

CONNECTOR

Toolkit: Connector

Welcome

Thank you for participating in the [Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission's](#) (COEDC) Connector Program as a Connector. COEDC is proud to be an active member of the [National Connector Program](#).

The Connector Program is a formalized networking initiative designed to broaden a job seeker's network through one-on-one meetings with established business leaders in the community. It is a simple but effective referral process that puts newcomers in touch with people like you so they can connect to our workforce and settle successfully in our community.

Be a Connector

The Connector program puts immigrants, newcomers, young professionals and spouses/partners in the Central Okanagan directly in touch with business owners, operators, managers, civil servants, and community leaders...People like you.

The Central Okanagan needs people. There is a documented labour shortage in British Columbia, the Okanagan and Canada. The region's economic growth depends in part on our ability to attract and retain immigrants, young professionals and recent graduates.

Who are Connectors?

Connectors are people in our community with business or personal networks who 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.

Connector Benefits

By becoming a Connector, you will benefit from:

- Accessing local talent
- Increasing awareness about your organization and industry
- Knowing you are opening doors and helping people succeed in the Central Okanagan
- Contributing to a welcoming and diverse community

Connector's Role

- Participate in an informational meeting with a Connectee (usually about 1-3 a year)
- Listen, ask questions, and share knowledge of current market demands and the skills required in your field
- Following your informational meeting, refer three of your contacts to the Connectee to build their business network by introducing them through email just as you were introduced to the Connectee
- Provide feedback to the participant directly or through the COEDC's Program Coordinator
- Share information about the program with your connections, if possible so they can refer new Connectors or Connectees

IS THIS A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM?

While we encourage our Connectors to build relationships beyond the first meeting, this is not a mentorship program. The Connectors commitment is a total of 2 - 3 informational meetings per year.

Participant's Role

Many job seekers in the Central Okanagan have the skills and education required to be valuable employees. But without an established local professional network, it can be difficult to find employment.

Connector Program participants (vetted Connectees) are expected to:

- Arrive prepared and on time for meetings with Connectors
- Demonstrate professionalism during all meetings
- Respect the time and dedication of the Connector
- Ensure business inquires and concerns align with the goal of finding work in their related field
- Be responsible for subsequent contact with the next round of connectors, and any other referrals provided
- Keep track of meetings with Connectors to use as references and referrals into the next round of Connectors

HOW DO YOU ENSURE PARTICIPANTS ARE EMPLOYMENT-READY?

Each participant is screened by the Program Coordinator or partner organization before being matched with a Connector. What some participants may lack in work experience they make up for in their skill set, education and willingness to learn. The business network created from this program will better connect them to opportunities available in the Central Okanagan.

Applicants who are not deemed employment-ready by the Program Coordinator will be referred to community partners for additional training before participating in the Connector program.

How does the Connector Program Work?

WHAT IS THE TIME COMMITMENT?

This program requires a minimal time commitment. As a Connector you are expected to meet with a participant for a 45 to 60 minute meeting 2-3 times a year.

Step 1 - MATCH

The program Coordinator will reach out to you through email to see if you will be matched with a Connectee with similar educational background, experience or professional interests as you. A resume will be provided. If you agree to the meeting, the Program Coordinator will introduce you to the Connectee via email. It is the Connectee's responsibility to follow up that email to confirm a time to meet with you. Please respond to the Connectee within **one week** to provide them with your availability and preferred informational meeting location – ideally in-person but online works too.

Step 2 - CONNECT

A 45 to 60 minute informational meeting is held between you and your Connectee. This is where you will be asked questions related to your work experience, company, and/or industry sector. No preparation is required.

Step 3 - MATCH

Within **two weeks** of your meeting, provide the Connectee with, ideally, three referrals within your network. As part of the connection process your referrals are asked to provide the Connectee with another three contacts, if they can, following their informational meeting. The potential contacts are limitless, and it is up to the Connectee to make the most of the connection meetings. To make it easy, you can use an email similar to the first introduction email with the Connectee when you refer them to others and let them know about the program structure and the Connectee.

Step 4 - SURVEY

You may be emailed a brief survey following your meeting or you can follow up directly with the program coordinator. You can reflect on your Connectee meeting and program experience. Your response directly impacts program efficiencies.

Informational Meetings

An informational meeting is an opportunity for the Connectee 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 are other organizations that may be suited to my experience?
- What key jobs or experiences led you to the position you are in today?
- What are the top three skills (transferable or technical) needed for the Connectee's 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?

Managing Referrals

Why is providing referrals important?

Connectees are involved in the Connector program because they have limited connections and are looking to build their professional network. Referrals are extremely valuable to Connectees as they allow them to:

- Gain information from different professional perspectives that can be applied to their 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

How soon should referrals be provided?

Connectors are strongly encouraged to provide referrals within two weeks of meeting with the Connectee.

Potential Referrals

- Referrals include anyone within your personal or professional network who would be a good resource for the Connectee
- These could include: Executives, Managers, HR professionals, influential business leaders, members of industry associations, or even someone who is looking to fill a job vacancy
- Inviting the Connectee to a local networking event or attending an association networking event with the Connectee could also be an effective referral
- Note: While most Connectees seek a job, some are also open to volunteer activities to help them break into the job market in certain sectors

We know you'll do your best to provide the Connectee with at least three referrals. There is no 'perfect' match but making connections based on similar interests and backgrounds works well for professional newcomers and also benefits our community.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do we meet with a Connectee?

- The COEDC's Program Coordinator will conduct an initial intake interview with each Connectee to assess eligibility, background and career interest
- If the Connectee's background and career interest match with your expertise, the Program Coordinator will send the Connectee's resume to you. It's up to you to decide whether or not to meet the Connectee and provide referrals.

After you agree to meet with the Connectee,

- The Program Coordinator will introduce you to the Connectee via email. The email will provide details including your name, title, employer, contact information, and a brief biography. Most Connectors are on Linked In so the Connectee may look you up in advance.
- The Connectee will contact you directly to arrange an informational meeting at your convenience.
- Following the informational meeting the Connector will provide a warm introduction, to three contacts. Then it is the Connectee's responsibility to arrange informational meetings with these contacts.

Where will the Connection meeting take place?

The meeting will be scheduled ideally either at the Connector's office or another convenient public location of your choosing, or online pending various factors. In person is still preferred but not always possible.

What happens at the informational meeting?

You could discuss the following topics with your Connectee:

- 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?

As a Connector, you are asked to provide three referrals to the Connectee within two weeks of your meeting. In turn, each of your referrals is asked to provide three additional contacts to the Connectee. The basic business network created from this program will better connect them newcomers and graduates to the opportunities available in the Central Okanagan.

How does COEDC ensure Connectees are employment ready/ready for a Connector meeting?

Each Connectee is screened before being matched with a Connector. The business network created from this program will better connect them to the opportunities available in the Central Okanagan. Please share any concerns about the Connectee's employment-readiness with the Program Coordinator.

Do I need to keep in touch with the Connectee?

No. A 'mentor relationship' where you would routinely keep in touch is not expected. If you would like to stay in touch with the Connectee or connect on LinkedIn, that is up to you but it is not required.

Do we have to be able to offer a job to the Connectee?

No. The purpose of the COEDC Connector Program is to help Connectees grow their professional networks, learn more about the Central Okanagan business community and accelerate their job search and community integration. Connectees are aware that the goal of the Connector Program is to enhance their networking skills and current job search strategies. They are aware that there is no guarantee they will find employment through the program.

If you have further questions, please contact the Connector Program Coordinator via email.

Contact

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