

Information and Activity Report

CBRM Regional Enterprise Network

Q2 – FY 2025/26
(July - September 2025)

Subject:CBRM REN Information and Activity Report
To:Cape Breton Regional Municipality
Date Prepared:October 31, 2025
Prepared by:Tyler Cole, 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.



2025/26 CBRM REN Board of Directors

- **Chair:** Ron Blinkhorn - Casino Nova Scotia
- Shaowei Xu - SW East Trading & Consulting
- Howie Doiron - Lindsay Construction
- Darrell Gallant - Marine Atlantic
- Nicole Morrison - Mabel Systems
- Douglas MacLennan – TierToo Properties
- Mary Jane Morrison - Cape Breton University

Other Invited CBRM REN Board Meeting Attendees:

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

2025/26 CBRM REN Liaison Oversight Committee:

- **Co-Chair:** Steve Gillespie – CBRM Councillor
- Dave MacKeigan – CBRM Councillor
- **Co-Chair:** Demetri Kachafanas – CBRM Chief Administrative Officer
- Tyson Simms – CBRM Director of Planning and Development
- 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 Kachafanas

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 **July 1 – September 30, 2025**.

Highlights and Events

- **Unlocking the Power of AI: July 14** – 1.5-hour interactive session at the Sydney Public Market for business owners and entrepreneurs, led by Benedict Wong, a tech leader with 20+ years of experience. Co-hosted by the Cape Breton Connector program.
- **Coffee & Connect: July 15** - Coffee & Connect session, hosted by the Cape Breton Connector Program, the Cape Breton Welcome Network and community Connectors. It's the perfect opportunity to share stories, build relationships, and grow your network in a friendly, laid back and welcoming environment. Hosted at the Sydney Public Market.
- **Offshore Wind Information Session for CBU Faculty & Staff: July 17** – The Green Energy Engagement Coordinator gave a special presentation at Cape Breton University to touch on the latest in the offshore wind sector, including the designation of Sydney Bight as one of four Offshore Wind Development Areas in Nova Scotia waters.
- **OffshoreWind4Kids Beach Demo Day: July 20** – Hosted by COVE at Dominion Beach, this event gave opportunities for youth to build mini wind turbines and learn about the green energy sector.
- **Ticket To Ride: July 27** – Hosted in Louisbourg in partnership with the Cape Breton Connector Program and the Multicultural Association of Unama'ki - Cape Breton. The event featured a multitude of interactive cultural booths and performances, including but not limited to Vietnamese and Mexican crafts, African drumming, Indian henna, Chinese dragon dancing, and more.
- **Partners Update Event: July 29** - The session included highlights and updates from Cape Breton Partnership staff on several of the organization's services and initiatives, as well as opportunities to meet with members of the Cape Breton Partnership Board of Directors and staff. Hosted at the Glenora Distillery.
- **Tenant's Rights for Renters & Community Supporters (Virtual Session): August 27** - Jamie Morrison, Social Justice Support Worker with Nova Scotia Legal Aid, provided support to tenants facing rental-related challenges and assisted with navigating the Residential Tenancies Program. She delivered a one-hour overview of key tenants' rights in Nova Scotia and spoke about the main challenges tenants face based on her experience. A Q&A session followed the presentation. Co-hosted by the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership.
- **Port of Sydney Information Session: September 9** – This session, co-hosted by the Cape Breton Partnership and the Port of Sydney Development Corporation, provided updates on happenings at the Port.
- **Clean Energy Conversations in Sydney: September 17** – This event was hosted by Net Zero Atlantic and the Nova Scotia Department of Energy at the NSCC Waterfront Campus in Sydney. It was an open house which highlighted provincial plans for green hydrogen, offshore wind development, and clean energy opportunities.

