deploying them across multiple companies.

Skills Development – Workforce Priorities



2. Support training, and capacity-building opportunities, particularly for small and medium-sized companies

a) Develop a regional mentorship and peer-support initiative for employers

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Facilitate the creation of a mentorship network (e.g., host meet ups, facilitate connections)Connect / integrate with existing initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Explore other existing initiatives within the region (scale or net new)Gage interest, identify employer needs and expertise

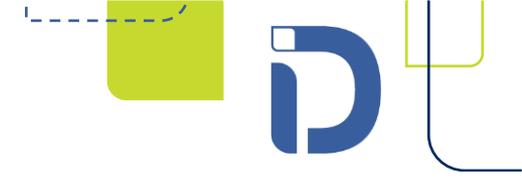
b) Develop or scale a regional fractional senior-talent program

COEDC Priority Actions	Potential Partnership Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop a clear sense of employer demand / interest in modelSupport efforts to explore potential funding opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Explore scaling options and potential longer-term, sustainable funding opportunities



Skill Development Questions

1. Are there additional roles that COEDC could play in supporting these skill development priorities?
2. What roles could / should other partners (industry, PSIs, etc) play?
3. Do you see additional opportunities to apply these learnings?
4. Is there anything else you'd like to share for consideration?



Next Steps

- Present final Central Okanagan Workforce Profile & Workforce Strategy to the Regional Board – March 19th, 2026
- Share findings and strategy with interested parties – Q2 to Q3 2026
- Implement action plan:
 - Enhance and refine existing COEDC programming – Immediate
 - Develop and execute long-term workplan – 2027-2030
- Update Central Okanagan Workforce Profile - 2027