An Economic Opportunities to 2020 Strategy for the Central Okanagan Region

Prepared for the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission
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Executive Summary

The Regional District of the Central Okanagan has contracted Global Innovation Partners to assist the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) in creating *An Economic Opportunities to 2020 Strategy*. This action plan will guide the COEDC in creating a well-diversified economy that builds upon the Region's current strengths and innovation assets and capitalizes on economic opportunities.

To develop this strategy to guide COEDC’s efforts to the year 2020, Global Innovation Partners provided global strategic insight and comparative perspective from its work across North America and Europe, especially in the fields of business attraction, innovation, enterprise growth, and general economic development. The resulting strategy is a framework from which COEDC can concentrate its efforts and help the Region achieve its vision of being “a prosperous region, where smart growth complements its natural resources and amenities, embracing new global economic and social change.”

In developing the strategy, the project team looked to provide guidance on three questions at the crux of the Region’s efforts to move forward, specifically:

- What can be done collaboratively to assist the existing and growing business base with enhancement related activities and programs which address needs and challenges?
- How can the Region attract new investment in the form of human and business capital into an expensive marketplace, and
- What larger policy and infrastructure issues must be addressed to allow the Region to meet its economic potential?

The project was comprised of five phases, each building on the other to produce a framework through which the Central Okanagan region can leverage its innovation-led, partnership based approach. The recommendations herein provide a road-map for COEDC to create a competitive and sustainable innovation ecosystem that supports existing businesses and encourages appropriate new business investment.

The strategy provides a mechanism for COEDC to fine tune and enhance its approach to economic development so that it not only fosters innovation, employment creation, and diversity, but also fully leverages existing companies, assets, and resources and identifies future convergences. By taking steps to better focus the Region’s economic development service delivery, more strategically engage private-sector leadership, and create a place and mechanisms where such innovation can occur, COEDC will ensure the Central Okanagan region is a leader in cross-sector innovation and a place where leading talent and companies will want to grow and locate.
Project Methodology

The methodology used in the strategy development process sought to create an understanding of where the Central Okanagan region currently stands, define an aspirational, optimal future state for the Region (based on key assets and opportunities), and build a strategy to overcome any gaps or challenges the Region faces. The specific phases of the engagement are described in the table below.

Work on the above consisted of field research and in-person meetings with key leaders at the regional and community level, a review of existing studies, and independent research. Additionally, the Global Innovation Partners’ team greatly benefited from the University of British Columbia Okanagan’s Innovation Assets Mapping project, as well as the report by the Malatest Labour Market Study Committee. The team also referenced COEDC’s current operational plan to ensure that recommendations were in keeping with the culture and expectations of the organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Deliverable</th>
<th>Phase I: Understanding of the current situation</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research the current situation; familiarization with the Central Okanagan Region and its component communities. Review available information, tours and visits in the region, interviews and meetings with key leaders and observers.</td>
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| Phase II: “What is” Profile | Build a profile based on perceptions from visits, interviews, meetings, objective observation, review of UBCO’s Asset Mapping results and findings of the SWOT analysis. Focus on innovation and how assets can fuel a regional fast-growth knowledge economy, and stimulate existing mature slower growth sectors. |

| Phase III: “What Could Be” | Based on the Region’s unique strengths, the asset mapping results and best practices used across North America and the UK, show the Region’s potential |

| Phase IV: Gap Analysis | Determine what needs to be done to move to the best practice level, with a focus on innovation and close collaboration among economic development entities, the university, college and research community, accelerators/incubators, businesses, entrepreneurs, government, and other key players. |

| Phase V: Develop Strategy | Lead collaborative development with COEDC staff of an innovation based Economic Opportunities Strategy to 2020 plan |

The resulting recommendations provide a road map to help the Central Okanagan region overcome the identified gaps and make progress towards its vision. The key projects/initiatives are suggested with specific strategies and tactics that will help the Region reach its economic potential. Two of these projects are to be led by COEDC working with its EDO partners. The others are complementary initiatives to influence, leverage and support related initiatives currently underway by other lead organizations. They are all designed to reinforce and support each other.

Companies and Organizations interviewed

- Accelerate Okanagan
- University of British Columbia – Okanagan (UBCO)
- Okanagan College (OC)
- BC Innovation Council
- BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism & Skills Training
- BC Ministry of Technology, Innovation and Citizens’ Services – Asset Mapping Project
- Kelowna Flightcraft
- Kelowna General Hospital
- COEDC Director
- COEDC Staff
- Economic Developers
- District of West Kelowna
- Westbank First Nation
- City of Kelowna
- District of Lake Country
- Disney Interactive Canada
- District of Peachland
Current State

As COEDC seeks to build upon its innovation-led economic development program of fostering innovation, employment creation and diversity to attract investment and facilitate business growth and competitiveness, it has many assets upon which to build.

Phases One and Two of the project focused on identifying the Central Okanagan's current key assets and challenges which can serve as the basis from which it will build its future economic vision. In assessing the Central Okanagan Region, the Global Innovation Partners team posited that the region’s ability to do so rests on its commitment to create a solid innovation ecosystem. Such an ecosystem includes six elements: the existing business base; innovation and idea generation; quality of place; brand/credibility; connectivity infrastructure and talent.

Innovation Ecosystem

Strengths

Examined in the context of such an innovation ecosystem, the Central Okanagan region has strong existing sectors with foundations in areas such as advanced manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism. Increasingly the Region is gaining prominence as a place for digital media and its applications. The intellectual capital in the Region—comprised of the University of British Columbia Okanagan, Okanagan College, and a host of research institutes (as identified by the Innovation Mapping project)—provides a solid basis for idea generation. These assets are further complemented by technology-led efforts underway at Kelowna General Hospital/Interior Health, existing companies such as Disney, Flightcraft, and other niche leaders, and the existing innovation infrastructure support for entrepreneurs such as Accelerate Okanagan and metabridge.

Additionally, the Region’s strong quality of place, talent pool, and work ethic attract the creative class, along with lifestyle entrepreneurs and potential investors.
**Challenges**

With its positive attributes, the Central Okanagan region also has challenges to overcome if it is to reach its full potential and desired future. The Region’s relative remoteness and lack of brand outside of Western Canada is a limiting factor—especially as the Region seeks to attract talent. Likewise, the relatively small size of the market and large proportion of small companies (as opposed to large ones) limits its market potential.

