

# Information and Activity Report

*CBRM Regional Enterprise Network*

Q4 – FY 2024/25  
(January - March 2025)

**Subject:** .....CBRM REN Information and Activity Report  
**To:** .....Cape Breton Regional Municipality  
**Date Prepared:** ..... April 14, 2025  
**Prepared by:** ..... Tyler Cole, Economic Development Officer, CBRM  
..... Lan Zheng, Economic Development Officer, CBRM

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## Background:

The Cape Breton Partnership (CBP) provides economic development support to the Cape Breton Regional Municipality under the Regional Enterprise Network (REN) model in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia.

The Cape Breton Regional Municipality Regional Enterprise Network (CBRM REN) serves all of the communities of the CBRM from the CBP offices in Sydney.

The CBRM REN is part of a larger network of Regional Enterprise Networks across Nova Scotia.

The CBP maximizes the value of the CBRM REN's funding partners, leverages that investment to have a greater impact, and collaborates with other partners, funders, and projects that it is responsible for (like the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership) to deliver operational synergies across Unama'ki – Cape Breton and to benefit the CBRM.



## 2024/25 CBRM REN Board of Directors

- **Chair:** Ron Blinkhorn - Casino Nova Scotia
- Tracey Boutilier - Vibe Creative Group
- Shaowei Xu - SW East Trading & Consulting
- Howie Doiron - Lindsay Construction
- Darrell Gallant - Marine Atlantic
- Nicole Morrison - Mabel Systems
- Mary Jane Morrison - Cape Breton University

### *Other Invited CBRM REN Board Meeting Attendees:*

- LOC Co-Chair Steve Gillespie
- LOC Co-Chair Jennifer Campbell

## 2024/25 CBRM REN Liaison Oversight Committee:

- **Co-Chair:** Steve Gillespie - Councillor, CBRM
- Dave MacKeigan - Councillor, CBRM
- **Co-Chair:** Jennifer Campbell - Chief Financial Officer, CBRM
- Tyson Simms - Director of Planning and Development, CBRM
- Evan Williams - Nova Scotia Department of Growth and Development
- Donald Ferguson - Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Skills & Immigration

### *Other Invited CBRM REN LOC Meeting Attendees:*

- CBRM REN Board Chair, Ron Blinkhorn
- CBRM CAO Demetri Katchafanis

## Additional information about the CBRM REN

Full information on the CBRM REN, including the CBRM Forward Strategic Plan, annual business plan, quarterly reports and more is located on the [CBRM REN webpage](#).

## Reporting Period

Your CBRM REN team and the CBP are pleased to share highlights, milestones achieved, and metrics from **January 1 – March 31, 2025**.

## Highlights and Events

- **Grand Opening of Village People Coffee Company at The Whale House: January 8** – Baddeck-based coffee roasters Village People opened a seasonal café in Sydney, at the Whale House.
- **Nova Scotia Cross-Sectoral Housing Summit: January 20** – This event highlighted opportunities for development and collaboration in the non-profit housing sector. Members of the CBRM REN team, alongside colleagues from the CBRM’s Planning & Development Department, were in attendance at Casino Nova Scotia in Halifax.
- **Cape Breton Vital Excellence Awards: January 24** – The Vital Awards, hosted at the Port of Sydney, focused on the next generation of community and business leaders on the Island.
- **Coffee & Connect Event, CBRM: January 28 and February 25** – The Cape Breton Connector program and Welcome Network hosted another two Coffee & Connect Events at Whale House in Downtown Sydney, aiming to cultivate a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere for expanding networks among newcomers, local professionals, and community leaders.
- **Information Session for Business GHST/HST Tax Break: January 29** - The Cape Breton Partnership hosted an information session for business GHST/HST Tax Break. The local experts shared details on what businesses should know about the GST/HST Holiday Tax Break and what to do next as they prepare to remit GST/HST to the Canada Revenue Agency.
- **Construction Association of Nova Scotia Member Mixer: January 30** – CANS hosted this annual event, which focused on building connections between construction sector stakeholders.
- **Weather & Emergency Preparedness: January 31** - The Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP) and the CBRM planned and hosted a workshop to help locals in the community prepare for unpredictable weather and emergencies.
- **Immigration Information Sessions at the Whale House: February 19 and March 20** – These sessions focused on immigration options for graduating students and their families to stay in Nova Scotia after you graduate.
- **Net Zero Atlantic Geothermal Energy Workshop: February 25** – Net Zero Atlantic hosted a workshop at CBU, focused on geothermal energy opportunities in Unama’ki – Cape Breton, particularly in the CBRM due to the region’s rich coal mining history.
- **Futures in Film information session at NSCC Waterfront Campus: March 26** - The Unama’ki- Cape Breton Futures in Film information series took place from March 25-27,2025, in communities across the island, providing attendees with insights into how they could fit into Unama’ki -Cape Breton’s booming film industry.
- **Building Mi’kmaw Tourism in Unama’ki Conference: March 26** – This conference, co-hosted by the Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network, Destination Cape Breton, and the World Tourism Institute, highlighted the growing Indigenous tourism industry in Cape Breton and how collaboration and partnerships can work towards economic reconciliation in the tourism sector.

