

**Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 25th, 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:

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

X	Nagy, Angela
✓	Burleigh, Mark

Advisory Committee:

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

✓	Friesen, Jason
X	Gatzke, Alan
✓	Gratz, Derek
X	Harper, Shauna
X	Ireland, Blair
X	Jones, Garrett
A	Kam, Michelle
X	Labrecque, Cory
✓	Lake, Brea
X	Metvedt, David
A	Molina, Tonja
✓	Mullings, Dale
X	Rezania, Sepideh
X	Robinson, Heather
✓	Rubadeau, Devin

✓	Schlosser, Joanna
X	Selby, Robert
A	Spencer, Sandra
X	Sulentich, Ruth
X	Threlfall, Rich
X	Walker-Matthews, Ellen
X	Wall, Jonathan
✓	Wang, Bill
X	Widmer, Larry
✓	Wong, Roger
✓	Wylie, Taylor

Staff and Consultants:

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

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

✓	Stark Leader, Myrna

Guests:

Kanters, Jen
Powell, Kristiana

1. Call to Order

Chair Paula Quinn called the meeting to order at 7:30 am.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Chair acknowledged our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded $t\acute{m}x^w\acute{u}la\acute{?}x^w$ (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 January 28, 2026, unanimously approved.

4. Workforce Profile & Strategy, Presentation of Findings

Kristiana Powell, Principal, Director of Business Development, Deetken Insight

Jen Kanters, Senior Consultant, Deetken Insight

Jen presented an overview of the Workforce Profile regarding Recruitment, Retention and Skills Development. She noted a large difference in job growth projections with Healthcare being the largest compared to the slowest job growth in Agriculture. Demographics are going to shape risks and opportunities in many sectors. Jen also highlighted cross-industry priorities in the Strategy including COEDC priority actions and potential partnership actions.

See presentation attached.

Discussion - Recruitment:

- Federal red tape appears to be the limiting factor for immigration recruitment, but we can foster welcoming relationships and connections to make a softer landing for incoming workers.
- Can we find out how long the 55+ workers are staying in the Aerospace workforce? Kristiana will email that information to Mark Burleigh.
- How can we support the connection between education and industry? In the BC Aerospace capabilities guide there's a good example of federal funding used to create a profile of what's available in a particular industry if students want to get into that field.
- The Nanaimo experience coordinated tourism and recruitment. Perhaps we can use that strategy here as well.
- Could we apply Familiarization (FAM) tours to K-12 education? There is also a collab between AO and OC Faculty of Science to finance bussing students to campuses.
- The COEDC provides good measurement and tracking data around initiative effectiveness to allow partners to prioritize and go deeper with their actions.
- Co-op and dual credit programs exist in several K-12 institutions. Industry associations and employers need to identify gaps along with educators in the promotion of the programs and to get them started earlier.
- How can we bridge the gap in expectations between people entering the workforce and employers expressing the lack of skill sets being brought to the workforce? In the past, the

COEDC has done well-received employer workshops with educational institutions to bridge generational challenges.

- There are provincial Post Secondary Institution (PSI) people who can put on workshops for employers. Perhaps the COEDC can tie into the Look West strategy for workforce training.
- Myles mentioned that the Province will host the German Industrial Association for mechanical engineers in Vancouver in May who are interested in our mining, mineral processing, metal fabrication, etc. and could possibly be brought here if enough companies are interested in meeting them.

Retention:

- The workforce needs intergenerational knowledge sharing, in both directions, ie. specialized experience down, tech innovations up.
- Mentorship is important especially for mid-level career support. Expanding the Connector program could be a good support here.
- Employers could step up with a cultural awakening to provide leadership to the younger workforce during generational shifts.
- PSIs could work with employers to encourage youth to lay down roots here and increase international student employment for the necessary Canadian work experience.

Skill Development:

- There are opportunities for trades to partner with PSIs to increase dual credit and co-op seats. Larger companies are needed to step up with external funding to expand these programs, although we don't have very many larger companies in the region yet.
- How do the youth see all of this and what is the best messaging for them to ensure they're aware of our great regional industries? Engagement with youth wasn't in the scope of this profile work but the COEDC Strategic Plan development included extensive workforce engagement and surveying that developed the customer side of what we're seeing now. Also, our Okanagan Young Professionals Collective engagement has addressed some of the input and issues around skill development. Improving industry marketing to youth to get them into the businesses is something that needs work.
- Try a Trade programs are very popular and could be expanded with more funding. Doing more when the professors have some down time could be an approach to optimize campus resource use.
- We need to find capacity within Small & Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) to get placements for students.

5. COEDC Activity Update

- We will look at what is realistic to lead vs. influence from the Profile & Strategy findings.
- Implement an action plan to enhance and refine existing COEDC programming.
- Develop and execute a long-term work plan through 2027-2030.
- We will be updating the CO Workforce Profile in 2027 once new census data becomes available.



- Thank you to all industry participants for your input & feedback, to UBCO and OC for partnering with us financially on this process, and to Global Affairs Canada through their CanExport Community Initiatives program.
- The role of the COEDC will be to bring all the pieces together over the coming months.

Action Items for Advisory Committee: Thank you for your input in this process. Please share findings and strategy with interested parties later this year.

6. New Business

- Okanagan Young Professionals coffee social at UBCO March 19th
- Next meeting April 15th

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 am.