Moreover, the Region and its economic development efforts are slowed due to underdeveloped connectivity among idea generation organizations. COEDC and the local economic development organizations have great potential for refining and evolving their respective economic development service delivery structures and ensuring that all stakeholders are taking their efforts to the next level by working towards a defined, common, economic goal.

**Where the Central Okanagan Region Stands**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Strong existing sectors</td>
<td>- Regional collaboration and acting more cohesively</td>
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<td>- Promising emerging sectors</td>
<td>- More leverage of academic / innovation assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Talent, transferable skills, strong work ethic</td>
<td>- Link talent attraction to opportunities</td>
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<td>- Quality of life/attractiveness</td>
<td>- Expand digital media/cross sector convergence</td>
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<td>- Strong tourism brand</td>
<td>- Leverage the medical core/hospital with medical tech development, remote monitoring and delivery of services</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Infrastructure (broadband, highways, airport, business services and support)</td>
<td>- Build on dark fibre capability</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Strong network of ED professionals</td>
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<td>- Open to growing the nascent innovation ecology</td>
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<table>
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<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<td>- Remoteness/limited awareness</td>
<td>- Silos/Increasing verticality of municipal governments</td>
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<td>- Cost structure in resource intensive industries</td>
<td>- Competing intra-regionally rather than globally</td>
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<td>- Fragmentation</td>
<td>- Missing the opportunity of UBCO “Institute”</td>
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<td>- Declining natural resources industries</td>
<td>- Not leveraging convergences/potential collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Under developed potential for private sector engagement and investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Limited ambitions / lifestyle entrepreneurs</td>
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<td>- Insufficient talent pipeline</td>
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The Opportunity

COEDC has expressed its desire to move past traditional economic development that focuses on recruiting new companies and to concentrate more on building an economic future that takes into account the importance of knowledge creation and growing from within as espoused in Romer’s New Growth Theory.* Additionally, given the insights and observations uncovered in the early phases of the assessment, the project Steering Committee expanded the economic development vision for the Region, asserting that in addition to being knowledge-driven and organic, the Central Okanagan region’s economy should be one that seeks to exploit convergences in technologies, in addition to employing and adapting the technologies themselves.

The Region’s strong foundations of existing sectors, talent, brand, and idea generation capacity position it well to do so.

Goal

As the Central Okanagan region looks to build such an innovation ecosystem, the key goal of the Economic Opportunities to 2020 Strategy should be to:

*Position the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission as a continuing leader in economic development by working effectively with local and other economic development partners to grow the region’s existing base of advanced and leading edge sectors, as well as to identify and nurture key areas of convergence so that the Region is known as an epicenter of cross-sector innovation.*

To do so, COEDC will need to be more proactive in organizing the various economic development activities in the region around the above goal, as well as continue to nurture relationships with innovation assets within and outside the region to better leverage emerging trends.

Key Projects/Initiatives

To meet the economic goal for the Central Okanagan region, Global Innovation Partners recommends that COEDC, in partnership with other economic development and related organizations in the Region, take on four key projects/initiatives. Work on the projects would be manifested through five strategies. These complementary initiatives are designed to allow COEDC to capitalize and leverage the Region’s existing infrastructure and assets and strengthen its innovation ecosystem. The projects are mutually-supportive and build upon the Region’s existing strengths while mitigating obstacles that have hindered the Central Okanagan region’s economic growth.

• **Organizational Cohesion through Sector Development and Account Management (Primary/Lead)**

COEDC will take the lead in better organizing the economic development activities in the region so that there are clear roles and responsibilities and a common goal of strengthening, nurturing and building the region's sectors with deeper engagement of business leadership.

• **Innovation Institute (Support)**

COEDC will support UBCO and OC in achieving effective economic development alignment through the proposed Regional Socio-Economic Development Institute of Canada (or a similar organization) to better identify community needs and leverage university/college assets and networks.

• **Collaborative Commons (Support)**

COEDC will advocate for the creation of a dedicated space within the new Okanagan Centre for Innovation as a regional collaborative commons that is focused on stimulating cross sector/cross organization interactions and economic development support for the Region's idea generation.

• **Talent Attraction (Lead)**

In conjunction with the Malatest recommendations and implementation of the Labour Market Strategy, COEDC will take a pro-active economic development role in retaining and attracting talent to the Region through more focused co-branding and messaging of the Region's opportunities and providing a more comprehensive and future sensitive demand-side perspective.

The figure below illustrates how the projects are envisioned to work together.

**Key Projects/Initiatives**

The four projects are designed to work in tandem with one another to strengthen the Central Okanagan region’s innovation ecosystem. The projects will be undertaken through a series of strategies and tactics.
Strategies

Global Innovation Partners recommends the following five interdependent strategies to accomplish the key projects/initiatives, thereby promoting and enhancing the Region’s innovation economy. The strategies will be delivered through the following, associated tactics.

For some of the strategies, COEDC will be the lead; for others it will be a supporter and advocate. Together under COEDC’s guidance they will deliver a comprehensive, mutually supportive, integrated regional strategy.

Summary of Strategies

1. Create more cohesion and effectiveness around the Central Okanagan region’s economic development efforts with an emphasis on account management (Lead role)

2. Create a Sector Development program for the region to leverage existing companies and better engage the private sector in the Central Okanagan region’s economic development efforts (Lead role)

3. Collaborate with UBCO and others in the creation and development of the Regional Socio-Economic Development Institute of Canada (Support role)

4. Create a regional collaborative commons focused on creating interactions and economic development support for the Region’s idea generation (Support role)

5. Take a pro-active economic development role in retaining and attracting talent to the Region (Lead role)
Strategy 1: Create more cohesion and effectiveness around the Central Okanagan region’s economic development efforts with an emphasis on account management (Lead role)

COEDC is an agency of the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO). COEDC is funded by and accountable to the elected board of the RDCO. The RDCO includes Peachland, West Kelowna, Kelowna, Lake County and Westbank First Nation. These municipalities have their own government and taxing powers, but contract with RDCO for a variety of services including the work of COEDC. Although most, if not all, of the local municipalities have development staff, they look to COEDC and its staff to provide regional coordination and other services in three streams: Retention & Enhancement; Investment Attraction; and Facilitation.