Select Project Updates

Economic Development Project Updates:

- **Women+ Microloan Program** - In Q2, the CBRM REN staff supported two women entrepreneurs successfully securing funding from the Sydney Credit Union. This initiative offers vital financial support, empowering these women to expand their businesses and bolster the regional economy.
- **Northside Business Park Land Sales** - In Q2, interest in the available lots within the Northside Business Park (NBP) remained high. The CBRM Regional Enterprise Network (REN) staff received two complete applications for the lots and were now collaborating with CBRM municipal staff to review them and provide recommendations.
 - [Northside Business Park](#) is now listed on the Atlantic Certified Site platform, a strategic move to enhance its visibility to national and international companies seeking shovel-ready industrial properties in Atlantic Canada
- **Home at YQY Lounge** - Launched on August 2, Home at YQY is a community vendor focused space that offers community kitchen and gift shop options to travellers, based at the Sydney Airport. It uses the previously vacant café and dining space in the arrivals area of the airport, in addition to a rentable commercial kitchen. Vendors in the space sell frozen meals to travellers, with many vendors also being a part of the Sydney Public Market in Downtown Sydney.
- **Design Cube Project – Nova Scotia Community Economic Development Fund** – Project planning is underway with the Island Sandbox at CBU to deploy portable devices to communities around the Island, which include 3D printers, vinyl cutters, laser printers, and other similar equipment. A release date for when cubes will be found in the community is still to be confirmed.
- **The Unama'ki – Cape Breton Business Insights Program (BIP)** – This program was launched in April and aims to gather insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by businesses across Cape Breton. Interviews as part of the program continued across the summer, with **13** completed in the CBRM through the end of Q2. A range of businesses have been interviewed, in different communities around the region.
- **Foreign Direct Investment Strategy for Unama'ki – Cape Breton** – Funded in part by the Government of Canada's CanExport Community Investments program, the CBRM REN team will be working with the CB REN team and a consultant to develop a new Foreign Direct Investment attraction strategy for the Island. A consultant will be selected, and work will be getting underway in Q3.

Green Energy Sector:

- **CBU Offshore Wind Presentation: July 17** - The Green Energy Engagement Coordinator gave a presentation on the status of offshore wind and opportunities regionally to faculty and staff at Cape Breton University in collaboration with the Director of Sustainability, Risk Management at CBU. There were 30 people in attendance from academic departments including Business, Science, and Engineering.
- **OffshoreWind4Kids: July 20** - In collaboration with the Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship (COVE) OffshoreWind4Kids, through the GEEP, we held OffshoreWind4Kids Beach Demo Days where families were able to learn about offshore wind, build model turbines, and launch them in the water. The program is delivered through training from the Belgian OffshoreWind4Kids nonprofit. The second session was July 20 at Dominion Beach with approximately 15 people attending.

- Participated in a meeting with the **Port of Sydney Development Corporation (PSDC) board** and key Sydney Harbour stakeholders regarding a working group focused on port development; attended follow up presentation by PSDC to CBP Board.
- **Partners Day Presentation: July 29** - Provided a presentation at the Cape Breton Partnership's Annual Partners Day Event at Glenora Inn & Distillery in Mabou, that gave an overview of the GEEP and the work underway. Members in attendance included ACOA, Invest NS, BDC, Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce, CDÉNÉ, and CEED.
- Participated in **Community of Practice** with Nova Scotia Department of Energy, Net Zero Atlantic (NZA), COVE, Discovery Centre, Atlantica Centre for Energy, and Skills NS, to discuss engagement efforts related to the energy transition across Nova Scotia.
- Facilitated planning for the Dept. of Energy and NZA **Community Clean Energy Conversations** happening across Unama'ki – Cape Breton. Input was provided for locations, venues, dates/times, advertising, along with copy written to promote events locally on social media and through eblasts.
- Attended the **Conversations on Clean Energy** to support the Department of Energy and NZA in Sydney.
- **Offshore Wind R&D Forum: September 23** - Attended the NZA and NS Dept. of Energy's Offshore Wind R&D Forum in Halifax, where researchers, innovators, Indigenous and community leaders, policymakers, and industry professionals gathered to discuss and learn about research with practical, technical, and regulatory needs for Nova Scotia's OSW development.
- Provided local context and input to 21FSP for a study on the socioeconomic impacts of offshore wind development in Nova Scotia commissioned by Net Zero Atlantic and the Department of Energy.