## Select Project Updates

### Economic Development Project Updates:

- **Women+ Microloan program** - The CBRM REN staff supported two CBRM women entrepreneurs successfully apply for and secure funding through the Sydney Credit Union in Q4. This initiative provides critical financial support, empowering local women to grow their businesses and strengthen the regional economy.
- **Northside Business Park Land sale** - In Q4, the CBRM REN team received three applications for available lots and advanced one qualified submission to CBRM staff for further review. This process supports strategic business development opportunities in the region. Progress on the sales remains under evaluation by municipal authorities.
- **Insights from the 2025 Seafood Expo North America** - In March 2025, CBRM REN Staff Lan Zheng attended Seafood Expo North America, engaging with Cape Breton seafood companies to assess the potential impacts of proposed tariffs. Key insights from these discussions are documented in the report "[Insights from the 2025 Seafood Expo North America](#)" available for further review. This initiative supports local industry preparedness for evolving trade policies.
- **CDÉNE Webinar Presentation, March 11** – CBRM REN Staff Lan Zheng and CB REN Staff Lynne MacLennan participated in a CDÉNE-hosted webinar series supporting women in business. During the session, they presented the Women+ Microloan Program, highlighting its role in empowering female entrepreneurs through accessible financing. The engagement provided valuable exposure for the initiative and fostered connections with aspiring business owners.
- **The NSNP Entrepreneur Stream candidate support** - CBRM REN Staff Lan Zheng assisted an immigrant entrepreneur under the NSNP Entrepreneur Stream by identifying viable local business investment opportunities and facilitating direct meetings between the candidate and potential sellers. Additional support included guiding the candidate through the investment process and connecting them with relevant regional resources to ensure a smooth business establishment in Cape Breton. This hands-on assistance helps immigrant entrepreneurs navigate the local market and contribute to the regional economy.
- **CBRM Offshore Wind Task Force** – During a Council presentation on March 4, Councillor Steve Parsons stressed the importance of establishing a "CBRM Offshore Wind Task Force", to align key interested parties in Sydney Harbour in efforts to attract offshore wind development to the region. Conversations have taken place between Cape Breton University, senior CBRM staff, the CBRM REN, and other important parties around what format this group could take, leadership structure, and desired outcomes from the task force.
- **Community Transportation Pilot Project** – The CBRM REN worked with United Way Cape Breton and other community partners to submit an application to the Province of Nova Scotia for a Community Transportation Pilot Project, seeking to increase access to public transit for rural residents in the CBRM. By giving increased access to public transportation, the CBRM REN believes this will open up economic opportunities for rural communities, and enable rural residents to be greater participants in the labour force which will aid employers in the region.