As evidenced by past initiatives, the economic development entities within the RDCO work well together when focused around a specific task. Due to history and geography, there is a wide variance in the mission and focus of each of the local entities.

To increase its effectiveness and ability to build the innovation ecosystem needed if the Central Okanagan region is to fully reach its potential, all economic development organizations (EDOs) of the RDCO must build consensus around the region’s vision and articulate each organization’s role in achieving it.

Local EDOs need to focus their efforts on building a strong account management system and servicing specific company/client needs located in their jurisdictions. The intelligence they gather and the relationships they build through COEDC will support and inform the Region’s efforts to identify collective needs and regional priorities and strengthen its innovation ecosystem.

The Regional Commission through COEDC should be focused on driving and facilitating the regional strategy, branding/marketing initiatives, and coordination of region-wide infrastructure and talent programs that strengthen the innovation ecosystem, while leveraging economies of scale through cooperative programs and communications.
As evidenced by past initiatives, the economic development entities in the Region work well together when focused around a specific task. However, more formal roles and responsibilities are needed to ensure economic development service delivery is conducted effectively and efficiently at all levels.

**Tactic 1.1: Define roles and responsibilities of each level of economic development service delivery and agree through an MOU on how the various entities should work with one another**

A critical first step to delivering a cohesive strategy is for the economic development entities in the Region to collectively identify what can be done most effectively at the local, municipal level; recognize areas where impact and economies of scale can best be achieved at the regional level; and determine how federal, provincial, specialized agency, educational support and the array of innovation assets can be fully integrated. By better delineating the roles and responsibilities of each entity, the Region can rationalize its economic development delivery services and make them more effective.

Throughout the economic development industry, it is widely accepted that those units of organization closest to the client (companies) are most successful in understanding and reacting to the needs of those clients. The intelligence gathered at this level can inform more strategic efforts encompassing the entire region. The result is a division of responsibilities that all constituents accept and that has the organizational support to facilitate and move projects along.

The Central Okanagan region needs to embrace some of the methodologies and processes that other communities and more mature regions have adopted.

Given the make-up of the Central Okanagan region’s economic development partners and the needs facing the region immediately and in the next 1-3 years, the following matrix of activities/responsibilities is suggested. COEDC should use this as a guideline to develop a more formal protocol or memorandum of understanding for all parties involved.
Local and Regional EDOs should build consensus around the region’s vision and articulate each organization’s role in achieving it, with local EDOs focusing on account management and servicing specific company/client needs.

### Recommended Organizational Roles and Responsibilities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strategic Planning</th>
<th>Account Management</th>
<th>Engaging Private Sector</th>
<th>Liaison with Innovation Assets</th>
<th>Promoting Collaboration</th>
<th>Marketing</th>
<th>Advocating for change</th>
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<td>Local EDOs</td>
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<td>COEDC</td>
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<td>Advisory Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Partners</td>
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- **Lead**: COEDC, with active participation and agreement by the local EDOs
- **Resources**: Realignment of staff and responsibilities; agreement among organizations to interact or engage differently
- **Priority**: High
- **Start date**: Immediately
- **Measurement Guideline**: Consensus definition of organizational roles and responsibilities; completion of an MOU or other protocol document that governs the role of each organization

Local EDOs = Economic development units in the City of Kelowna, Lake Country, West Kelowna, Peachland, and Westbank First Nation

Other Partners = Organizations in the Innovation Assets Mapping; COEDC Active Partnerships
**Tactic 1.2: Develop an Account Management system among economic development entities in the region and MOUs to govern how the various entities work with one another**

To fully leverage the existing sectors and build a rigorous sector development program, the Region will first need to better understand each local company’s specific needs and requirements with an aim of fostering growth, expansion and retention by the company in the area. A key task in doing so would be to build a strong account management system that will provide a formalized process for gathering and using the information. This can build on the current business visit/walk program, but will mean that each of the EDOs will need to standardize and execute their relationships with local companies. Some elements of the account management system may already exist in individual EDOs and/or could be supported or augmented by the work of the local chambers of commerce. The goal of this effort is to ensure each EDO is executing this element of their responsibilities consistently and that information gathered can be analyzed and shared on a regional level to identify collaborative needs and opportunities, inform and help shape regional marketing, business support and innovation programs.

As the primary contact for companies in their local jurisdiction, local EDO staffs need to develop an account management program to strategically and tactically facilitate and connect companies/entrepreneurs to suitable business support programs and initiatives to stimulate growth. Account management should be reactive to client company needs, brokering them to specific programs that will boost growth and, in turn, increase employment.

Elements of the account management process should include:

- Creating awareness of the benefits of taking up business growth support and leveraging the outputs or programs of the Region’s innovation assets;

- Helping businesses understand what services they should be using, and why;

- Providing support and resources for business leaders to make informed choices about the business support providers with whom they engage; and

- Encouraging more businesses to work with business support providers, innovation initiatives and networks and for the account managers to keep on working with them as they address evolving challenges and opportunities.

In return, the standardized interaction with the business will help the local EDOs and other business support service providers understand what client companies need. Local and national business support programs can be shaped to better match the evolving needs of the Okanagan business community.
A realistic goal for the region would be for each local EDO to aim to meet with 20-35 local companies at least twice a year, with larger EDOs proportionally more.

**Lead:** Local EDOs with COEDC providing overall direction and guidance

**Resources:** Re-prioritize staff time around account management; potential MOU

**Priority:** High

**Start date:** Immediately (2Q 2015)

**Measurement Guideline:** Account management established in each local EDO; 20-35 companies per EDO identified and engaged
### Strategy 2: Create a Sector Development program for the Region to leverage existing companies and better engage the private sector in the Central Okanagan region’s economic development efforts (Lead role)

Given its strong quality of life, variety of innovation assets, and existing companies, the Region has a basis upon which to build strong sector niches and brand itself as an innovation center—both for existing technologies and as a place where convergent uses of technology are discovered and put into practice. However, the Region and its economic development efforts are hindered due to underdeveloped connectivity among economic development organizations. Without such a rigorous structure to understand the needs and potential of existing companies and sectors, the Region is not fully harnessing its innovation capacity nor is it as capable of identifying emerging global trends and leveraging those trends locally.