Indigenous Engagement:

- The Green Energy Engagement Coordinator onboarded our new **Mi'kmaq Engagement Liaison**, Kelly Paul. Ms. Paul's work is focused on outreach to Mi'kmaq Communities to learn more about community perspectives on the energy transition. We are initiating conversations about equitable and accessible participation in the energy transition in Unama'ki - Cape Breton, specifically related to renewable energy topics like engagement, information sharing, training and skills development, as well as supply chain opportunities.
- Worked with the Department of Energy to **amend the grant to extend the work** of the Mi'kmaq Engagement Liaison, Kelly Paul, an additional eight weeks. The amendment is currently awaiting ministerial signing.
- Meetings planned with KMK, WMA, UINR, and the Native Women's Council, along with members from each Mi'kmaw community in Unama'ki – Cape Breton.

Women and Youth Technical Capacity for the Blue Economy (WYTEC Blue) with the Development of Ocean Technical Capacity with African Nations (DOTCAN) Institute:

- **WYTEC Blue** is a free, 10-week training program beginning in October 2025 for women and youth. Participants from across Nova Scotia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria will learn about different marine sectors and future opportunities from experts in the field, both locally and abroad, to actively participate in the Blue Economy. The Program launches on October 18 at the Cape Breton Partnership Partner Hub in Sydney.

- Preparatory activities ahead of the program launching in October included completing an Island-wide database of companies working in the blue economy; emailing surveys to these organizations to identify labour and skills gaps; identifying instructors and opportunities for site visits through collaborative curriculum development; advertising to recruit participants to the program, and vetting applications.

Creative Economy Projects and Sector Initiatives:

- Providing on-going support for workforce, locations, accommodations, and business services to **4 feature films** and **1 TV series** analyzing CBRM as potential location for 2026, with combined production spending of \$20M.
- **TV Series Support: July & August 2025** - Provided workforce support to **2 TV series** including "Still Standing" (CBC, July 2025), and "Colin and Justin's Small-Town Escapes" (HGTV, August 2025).
- **Cape Breton Comedy Festival: August 20-23** - Provided support to the **Cape Breton Comedy Festival** with multiple shows in CBRM.
- **CBRM Mayor's Office** - Consultation with Mayor Cecil Clarke on several proposed 2026 projects including a "Performing Arts" Festival, an "Intro to Film" March break day-camp for school kids, and a proposed Cape Breton Film Festival.
- **Little Lorraine Film Premiere** - Supported the highly successful "Little Lorraine" world film premiere at TIFF (September 5/6) and in Halifax at AIFF (Sept 12/13/14). CBRM locations are featured prominently in the film.
- Working with NSCC, LSI, CBU on **film industry workforce development** to supply crew to future Cape Breton film/TV productions.
- Provided support to the **Lumiere Art Festival** in Sydney (Sept 25, 26, 27).
- Working on **museums project** with CBRM Community Development department.
- Working with CBU on the island-wide "**Creative Arts Awards**" on November 6.
- Working with Membertou as script development cultural consultants on ONARI TV series 2026.

People and Labour Force Attraction:

Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP) Updates:

In Q2, the CBLIP implemented and moved forward with a number of events and initiatives, including:

- The photography project *In Focus: Newcomer Experiences in Unama'ki - Cape Breton*, with events hosted at Nicolas Denys Days in St. Peters, at the Baddeck Library, and as part of Lumiere in Sydney.
- Updates to the Multicultural Calendar and Newcomer Service Map, both available on www.welcometocapebreton.ca
- A virtual workshop on Tenants Rights, with Jamie Morrison at NS Legal Aid
- A Mi'kmaw 101 workshop in Wagmatcook for CBLIP members, led by Robert Bernard and Graham Marshall

- The launch of the new CBLIP Building Partnerships Working Group, chaired by Simon Barrick (CBU)
- Collaboration on four successful workshop proposals for inclusion in the upcoming Pathways to Prosperity Conference to be held in Halifax in November.
- The quarterly meeting of the CBLIP Council, held in Sydney at the new Anchor Youth Space, with discussion on the upcoming biennial Immigrant Survey and the 2025 CBLIP Partner Update Event, scheduled for December 12th in Membertou.

