

CONNECTOR

Toolkit: Connectee

Welcome

Welcome to the [Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission](#) (COEDC) Connector Program. The COEDC Connector Program is a formalized community integration initiative to help newcomers and young (er) professionals broaden their network through meeting one-on-one with established business leaders in the community. This informational meeting is an opportunity to discuss how your education and skills can be applied in the Central Okanagan labour market.

The goal of the COEDC Connector Program is to enhance your networking skills, accelerate your job search and help you integrate into the professional community in the region. **There is no guarantee you will find employment through the program**, however, it is important to consider that each informational meeting could lead to a referral or job interview. You are encouraged to continue your job search while participating in the program as this will improve the chances of finding employment.

The COEDC Connector Program will match you with a business person, civil servant or community leader (known as a “Connector”) through a screening process based on your experience and qualifications, typically within three to four weeks. Once a match has been made, the program coordinator will introduce you (the Connectee) and the Connector via email. It is the responsibility of the Connectee to reach out to the Connector to determine a good meeting time and location, which may be in person or online.

Following the informational meeting with your Connector, they will work to introduce you to two or three referrals within their network. Those referrals are encouraged to provide you with more referrals, forming the start of a professional network for you. The potential contacts are limitless, and it is up to you to maintain your network and make the most of your connection meetings.

Connectee (Participant) Check List:

- Read this Toolkit and prepare for your initial meeting with your connection.
- Create LinkedIn Profile (if you do not already have one)
- Take the initiative and be pro-active in contacting and following up with your connections.
- Update the Program Coordinator when you find a job.
Once you are employed in your field, your role in the program can shift from Connectee to Connector if you agree.

Connectee's (Participants) Role

As a participant in the Connector program, you are expected to:

- Arrive prepared and on time for all meetings with Connectors
- Respect the time and dedication of the volunteer Connector
- Ensure business inquiries and concerns align with the goal of finding work in the Connector's related field
- Be responsible for subsequent contact with the next round of Connectors, and any other referrals provided
- Keep track of meetings with Connectors since you never know when they might be helpful in your career or you may be of help to them
- Provide feedback to the COEDC by completing any follow-up surveys

IS THIS A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM?

No. While Connectors are welcome to build a professional relationship with you beyond the first meeting, they are not required to remain in regular contact.

The Connector

Who are Connectors?

Connectors are people in our community with impressive networks and are in the habit of making introductions. Connectors know people through social, cultural, professional, and economic circles, and have a special gift for bringing people together.

What is a Connectors Role?

- Meet with you for a 45 to 60 minute informational meeting
- Listen, ask questions, and share knowledge of current market demands in their industry and the community and the skills required in your field
- Following your informational meeting, provide a warm introduction ideally to three additional contacts to help build your professional network
- Provide feedback to the COEDC's Program Coordinator

How does the Connector Program Work?

Step 1 - APPLY

Complete and submit the application form, including resume, to the Program Coordinator. If accepted for initial review into the Connector Program, you will receive an email from the coordinator with next steps. If you not accepted, you will also receive an email confirming this. (Note: Please download and save the form on your own computer and then send it in.)

Step 2 – PRE-INTRODUCTION

The Program Coordinator will contact you to schedule a meeting, preferably in person, to go over the expectations of the program and next steps.

Step 3 - INTRODUCTION

The Program Coordinator will connect you with a Connector that suits your skills, experience &/or field of interest via email.

Step 4 - PREPARE

To prepare for the meeting:

- **Research the company and Connector in advance.** Go to the company website and read about what they do. Be ready to ask questions. LinkedIn is also a great tool for this research.
- **Confirm the meeting time, place and date.**
- **Be on time.** It is important to be conscious of the Connector's time, as they are taking time out of their schedule to meet with you.
- **Spell check and remember a bit more formal communication is preferred.** You will be corresponding with the Connector to set the time and place. Take as much care in this correspondence as you did with previous cover letters or resumes for your job search.

Step 5 - CONNECT

To maximize the benefit of your informational meeting.

- **Take notes.** Bring a notebook and pen with you to write down any important information or referrals given.
- **Turn off all electronic devices.**
- **Maintain eye-contact and be appreciative.** Be sure to shake hands in the beginning and at the end of the meeting. If your religion forbids shaking hands with the opposite gender, please mention that. After the meeting, be sure to thank your Connector for their time and advice.
- **Be professional.** While there is no guarantee of employment, this Connector could be a potential employer so make sure to keep a positive, professional attitude. It is only natural that discussing general information about your personal lives may cross over a little bit; however, the focus should be on industry information and finding networking opportunities.
- **Dress professionally and bring a copy of your resume.** Part of marketing yourself is looking professional, so dress as if you were going to an interview.