To leverage such expertise and assets, the Region needs to be more proactive and strategic in engaging the broader business leadership toward building a transformational strategy to develop and grow existing sectors. Identifying potential sector niches and cross-over opportunities for the Region that will strengthen the economy will create more and better job opportunities and support a more targeted talent recruitment effort.

Such “Sector Development” is a proactive and strategic process which will be spawned out of the account management work streams. It will be industry

### Keys to Successful Sector Development

- **Must be a strategy and ongoing process, not just an event.** Consistent interaction and engagement between companies and supporting organizations allows for more rapid industry growth compared to natural organic growth. Working partnerships that are closely aligned and are accountable and productive with a single delivery goal (such as creating more jobs) are generally more successful. EDOs, industry associations, academia, and government should jointly facilitate and support the effort.

- **Communicate current strengths/success.** By highlighting the success of industry activities and interaction, participation will grow and mature. Media channels that can be exploited easily and regularly are key.

- **Engaging private sector demands is critical.** The effort should include leadership development; leveraging supply chains, suppliers and customers; and exploring sectors of opportunity (e.g. healthcare, medical technology, and entertainment).
sector oriented and will focus on clusters, sectors, sub-sectors and cross-sector opportunities involving leadership across companies, suppliers, universities, agencies and innovation asset organizations from a spectrum of related interests. The data will be uncovered through a well-functioning account management system. If a niche—or an emerging niche with a number of companies operating in a similar market or discipline—is identified, the sector development program will work to realize any additional support programs and initiatives that can boost growth for a number of companies simultaneously across the niche. This process relies on EDO and account management staff being able to grasp and employ a strategic view of the mapped companies and moving forward to create new initiatives and partnerships to facilitate and speed growth for the sector.

**Tactic 2.1: Identify and prioritize sectors which have potential to grow in the region. (Mapping the business growth sectors)**

The first step in projecting future areas of potential convergence is to understand current assets. Through the Account Management system, local EDOs will identify and characterize the local businesses operating in their local area. From this inventory, the EDOs could take note of any existing “hubs” or networks of collective and convergent activity and report those to COEDC or the Institute for further assessment or investigation. For example, local EDOs could collect a standard set of data for each company/account which would then be integrated into a Region-wide database (perhaps creating and using a shared, Region-wide CRM system such as Tractivity CRM or similar). This exercise would reveal sector or cross-sector opportunities across municipal boundaries or among multiple companies and research organizations. These may be as simple as understanding supplier networks where more local procurement could be encouraged. Or it may uncover opportunities for co-development of products or services through joint ventures. Or where an overabundance of technical skills or downsizing in one company could be transferred or absorbed by another company in the region, perhaps even in a different sector.

An example of the characteristics or metrics to document might include:

- Size (revenues, profits, jobs, and employment)
- History (New start or “Lifestyle” company)
- Target sector(s) market
- Size of market and potential for growth
- Trading market
- Future talent needs
- Technology specialties
- Specialist skills

*The first step in projecting future areas of potential convergence is to understand current assets. Through the Account Management system, local EDOs will identify and characterize the local businesses operating in their local area.*
Best in Class Precedence

The following are examples of mature sector development programs.

**The Cumbria Business Growth Hub** provides a range of business support services and activities for businesses in the region at a significantly reduced cost. It was developed and delivered by the University of Cumbria and is funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The Growth Hub and its programming are a manifestation of the region's sector development program. [http://www.cumbriagrowthhub.co.uk/](http://www.cumbriagrowthhub.co.uk/)

**The Growth Hub** is an initiative in Gloucestershire that carries out the government’s economic plan to develop its reputation for starting and growing great businesses and creating a culture of entrepreneurship in educational institutions. It is funded by government and private sector sources, GFirst and the University of Gloucestershire. New and existing businesses are supported at The Growth Hub through a number of key support services – aimed at transforming the business. These services include diagnostic, consultancy and business planning services and are offered at a reduced cost or at no cost. [http://www.thegrowthhub.biz/](http://www.thegrowthhub.biz/)
How Sector Development Might Occur in the Central Okanagan Region

The region’s work to identify convergent and cross sector niches could be manifested through existing growth assets and “anchor” organizations already in the Central Okanagan region if given the right environment to flourish.

For example, medical technology—a significant growth sector—could play a major role in bringing together the Region’s major institutions in partnership with business to exploit new markets in wearable and health-focused technology or by applying gaming and simulation to e-learning, patient education, or monitoring. Each product requires specific input and expertise from a specific local sector. The work to align different entities to support and identify sector niches and cross-over opportunities would accelerate the sector development process. Sector development in the Central Okanagan could evolve as follows:

1. Hospitals would provide medical know-how and an understanding of potential needs that can be fulfilled and the potential of clinical trials and training of medical personnel;
2. The Colleges and Universities would support commercialization, implementation, and product design, along with advanced education and training;
3. The advanced manufacturing sector would provide product design, create, and manufacture the device (from prototype to production);
4. Digital hardware providers would develop the connectivity components in the device (e.g., LTE/4G/Bluetooth/WiFi);
5. Digital software providers would create the user interface and firmware/operating system; and
6. Internet specialists would market and brand the device and create e-commerce platforms alongside new commercial data capture and analytics platforms.
7. Digital media specialists would support e-learning, patient education, and asset creation to support the products and services.

An additional benefit of the sector development process could be finding other areas to deploy the region’s talent or creating “follow on jobs”. For example talent that had previously been tied to one company and/or a slow-growing sector could apply their skills to other growing niches.
Tactic 2.2: Evaluate the specific needs in each individual sector.

This activity should be undertaken by the local EDOs and COEDC in collaboration with private sector entrepreneurs and business owners via workshop events led by COEDC and private-sector leadership. The workshops (to be held twice a year) should be designed to uncover gaps in the Region’s business support provision for the individual sector. The goal of the workshops is to understand what the Region can do to help support growth, i.e., what policies or programs would help to boost the sector and exponentially increase the speed of growth in the business sectors.

Representatives from support providers at the provincial and federal government levels should be engaged so that they clearly understand the “local drivers” and can begin working with COEDC and local EDOs to fill the gaps in support.

Some sectors will be more mature than others and thus able to have more substantial and productive conversations. Together COEDC and the relevant local EDOs should identify which sectors offer the greatest opportunity for growth and begin with those. The key to success for the program will be to provide support to businesses that can capitalize on the assistance and create growth and additional jobs.