## Green Energy Sector:

- **Electricity Sector Climate Change Adaptation Implementation Team** - Attended a Community of Practice event in Cole Harbour to collaborate on climate adaptation strategies for Nova Scotia's electricity sector, with ongoing public engagement planning.
- **Canada's Ocean Supercluster Ocean Artificial Intelligence and Technology Foundations Course** - The Green Energy Engagement Coordinator completed a 19-week course on digital transformation, AI, data science, and cybersecurity to enhance skills in ocean technology and business practices.
- **KMNKO Symposium** - The Cape Breton Partnership is sponsoring the Mukk Nqa'ltutuk: Community Connections Symposium in collaboration with KMNKO to advance Indigenous engagement in the energy transition. The event will unite First Nations Economic Development Officers, Indigenous Employment Officers, and industry partners to explore opportunities in procurement, energy, and tourism. This initiative supports Mi'kmaq communities in leading the shift toward a greener, more sustainable economy. All CB Partnership's EDOs will attend to foster connections and share ideas.
- **Net Zero Atlantic Ports Study** - The Cape Breton Partnership is involved in Net Zero Atlantic's [\*Assessment of Atlantic Canadian Ports to Support Offshore Wind Development\*](#). The kick-off webinar was held this quarter, and ports are submitting technical details to the consultant independently to highlight capabilities, identify gaps, and provide conclusions and recommendations related to potential involvement by Atlantic Canadian ports in offshore wind development.
- **Department of Natural Resources Funding** - The Green Energy Engagement Coordinator Worked collaboratively with the Department of Natural Resources to identify and secure \$47,000 to hire an Indigenous student for energy transition engagement and fisher outreach, plus funding for cross-regional knowledge sharing.
- **DOTCAN-WYTEC** - The Cape Breton Partnership signed an MOU with DOTCAN, a Dalhousie-based nonprofit, to serve as a partner hub for their WYTEC program in Unama'ki-Cape Breton. This initiative provides trans-Atlantic training in ocean technology and maritime safety, co-developed with partners in Nova Scotia and West Africa. Supported by Canada's DFO and endorsed by the UN, it prepares women and youth for careers in the blue economy. Training programs will be delivered through knowledge hubs in Halifax, Cape Breton, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.
- **Green Futures Summit in Pictou County** - The Cape Breton Partnership attended the Green Energy Summit, where Jenn MacNeil joined a panel on renewable energy engagement while Tyler Mattheis and Rachelle Samson (Economic Development Officer for Richmond County & Port Hawkesbury) represented the organization. Premier Tim Houston delivered the keynote, and Energy Minister Trevor Boudreau participated in a separate discussion. The summit emphasized workforce readiness for renewable energy, highlighting skill gaps in Nova Scotia. Key takeaways included the urgent need to train local workers for large-scale clean energy projects.
- **Other Participation** - Engaged in Nova Scotia Power's Climate Adaptation Strategy consultation and the State of the Strait meeting.

## Creative Economy Projects and Sector Initiatives:

- **Futures in Film Program** - After Nova Scotia introduced the "Distant Location Incentive" for the film industry in July 2024, the Cape Breton Partnership saw growing interest from production studios. In response, the Creative Economy Development Officer launched the Futures in Film Program in Q4 2024-2025. The initiative aims to support and capitalize on new opportunities in Cape Breton's film sector.
- **Film & TV Producers** - In the fourth quarter of 2024-2025, the Creative Economy Development Officer (CEDO) has been working directly with interested producers from Vancouver, Toronto, the UK, and local Mi'kmaq producers, with a combined total production budget of \$8M. The CEDO consulted with these productions on locations, local workforce, equipment needs, the provincial film incentive program, local business supports

including accommodations, catering, security, local actors, and connected them to investment capital opportunities.

- **Bollywood Productions** - The CEDO is also working with Bollywood producers on two India – Canada co-productions, taking advantage of the current film treaty between countries.