Step 6 - FOLLOW-UP

After your informational meeting:

- **Inform the Program Coordinator** that you have met with your Connector and complete any surveys.
- **Send a thank you note** after the meeting within 48 hours, thanking the Connector for their time and commitment to providing additional referrals to you. This may be an email.
- **Follow up** by contacting any referrals within one or two business days of receiving an email introduction so you are still fresh in their minds.
- **Log Meetings** so you can share whom you were introduced to by the initial Connector with the Program Coordinator. This information can help the program obtain new Connectors or create testimonial promotions.

Informational Meetings

An informational meeting is an opportunity for you to learn through the Connector's professional experiences by asking questions related to their career progression, occupation, or industry.

Commonly asked questions:

- Could you tell me more about your role within the organization?
- What is the work culture like within your organization, and in this particular industry in the Central Okanagan. Do people tend to work in teams or individually? Is the office setting formal or informal?
- What do employers look for in a successful candidate in this industry?
- What does the training process look like in this industry?
- What other organizations may be suited to my experience?
- What key jobs or experiences led you to the position you are in today?
- What are the top 3 skills (transferable or technical) needed for my desired role/position?
- Is there an entry level role/position that could be a stepping stone to this type of role/position?
- What experience and expertise is expected within this industry?
- Are there any unspoken expectations of people working in this industry?
- How does one typically find employment in this industry?

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are the referrals important?

Referrals are an extremely valuable way to:

- Gain information from different professional perspectives that can be applied to your career or job search
- Meet other knowledgeable and experienced professionals in the community
- Have a better understanding of the local job market and industry of interest

Where will the informational meeting take place?

The meeting will be scheduled at the Connector's office, another convenient public location suggested by the Connector or on-line using a tool like Zoom.

What happens at the first meeting?

It is your responsibility to come prepared for the meeting and initiate the conversation.

Topics you could discuss with your Connector include:

- Professional background, skills and areas of expertise
- Sector related news
- Central Okanagan industry specific labour market demands
- Potential career opportunities within your industry in the Central Okanagan
- Networking tips

How does the referral process work?

The Connector is asked to provide you with two or three referrals within two weeks of your meeting. In turn, each of those referrals is asked to provide additional contacts to you. It is your responsibility to manage referrals and arrange informational meetings. Remember, Connectors and referrals are taking time out of their schedules to meet with you. The professional network created from this program will better connect you with opportunities available in the Central Okanagan.

If you have further questions, please contact the COEDC Program Coordinator

Contact: connector@investkelowna.com

Suggested Templates

On thanking your Connector for meeting with you / thanking subsequent referrals

Thank the person for taking time to meet with you, tell them specifically what you enjoyed about your discussion and some things that you learned. Let them know it was a great opportunity and thank them again for the contacts they provided you with.

Example:

Dear _____,

Thank you for taking time out of your day to meet with me. I enjoyed our conversation about your organization and experiences within this industry. I learned more about what it takes to be successful in a career such as this and how to move forward to network with others in this field. Speaking with you was a great opportunity, and I appreciate the additional contacts that you shared with me.

Sincerely, _____

On responding to the introduction from your Connector

Email them to tell them more about who you are, and what your profession is. Let them know you would like to meet with them briefly if they are interested. If so, set a date and time to meet, make sure to verify with them beforehand. We suggest attaching your resume to the email if your referring Connector has not already done so.

Dear _____,

I'm a participant in the COEDC Connector Program and a recent {(xxxx) graduate from (xxxx) or a newcomer to the region from (xxxx)}. I have experience with _____ and _____. I'm working to build my professional network in the Okanagan (Connector's name) suggested that you would be a valuable connection. Are you available to meet with me for 45-60 minutes in the next few weeks so I could learn more about your organization and industry? The opportunity to expand my industry contacts in the Central Okanagan is greatly appreciated. Thank you very much and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, _____

Website & Online resources

Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission

www.investkelowna.com

data.investkelowna.com – Central Okanagan Economic Development portal for information about businesses, people numbers and the community.

Okanagan Young Professionals Collective

oypcollective.com

Industry Specific Resources:

www.investkelowna.com/about-the-okanagan/business/industries/

National Connector Program

www.ConnectorProgram.ca

Chambers of Commerce Networking Events

- Lake Country Chamber of Commerce - www.lakecountrychamber.com/
- Kelowna Chamber of Commerce - www.kelownachamber.org/
- Greater Westside Board of Trade - www.gwboardoftrade.com/
- Peachland Chamber of Commerce - <https://www.peachlandchamber.com/>

Resumes, Cover Letters or Interview Practice

- WorkBC - www.workbc.ca
- YMCA of Southern Interior Youth Works Program - www.ymcaokanagan.ca
- Kelowna Community Resources - kcr.ca/

Volunteer Opportunities

- Do Some Good - dosomegood.ca/
- Kelowna Community Resources - kcr.ca/

Self-Employment Support

- Community Futures Central Okanagan - www.cfdcco.com/
- WeBC (Formerly Women's Enterprise Centre) - www.we-bc.ca/
- Futurpreneur - www.futurpreneur.ca