Lead: COEDC with input from the local EDOs and private sector leaders
Resources: Business engagement workshops and events
Priority: High
Start date: 3Q-4Q 2015
Measurement Guideline: Needs assessment completed for initial sectors

Tactic 2.3: Begin to map initiatives/interventions that are both sector specific and cross-cutting. These should be value-added to existing local and national programs and innovative where no support already exists.

Once COEDC and the local EDOs have an Account Management system in place, the Region should have a strong understanding of sectors with the highest potential for innovation and convergence. By understanding common needs and strengths, COEDC—with guidance from the leadership within those companies and sectors—can begin to build focused programs and policies to encourage growth across the sectors sharing such needs. This would be the first step in building a strategy to identify potential sector niches and cross-over opportunities.
The basic programs that could be put into place to identify and support potential cross-over opportunities include:

a. Additional entrepreneurial growth initiatives that CEO and senior staff can benefit from after the initial start-up period (management consultancy, mentoring/non executive directorship programs, e.g. growth accelerator in the UK);

b. Support company recruitment and training of recent university graduates or creating apprenticeships and internships with local companies to encourage talent to remain in the Region;

c. Sector specific support for breaking into new markets and countries;

d. Support for access to finance, including investment readiness, connections to investors (i.e., replicating metabridge across other sectors);

e. Improve the physical infrastructure (e.g., light the dark fibre to create better connectivity for local and rural businesses and potentially create a fibre test-bed platform that utilizes a network similar to Ultraband in Nottingham and other comprehensive ultra high-speed broadband installations such as in Kansas City and Chattanooga TN);

f. Create thought leadership and networking activities that brand the Central Okanagan region (i.e., ramp up metabridge into a year-round activity);

g. As the city and region grow and begin to implement new support initiatives, look at the possibility of boosting company retention by contractually obligating companies who receive any non “pay to play” support to stay for a period of up to 3 years. This mechanism is used widely across all European countries; and

h. Develop a recognizable brand for the Region’s innovation ecosystem around one geolocation or hub such as the Innovation Centre and actively recruit investors and new start/start-up businesses to it.

**Lead:** COEDC  
**Resources:** TBC  
**Priority:** High  
**Start date:** 3Q-4Q 2016  
**Measurement guidelines:** A set of identified business support programs and work underway to identify potential cross-over opportunities
Strategy 3: Collaborate with UBCO and others in the creation and development of the Regional Socio-Economic Development Institute of Canada (Support role)

By drawing on the rich collective resources of Okanagan College (OC), the University of British Columbia - Okanagan (UBCO), and the University of British Columbia (as a whole) to contribute global thought leadership, research prowess, deep sector knowledge, program discipline, and learning resources, COEDC can dramatically impact and transform the Central Okanagan economy to exploit emerging trends and sector convergences.

These institutions can be ever stronger strategic partners by working across the Region and beyond in the province and globally to identify and clarify needs, help shape sector development and convergent cross-sector opportunities, and by further engaging business and community leadership. In addition, they will create an improved understanding of global economics and talent development.

The vision of forming partnerships across the Region embedded in the mission of the proposed Regional Socio-Economic Development Institute of Canada (“the Institute”) provides a unique opportunity for the regional economic development community to work more intensely with businesses, entrepreneurs, innovation assets and government by drawing on the significant resources of the University of British Columbia campuses, Okanagan College and other post-secondary institutions in a disciplined way to link global trends with the region’s opportunities.

COEDC should facilitate the involvement of the economic development community to help shape the Institute as an effective complement to the work of the regional and local EDOs and their innovation partners.

Regional Socio-Economic Development Institute of Canada

The Regional Socio-Economic Development Institute of Canada is envisaged as way to ensure that there is a productive partnership across post-secondary institutions, community organizations, enterprises, accelerators, development agencies, First Nations and governments to support the Okanagan, BC Interior and comparable regions around the world in building on their dynamism and success thus far.

Vision: Community engaged post-secondary education that transforms the socio-economic development of regions in practice.

Mission: Through research and learning driven by community engagement, and in partnership with post-secondaries, policy agencies, enterprises and other community organizations, for UBC to have a transformative impact on regional socio-economic development in BC Interior and comparable regions worldwide; particularly via imaginative change involving organizations in the economies, communities and societies of which UBC is and can be a part, and through innovation at UBC.

— from a preliminary concept discussion paper
Tactic 3.1: Support UBCO and the University as a whole in shaping the design of the Institute to illuminate, augment, and complement the work of the EDOs and other partners, mitigating duplication or gaps, while gaining the support of stakeholders.

As the proposal works its way through the University approval process and seeks support from Federal Research Councils, provincial, and other potential funders, COEDC and its partner organizations need to become familiar with the proposal and the concept of the Institute to ensure it builds on their understandings of the Region’s economy and dynamics, helps to organize existing innovation assets identified in the mapping process, and avoids confusing community leaders, the private sector and the general public about its role relative to the existing organizations. COEDC should work with its local partners to organize community input into the planning process and to moderate the discussion between university and community needs. Discussion points could include: resources throughout the UBC system that the Institute can tap, its “social-economic thrust”; its special interest in the Interior and non-metro areas; UBC’s global networks; the academic perspective; and its needs versus the community’s needs and interests.

Lead: COEDC  
Resources: Staff time  
Priority: Medium-high  
Start date: TBD in consultation with UBCO; develop a MOU late in 2Q 2015  
Measurement guideline: Initial MOU established between COEDC and UBCO

Tactic 3.2: Define roles and responsibilities of Institute, COEDC, local EDOs, other relevant stakeholders and innovation assets

Through the planning period and as understandings are developed, a series of MOU’s should be drafted and mutually endorsed by the Institute, COEDC, local EDOs, and other stakeholders to be involved. Issues such as who does what; how to avoid conflicts; and real or perceived fragmentation should be addressed. Additionally, protocols should be developed and joint or co-presentations or workshops should be delivered to COEDC’s various stakeholder groups to ensure that all involved organizations demonstrate the inherent collaboration within the effort.

Lead: COEDC  
Resources: Staff time  
Priority: Medium  
Start date: TBD with UBCO and then with EDOs and other partners  
Measurement guideline: Completed MOUs with key players
Tactic 3.3: Assist in identifying, vetting and endorsing proposals for funding.