### People and Labour Force Attraction:

- The **Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP)** advanced several strategic initiatives to foster inclusive, welcoming communities:
  - Members engaged in the development of a new Theory of Change framework.
  - Welcomed new members to the CBLIP Council, including William Roy of the CBRM, Denise Bantegeyeko from Immigration Francophone Nouvelle-Ecosse (Sydney-based settlement for Francophone newcomers) and Megan Penney, the CEO of the Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce.
  - The Program Manager attended the national Metropolis Conference to build knowledge and networks with immigration stakeholders across Canada.
  - Under the guidance of its Mi'kmaq Advisory Committee, CBLIP continues to deepen its commitment to building meaningful relationships between Mi'kmaq communities and newcomers
- **Connector Program - Community Engagement:** In Q4, the Connector Program welcomed 19 new Connectees and engaged 4 new Connectors, strengthening professional networks and promoting a sense of belonging in the CBRM.
  - The program was active in the community through events, workshops, and outreach. These efforts contributed to building a more welcoming and connected community for newcomers, students, and professionals in the region.
  - Promoted the program through a January 15 radio segment on Coastal Radio.
  - Co-hosted “Around the World in One Kitchen,” a cultural cooking and networking workshop.
  - Engaged post-secondary students at Cape Breton University and NSCC through classroom visits.
  - Held a Resume Writing Workshop and an Understanding Culture session as part of a Lunch & Learn series.
  - Hosted Coffee & Connect networking events and participated in the “Warm Your Bones” Winter Festival in partnership with local organizations.
  - Co-hosted virtual and in-person networking events with partners including EduNova, Halifax Partnership, and NSCC. Events included a Study and Stay networking event at Eltuek, Side Hustle event at NSCC, and a Disc Golf Networking Event at Rotary Park.
- **Immigration Updates:** The Cape Breton Partnership continues to support employers and newcomers through both *Immigration Advisory* and *Immigration Representation* services.
- **Advisory vs. Representation:**
  - Both of our staff dedicated to immigration provide Advisory services. Kelly MacKinnon, a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC), can also act as the legal immigration representative for employers – submitting applications and communicating directly with government partners on their behalf. This added level of support reduces the administrative burden for employers seeking to strengthen and retain their work force.
  - Dani Mombourquette successfully completed the Entry-to-Practice licensing exam on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and is expecting to become licensed as an RCIC in the coming fiscal year.
- **Immigration Metrics, at end of Q4 -**
  - Provided support to employers and newcomers who successfully submitted 2 designation applications and 3 provincial nomination applications. Supported 16 individuals on immigration quick supports.

- Acted as immigration representative for 16 employers, supporting 19 applications (9 in progress).
  - A total of 143 immigration advisory files were in progress at year-end.
- **Community Engagement:** The team was also active in community and employer engagement, delivering sessions to raise awareness about provincial pathways to permanent residency:
  - Participated in a Services Fair and Career Fair at CBU, reaching approximately 900 students and 70 employers/service providers.
  - Hosted two international student sessions, reaching 35 international students on PR pathways, and attended the Coffee and Connect for newcomers, which approximately 40 newcomers attended.
  - Engaged with employers and stakeholders in collaboration with IRCC to address retention and diversity strategies in workplaces with high numbers of foreign workers.
- **Welcome Network** - In preparation for the upcoming changes to the Cape Breton Welcome Network, further development of the new Buddy Program took place. This included refining intake forms, advancing branding work, and planning for a soft launch in Q1 of 2025.
  - The Buddy Program will aim to match newcomers with volunteers in Unama'ki-Cape Breton based on a number of factors. They will be matched based on location, lifestyle preferences, and meeting preferences. For example, a newcomer with young children in the Sydney area may be matched with a volunteer in a similar situation who is open to connecting. All volunteers will be required to obtain a criminal record check.
- **Community Engagement Highlights**
  - The Welcome Network continued to collaborate with the Connector Program to host Coffee & Connect sessions, prioritizing local venues and businesses to enhance community ties. The Welcome Network also supported and hosted a variety of events that celebrated culture and connection, including:
    - The pilot of a Cultural Cooking Workshop featuring traditional Mexican cuisine.
    - Participation in the Warm Your Bones Festival and Holi celebrations.
    - Hosting Art of Networking and Donuts & Disc Golf events.
    - These initiatives reinforced the importance of informal, welcoming spaces for newcomers to engage with their communities
- **Cape Breton Job Board** - In Q4, there were 116 new job posts in the CBRM bringing the year-to-date total for CBRM to 372. The *Cape Breton Job Board* currently has 278 organizations in CBRM registered.  
<https://capebretonjobboard.com/>



