

**Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 22nd, 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:

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

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

Advisory Committee:

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

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

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|---|------------------------|
| X | Rubadeau, Devin |
| ✓ | 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 |
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Staff and Consultants:

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

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|---|---------------|
| ✓ | Walraven, Jen |
| ✓ | Weston, Eva |
| ✓ | Foster, Jodie |
| ✓ | Ginter, Sally |

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|---|---------------------|
| X | Miller, Tory |
| X | Stark Leader, Myrna |

Guests:

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| Kanters, Jen |
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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 t̓mxʷúla?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 September 24, 2025, unanimously approved.

4. Workforce Profile and Strategy

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

Julian Whike, Partner, Deetken Insights

Jen Kanters, Senior Consultant, Deetken Insights

Fatima Sajid, Senior Associate, Deetken Insights

Krista Mallory introduced our workforce project as a follow-up on one of our strategic directions to support regional companies' growth and attract further investment. Financial partnerships with Global Affairs Canada, Okanagan College and UBCO are supporting the development of this project.

Jen Kanters provided an overview of the process so far, some highlights of the profile and regional priorities, and discussed how they'll structure the next phases of work. This project is about how we can plan proactively for our future workforce.

See presentation attached.

The Advisory Committee proposed the following as priorities that should be addressed in the strategy:

- How to connect the right job seekers to the right employers
- How to retain skilled and educated workers in the aerospace sector
- Improved transit is extremely important to get workers to neighbouring communities
- How to support equitable wealth generation
- Understanding about how global macroeconomic decisions affect the local economy
- Improving processes for temporary foreign workers who are vital in the agricultural sector
- Employers need effective administrative skills for construction workers
- Possibilities to match summer seasonal workers with winter seasonal work for continuity of employment
- Industrial space needs and younger workers with actual manufacturing work experience
- AI adoption in the workforce
- Work with the post-secondary institutions to ensure what they're offering for current and continuing education is in line with the workforce demands in the region

- Retaining and re-entering 55+ workers to maintain and share their existing knowledge and allowing for mentorship opportunities
- Enhancing mentorship within employee groups as well as through the COEDC Connector Program
- Housing affordability interconnection with all of the above aspects; we need to start thinking about intergenerational shared spaces, transportation and experiences.

Feedback on how to organize strategy outreach sessions included:

- Boiling down with smaller, more focused topic groups with digital pre-engagement
- Email surveys for people who prefer to write
- Ranking what is already known
- Small group discussions on pillar topics
- Some of this may be community specific
- Engage the chamber members, employer groups, industry associations
- Actions for the COEDC will be aligned with our mandate and resources
- Possible compensation for small businesses who engage in this process

5. COEDC Activity Update

Krista Mallory, Manager, Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission

Brianne Ververda, Business Development Coordinator, COEDC

- We support existing businesses and entrepreneurs in the region to connect with local resources through our ongoing project of a new Business Resource Hub. We expect to launch this in the new year.
- We have close to 300 resources to offer.
- Ecosystem mapping will be available and updated by AI and community partners and reviewed by staff. This includes Resources, Industry, Stage of Business, Financing and Permitting information, Organizations, curated Lists, Guides.
- It may be possible to keep the system open so outside AI sources can give more nuanced results as well.
- We met with partner business support organisations in the region to find out what resources their clients are looking for.
- Items we will bring up with the developer:
 - Could it be used to find who to go to for permitting across multiple jurisdictions?
 - Could users set up notifications for topics relevant to them and link them to events happening that could be beneficial to their business?
- When it gets shared with the business community it might be good to do demonstration training and have the option to subscribe to updates.
- Business licensing within the Regional District electoral areas and for mobile businesses will be similar and we'd like to do this with our municipal partners as well.

See presentation attached.

Action Items for Advisory Committee: help spread the word when it is launched, provide suggestions on how best to share the Resource Hub, and suggest further resources to include.

Share our Call for Expressions of Interest for new Advisory Committee members focusing on Aerospace, Healthcare and Indigenous Business.

6. New Business

- Small Business Week was promoted and celebrated this week. The Central Okanagan is recognized by Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada as a region that works well in BC with a common goal to support businesses in the region. Congratulations to GWBOT and WFN who completed a small business walk on the Westside. We also held the Okanagan Young Professionals coffee networking event in collaboration with the Kelowna Chamber with about 80 people in attendance. Business Excellence awards will be held on October 30th.
- The Call for Expressions of Interest for Advisory Committee members-at-large is currently open and closes on October 31st.
- AO Market Diversification funding has been topped up via ETSI-BC. Applications are open on the Accelerate Okanagan website.
- Buying fruit and wine directly from farmers saves you money and supports the local agricultural economy.
- Lake Country opened up 35 acres of industrial land.
- Next meeting November 26th

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 am.