COEDC and the local EDOs should coordinate or align efforts to solicit funding from provincial and federal sources. Knowing that all parties agree to the proposals will mitigate competition for support among the Institute, COEDC and local EDOs or other partners.

**Lead:** COEDC, or assigned to relevant EDO or partner organization  
**Resources:** Staff time  
**Priority:** Medium  
**Start date:** TBD with UBCO, ongoing  
**Measurement guideline:** Regular consensus on the proposals with joint backing

Tactic 3.4: Collaborate/partner with pilot programs and later with scaled up programs and projects

COEDC should coordinate efforts to ensure that the community understands how the joint efforts of the Institute and the EDO community are supporting the Region’s future economic vision (e.g., design and testing models for innovation; facilitating competitiveness of SMEs). Additionally, COEDC should help to identify internship opportunities and experiential learning opportunities for students within UBCO or Okanagan College to solidify the academic-business relationships, including placement within EDOs.

**Lead:** COEDC, or assigned to relevant EDO or partner organization  
**Resources:** Staff time  
**Priority:** Medium  
**Start date:** Mid year 2015 and then ongoing  
**Measurement guideline:** Joint cooperation and development of pilot programs and projects
Tactic 3.5: Provide regular joint reporting up and down to relevant stakeholders.

The stakeholders and partners supporting the Institute should assess the potential of joint community reports in various forms (including social media) to demonstrate collaboration and a single overall message across the economic development landscape.

**Lead:** COEDC, or assigned to relevant EDO or partner organization

**Resources:** Staff time

**Priority:** Medium

**Start date:** TBD with UBCO, then ongoing

**Measurement guideline:** Agreement on reporting format and timeline

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**Strategy 4: Create a regional collaborative commons focused on creating interactions and economic development support for the Region’s idea generation (Support role)**

In addition to a defined development strategy, sectors need an innovation support structure to ensure that ideas continue to be generated and shared. This would include intellectual assets that are linked to and aligned toward the overall economic goal of the region as well as facilitation and support from economic development entities to support the ideas being brought to market.

The UBCO Asset Mapping exercise illustrates the strong network potential of institutions, funding resources, and university/academic activities in the Central Okanagan region that make up the “idea generation” part of the equation. However, the assets seem to be operating independently, generally aware of each other but dispersed with little connective tissue among them.

Having a dedicated, physical “commons” space for these entities to interact with companies and organizations and further regional economic development and sector goals would facilitate “serendipitous” encounters, (e.g., informal, chance encounters, mash-ups, a casual lounge/coffee bar to exchange ideas) among all. This hub would encourage representatives of the Region’s higher education institutes and other innovation assets to discover each other’s resources and work collaboratively on a regular basis, as well as identify areas of convergence with existing companies and areas of support from economic development supporters.
Tactic 4.1: Identify a physical space for the Commons

The first step in building and encouraging this increased and strategic interaction to strengthen the region’s innovation ecosystem will be to find a physical location at which the activity can occur. The space should be convenient and central to personnel flow and a logical place to meet and share. The space should have a brand that complements the vision for the Central Okanagan’s future of a place for cross-sector convergences.

The Kelowna Sustainable Innovation Group is currently building the Okanagan Centre for Innovation to provide a place where similar activity to encourage innovation and new company start-ups can occur. COEDC should explore the possibility of acquiring or co-developing/managing space within the Centre to house the proposed “Regional Commons.” The hub would serve as a focal point for the Region’s innovative activities with an emphasis on convergence especially across sectors, organizations and geographies.

**Lead:** COEDC  
**Resources:** Staff time  
**Priority:** Medium  
**Start date:** Planning to start in 2Q 2015 in conjunction with detailed planning of the Innovation Centre  
**Measurement guideline:** Acquisition of space and preliminary plan

### Best in Class Precedence

Impact Hub King’s Cross is the working space for individuals that provides workspaces as well as innovative programs, events, and cutting-edge content. King’s Cross is part of a global network of connected communities that enable collaborative ventures, uniting people from every profession, background and culture. [http://kingscross.impacthub.net/](http://kingscross.impacthub.net/)
Tactic 4.2: Build on existing programs to generate and guide activity and interaction within the Commons

While having a dedicated physical place is a start, key stakeholders, companies and innovation assets will need a reason to congregate in the Commons. COEDC can build upon its existing activities such as the Accelerate Okanagan’s - metabridge Partner program, Young Entrepreneur Program, and/or Business Beyond Borders program to create activity and buzz at the Commons. Additionally, COEDC should work with innovation asset partners to encourage bringing appropriate programing there that would allow for networking opportunities as well as showcasing the many assets and support programs available.

Finally, as the Sector Development program (Strategy 2) becomes established, programing should be designed to support these efforts and help grow the Region’s network of innovation assets.

**Lead:** COEDC  
**Resources:** Staff time  
**Priority:** Medium  
**Start date:** 2Q 2016  
**Measurement guideline:** Creation of programming that supports the sector development program and awareness that the Commons is the central place where the innovation community of the Region comes together.

Strategy 5: Take a pro-active economic development role in retaining and attracting talent to the Region (Lead role)

To fuel its innovation ecosystem, the Central Okanagan region will need the talent and intellectual capital to identify and take advantage of areas of convergence. A strong talent/workforce pipeline is created when workforce training initiatives are aligned with economic development goals and projected industry needs (i.e., industry drives talent recruitment and training).

Economic development entities are in a prime position to work with businesses to articulate future demand and inform training plans. With overall direction and goals set by the industry itself, a region can be assured that it is creating the talent and workforce that will be needed and demanded.

COEDC and its economic development partners can be the source for such strategic direction for the Central Okanagan’s regional workforce development goals. Starting the conversation regarding workforce needs and acting as the connector to address both supply and demand sides, COEDC should provide the demand perspective to the initiatives stemming from the Malatest Labour Market Study to ensure training initiatives are aligned with future company needs and the Region’s economic development goals.
**Tactic 5.1: Informed through the account management/business visit program, provide a demand-side perspective of future talent needs**

Through insight and sensitivity gained during the local EDO account management and Industry Visit Programs, COEDC should integrate the results of the Malatest Labour Market Study and further identify and articulate emerging and future talent needs, especially those job titles that may not exist now, but will be demanded in 4-7 years. The effort to extract such information from the region’s businesses, as well as the mechanism to augment findings to the Labour Market Study should be formalized in the above account management project.