## Recent and Upcoming Events in Q1 of 2025-26:

- CBRM REN Council Presentation – Tariff Update & Response: **April 1**
- Cape Breton Job Fair at Port of Sydney: **April 8**
- Smart Energy Conference & Hydrogen East, Halifax: **April 14-16**
- Nova Scotia Association of Realtors Meet & Greet / Info Session, Sydney: **April 25**
- Nova Scotia Regional Enterprise Networks Conference, Fox Harbour Resort: **April 29-30**
- Safety First Symposium, Membertou: **May 14**
- KMKNO Summit, Truro: **May 21-23**
- CANS Spring Fling Golf Tournament & Banquet, Ben Eoin/Membertou: **April 22**
- Sydney Ports Day, Port of Sydney: **May 28-29**
- Downtowns Atlantic Canada Conference, Dartmouth: **May 28-30**
- Spark Cape Breton, Sydney: **June 12**
- **MORE EVENTS** - To be kept informed of all upcoming events as they unfold, follow the Cape Breton Partnership's social channels or [subscribe to the Pulse Newsletter](#).

## Metrics Overview:

*(Full Metrics are available in Addendum 1: CBRM REN Metrics (January 1 – March 31, 2025))*

Your Economic Development Officers, and CBRM REN team members, continue to provide business support and advisory services to entrepreneurs, business clients, and individuals throughout the CBRM. These projects are reflected in the Addendum below.



## Additional Information:



**CBRM REN Website:** Additional information on the CBRM REN, including the CBRM Forward Strategic Plan, annual business plan, quarterly reports and more is located on the [CBRM REN webpage](#).



**Welcome to Cape Breton Website:** Additional Information on Living, Working, Investing, Studying and Moving to the CBRM - including community profiles and economic data - can be found on the [Welcome to Cape Breton website](#).

- **News and Updates** – Elevate Magazine, and articles from Pulse Newsletter, new podcasts, news releases and more can be found on the [Partnership News section of our website](#).



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## Signatures:

Respectfully submitted by:

*Tyler Cole*

[Tyler Cole \(Apr 30, 2025 08:40 ADT\)](#)

Tyler Cole  
Economic Development Officer - CBRM  
CBRM REN, Cape Breton Partnership

*Lan Zheng*

[Lan Zheng \(Apr 25, 2025 15:13 ADT\)](#)

Lan Zheng  
Economic Development Officer - CBRM  
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*Tyler Mattheis*

Tyler Mattheis  
President and CEO  
CBRM REN, Cape Breton Partnership

Addendum(s):

- **CBRM REN Metrics (January 1 – March 31, 2025)**

---end report---

## Addendum I - CBRM REN Metrics: January 1 – March 31, 2025

	Q4 CBRM Metrics			YTD
	January 1 – March 31, 2025			Since April 1
Activities	Total Started	Total In Progress	Total Completed	Total Completed
<b>Business Support, Sustainability, &amp; Growth</b>	<b>Total: 11</b>	<b>Total: 6</b>	<b>Total: 14</b>	<b>Total: 45</b>
Business Planning	1	1	1	9
Business Productivity & Growth Services	0	1	3	10
Business Quick Support			2	4
Continuous Improvement & Business Advisory	7	4	8	23
Succession Planning	1	1	0	9
Micro-Lending	2	1	5	9
Creative Economy	1	0	1	4

<b>Economic Development Projects &amp; Strategic Sector Support</b>	<b>Total: 7</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>	<b>Total: 10</b>	<b>Total: 18</b>
Economic Development Projects	7	3	10	18
Sector Analysis (Strengths & Weaknesses)	0	0	0	0

<b>Addressing Talent Needs (Labour &amp; Population)</b>	<b>Total: 19</b>	<b>Total: 152</b>	<b>Total: 47</b>	<b>Total: 263</b>
Human Resources Advisory Services	0	0	0	0
Immigration Advisory for Businesses	19	143	21	218
Business Immigration Consultancy	0	9	26	45
<b>Retention Activities</b>	<b>Total: 23</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 32</b>
New Connectors	4			0
New Connectees	19	0	0	0
Welcome Network - Newcomers Welcomed	0	0		18
Welcome Network - Welcomers/Volunteers	0	0		14

**Note on Addendum 1:** The data provided is sourced from our Insightly CRM software and, at times, CBRM REN metrics may not be complete due to data availability from all programs and projects at the time of report preparation. Year-to-date data will be adjusted accordingly in subsequent quarterly reports to ensure accuracy.












# FY24-25 CBRM REN Q4 Report-FINAL

Final Audit Report

2025-04-30

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