This exercise should be an input to a more focused talent development and recruitment strategy (Tactic 5.2). It should also provide added value and focus to the work currently being undertaken by the Foreign Skilled Worker & Entrepreneurial Recruitment program and the efforts to recruit skilled workforce and entrepreneurs from US markets.

**Lead:** COEDC  
**Resources:** Staff time  
**Priority:** High  
**Start date:** Conduct parallel to Account Management starting in 2Q 2015  
**Measurement guideline:** Identification of emerging and current talent needs, and those associated with emerging job titles

**Tactic 5.2: Identify ways to leverage the Regional Institute and its research and forecasting capacity to inform demanded skills projections and resulting training programs**

Two objectives of the Regional Institute are to transform experiential student learning and partner with centres of excellence internationally, nationally and regionally. Coupled with the guidance and insights gleaned from the sector development program, research projects or practicums with the Institute around future skills and training; this information and data could contribute to a much better understanding of not only future talent and skills needs but how these skills can be articulated and carried into the education system at all levels. People who will be needing those professional, technical and creative skills are in the educational pipeline now. Much of this new job title preparation will require several years of education to assure a ready talent market able to compete with other regions with a first/early mover advantage.

**Lead:** COEDC  
**Resources:** Staff time  
**Priority:** Medium  
**Start date:** 1Q 2016  
**Measurement guideline:** Identification of research or data projects
Tactic 5.3: Create a more focused brand and key messages for the Region’s career opportunities that leverage existing tourism and economic development marketing channels

For many, more is known about the Region’s tourism opportunities and quality of place than of the professional career opportunities available. Talent tends to leave the Region after attaining their post-secondary degree under the assumption that there are few career opportunities, and life-style entrepreneurs seem to begin their ventures only after moving to the Region.

COEDC could help expand the Region’s image by deciding how the Central Okanagan region wants to be best known through its sector development efforts, and then creating more focused messaging as to the Region’s overall brand, career opportunities, and future needs (building on the recently conceived “Make It Here” campaign and potentially revisiting the Innovate Kelowna brand campaign developed in 2011/12). This work would augment the initiatives of the Okanagan Valley Economic Development Society and create key message points that sell the Central Okanagan region both for its lifestyle and career opportunities.

The new message points and collateral should also complement continued efforts by COEDC to recruit talent and companies globally from regions that are similar to the Central Okanagan region or that would appreciate and benefit from the quality of place and economic base the Central Okanagan region has to offer (e.g., Foreign Skilled Worker & Entrepreneurial Recruitment program and the efforts to recruit skilled workforce and entrepreneurs from global markets). The more focused efforts to attract talent could also be the basis of some of the programming in the Commons.

Lead: COEDC in conjunction with the Tourism Authority
Resources: Staff time, potential contract with PR or marketing agency
Priority: Medium
Start date: 2Q 2015
Measurement guideline: Deployment of “Make It Here” campaign; update as warranted by the Tactic 5.1 work stream

Best in Class Precedence

Work in the Triangle is a proactive talent initiative, led by the Wake County (Raleigh, NC) Economic Development Office in partnership with other economic development organizations in the region. The campaign showcases the Research Triangle nationally and internationally as one of the top destinations for talented professionals. This program is one of five economic development strategies that seek to bring prosperity and growth to the region. http://www.workinthetriangle.com/about-us
Tactic 5.4: Leverage existing tourism and economic development marketing channels

Several of the Region’s assets that make it competitive in attracting the tourist market can also be used to sell the Central Okanagan region to talent and entrepreneurs looking for an environment conducive to both their lifestyle and career goals.

COEDC can leverage existing tourism marketing collateral to promote the Region’s career opportunities. By using the same imagery and brand that attracts tourists, COEDC can garner the attention of potential immigrants and talent by customizing advertisements with the specific talent recruitment messages developed in Tactic 5.3. Such communications could be targeted at specialized tourism (e.g., agri-tourism or medical/health and business/technology conferences showcasing regional innovation) or business/technology tourism. Additionally, COEDC could look for support and alignment with other entities working to attract talent to the region (e.g., realtors, home builders, or the Downtown Kelowna Association).

The recently developed “Make It Here” campaign is an excellent example of what could be done, especially if it can increase placement by leveraging volume media buys and rates negotiated by the tourism campaign.
Moreover, the Region could leverage its attractiveness as a place to visit and explore while convening or attending conferences or festivals that show-off the area’s thought leadership and strength in a particular industry, technology, specialized niche or university research. metabridge is a great example. These could also be good off-season or shoulder season draws for hotels or convention spaces. They would also make use of specialized university facilities during lower occupancy periods.

Tourism marketing could be augmented to feature innovation in both mature and emerging sectors, thought-leadership, professional development, and specialized technical symposium, for extended/combined business and pleasure travel.

**Lead:** COEDC in conjunction with the Tourism Authority  
**Resources:** Staff time, potential contract with PR or marketing agency  
**Priority:** Medium  
**Start date:** Initial discussions with Tourism agency to determine potential for tie-in collateral messages  
**Measurement guideline:** Development of a preliminary campaign outline
Communications Plan

For the Economics Opportunities to 2020 Strategy to be effective, COEDC must ensure that the appropriate organizations are actively engaged and strongly support the goals set forth. Much of the work to communicate the launch of Strategy will be accomplished through COEDC’s established communications streams. Additionally, such engagement will be accomplished through participation in the above key initiatives. Communication tactics and messages will be different depending on the group.

Strategy Specific Communications

Given the thrusts of the projects and key strategies outlined above, the key audiences with whom COEDC should focus its efforts to communicate and engage are:

Advisory Board: If the Economics Opportunities to 2020 Strategy is to be truly integrated into COEDC’s work and guide its actions, the COEDC’s Advisory Board must be the main champion and advocate for action. The Advisory Board already acts as a conduit of community and business information for COEDC. With representation from local government, representatives of business associations, and leaders of the Region’s key and driver industries, the group will be an input and facilitator for a successful account management system and assist in identifying common needs and issues among the Region’s sectors.

- **Needed Action:** Work to engage and include the Advisory Board can be accomplished through COEDC’s existing lines of communications and interaction. Advisory Board members should be charged with being actively engaged in the above tactics and activities that are applicable to their expertise and role in the individual role in the community.
Local EDOs: As described in the account management and sector development strategies above, the local EDOs will be vital to the overall Strategy’s success. As the account management system is put into place, the local EDOs will have a standard process for engaging with the companies within their jurisdiction. Within the process, the local EDOs and COEDC should agree on the key message points to be used in describing the goals of the account management system and its overarching objectives. Additionally, prior to the launch of the Strategy, COEDC will need to engage with the elected and appointed leaders in each jurisdiction and reinforce why a regional economic development approach is needed, what the Strategy intends to do, and how each jurisdiction will benefit from and contribute to the effort.

- **Needed Action:** Once the Regional District of Central Okanagan Board and COEDC Advisory Board approve of and adopt the *Economics Opportunities to 2020 Strategy*, COEDC should work with the local EDOs as a group and individually to engage and gain support from their local leadership.

  Once agreement is reached and an MOU or similar agreement is formed, COEDC should communicate the MOU to applicable local audiences. This will ensure that all are briefed on the defined responsibilities for COEDC and the local EDOs.

  For the local EDOs, this will be in the form of a facilitated workshop or series of facilitated workshops to build consensus upon the roles and responsibilities at each level, as well as to define a standard process and goals. For the leadership groups,

  COEDC will need to engage the leadership (e.g., City Councils or other relevant elected officials) of each of the jurisdictions and make the case for the changes in the Region's economic development approach as well as describe the overall Strategy and goal of strengthening the innovation ecosystem and how it will affect each jurisdiction. With such leadership support and buy-in, the work of the local EDOs will be more effective.
Innovation Assets Organizations: As the Region’s idea generators, these groups will be vital to the success of the sector development program. COEDC should look to these groups to help support the sector development initiative as well as programming and activities in the Collaborative Commons. These groups should also be overall advocates for the *Economics Opportunities to 2020 Strategy* and the strengthening of the Region’s innovation ecosystem.

- **Needed Action:** Early in the process, COEDC should brief the leaders of the key funding sources, accelerators and incubators, and research institutes on the *Economics Opportunities to 2020 Strategy* and the vision to brand the Central Okanagan region as a place where cross-sector and emerging sector development takes place.

  The organizations should be recruited to serve as advocates for and experts to support the relevant strategies and tactics. Consideration should be given to developing a common graphic brand identity (logo) that could be used by various organizations to market and reinforce the Region’s innovation assets. As potential key resources in the Regional Institute work, the organizations will be an important partner in COEDC’s engagement with and use of the Institute. The organizations should also be encouraged to use the regional Collaborative Commons and to hold appropriate programs and activities there.

  Additionally, COEDC should build on the work of the Innovation Assets Mapping project to generate proof points to illustrate the already strong and robust nature of the Region’s innovation ecosystem. These proof points will support the talent attraction activities.

COEDC Active Partnerships: COEDC should continue to use this group to ensure that the Region’s economic development priorities are aligned and supported. Many of the organizations could and should be called upon to support the creation and execution of the account management system, as well as be key inputs and multipliers in sector development efforts. Others will be helpful in branding the region to attract talent and market professional opportunities.

- **Needed Action:** Through a facilitated workshop, COEDC should brief these partners in the goals of the Economics Opportunities to 2020 Strategy and solicit their input on how, specifically, each wants and needs to be involved. COEDC should request that these partners assist in raising the visibility of the initiative in the Central Okanagan region and encourage other groups to be involved where appropriate in strengthening the Region’s innovation ecosystem.
External Markets: Activities to engage and brief external markets on the Economics Opportunities to 2020 Strategy will be accomplished mainly through COEDC’s existing marketing. COEDC should ensure that key messages are augmented to support the talent attraction and retention initiatives as well as begin to brand the Region as a center for cross-sector and emerging sector activities. Activities and programming created to initiate and support the Collaboration Commons should be leveraged to gain visibility outside the Region where appropriate.

- **Needed Action:** As the initiatives get underway, COEDC and the local EDOs should integrate the activities with external marketing campaigns and the talent attraction initiative. To be effective, internal (regional) understanding and support of the strategy should be well along to ensure credibility of external marketing messages.
Representative Work-flow

The proposed projects and the strategies and tactics to carry them out provide a road map to help the Central Okanagan region overcome the identified gaps and make progress towards its vision. Two of the projects will be led by COEDC; the others are complementary initiatives COEDC should actively be engaged in and support. The recommendations and tactics reinforce and support each other. Timing is illustrative and assumes the Strategy’s adoption by the COEDC Board in 1Q 2015. The level of intensity for each tactic is indicated by the darker tone. Communication streams and potential milestones are also noted.

Organizational Cohesion

Tactic 1.1: Define Roles
Communications with Stakeholders regarding new structure

Sector Development

Tactic 2.1: Identify priorities
Tactic 2.2: Identify needs
Tactic 2.3: Map potential interventions
Ongoing communications and programing with private sector

Regional Institute Support

Tactic 3.1: Support creation
Tactic 3.2: Identify roles
Tactic 3.3: Help define funding protocol (aligned with ED needs)
Tactic 3.4: Collaborate on pilot programs
Tactic 3.5: Provide regular reports

Collaborative Commons

Tactic 4.1: Advocate for space
Tactic 4.2: Build programming

ED Contributions to Talent Recruitment

Tactic 5.1: Contribute demand perspective
Tactic 5.2: Include career opportunity elements in branding
Conclusion

The Central Okanagan region is in a strong position to build upon its existing organizational, company, idea generation and quality of place assets to create an innovation ecosystem that will allow it to become a leader in cross-sector innovation and a place where leading talent and companies will want to grow and locate.

The strategy detailed in this report provides a road map for COEDC to fine tune and enhance its approach to economic development and add measurable value to the work of the Regional District of the Central Okanagan. The projects which the strategies and recommendations in this report describe should be undertaken together; each project reinforces the others, and they are interdependent. Through the structures and processes outlined in the projects the Region will be able to better mine and exploit the expertise and potential of its companies and idea generating organizations.

By being more proactive in organizing the various economic development activities in the Region around the above goal, COEDC’s will be a more effective regional economic development driver.

Thank you

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