Connector Program Updates:

- **Screening of “You Are Here” Documentary: July 7** - A newcomer-focused documentary by Sari-Sari story highlighting newcomer journeys in Cape Breton.
- **Coffee & Connect: July 15** –Relaxed networking session with Connectors and newcomers to share stories and grow networks. Also was a special workshop with newcomer Benedict Wong, technology specialist leading an AI workshop in Sydney at the Sydney Public Market.
- **CBICI and Connector Program Lunch & Learn: July 18** – Topic was on how to grow your network and learn about the future in the skill trades.
- **CBU Presentation: July 22** - Exploring available resources, share effective networking strategies and discussing the added value of considering skilled trades as a powerful career path in Cape Breton.
- **Ticket to Ride Multicultural Showcase: July 27** - A family friendly multicultural celebration at S&L Railway Museum in Louisbourg with food, music, cultural performances and community resource booths. Collaboration with S&L Railway Museum, Cape Breton Regional Library, LATAM Society, Multicultural Association of Cape Breton and local businesses.
- **Community Connections Vendor Fair: September 3** – Introducing new students, staff and community members to the CBRM to the wide range of resources and opportunities available in Cape Breton in the skilled trades.
- **CBU Orientation Service Fair: September 4** – Introducing students, staff and community members to the wide range of resources and opportunities available in Cape Breton in the skill trades.
- **Around the World in One Kitchen: September 11** – Interactive cooking demonstration blending Peruvian cultural cuisine, storytelling, and interactive activities at Home @ YQY Airport.
- **Coffee & Connect: September 19** – Relaxed networking session with Connectors and newcomers to share stories and grow networks in Sydney with collaboration with the Sports and Social Club of Cape Breton, CBICI, Multicultural Association of Cape Breton and Cape Breton Influencers.

Immigration Services Updates:

- **Immigration Advisory Services** – The Cape Breton Partnership provided immigration advisory services that resulted in **11 designations** applications, **14 endorsement** applications, and **14 NSNP** applications. We also provided immigration quick support to **30 individuals or businesses**. Immigration quick supports include information and meetings that don't result in long-term files, but provides beneficial information to the community.
- **Immigration Representation** – Our in-house immigration consultant is currently serving as the immigration representative for **13 CBRM employers**. During Q2, they completed **five employer applications**. They also completed **8 employee or candidate applications**, with **19 ongoing**. Employees through these services may

bring accompanying dependents with them. In Q2, we saw two spouses and five children accompany applicants.

- **Launch of New Service:** We recently launched **Immigration Access +**, a new full-service immigration representation option designed for Cape Breton Partnership Investors. This program enables Investors to engage a licensed immigration consultant to manage their application from start to finish. With the licensing of our Immigration Engagement Coordinator in Q2, we were able to expand these services further. Revenue generated through Immigration Access + will support the continued growth of employer-focused immigration services and enhance dedicated support for local businesses.

Event Participation:

- Our Immigration Engagement Coordinator presented at several events, including:
 - Community Connections Vendor Fair
 - CBU Orientation Service Fair
 - Rotary Club “Immigration 101” Session

Cape Breton Welcome Network Updates:

Multicultural Celebrations:

- **Screening of “You Are Here” Documentary: July 7** - Screening at the Highland Arts Theatre of a newcomer-focused documentary by Sari-Sari story highlighting newcomer journeys in Cape Breton.
- **Ticket to Ride Multicultural Showcase: July 27** - A family friendly multicultural celebration with food, music, and cultural performances.
- **Around the World in One Kitchen: September 11** - Interactive cooking demonstration blending cultural cuisine, storytelling, and interactive activities .

Networking & Community Connections:

- **Coffee & Connect: July 15** - A relaxed networking evening at the Sydney Public Market bringing together newcomers and local Connectors to share stories, experiences, and community resources in a casual, welcoming space.
- **Coffee & Connect: September 19** – An engaging social mixer at the Eave Restaurant in Sydney, fostering meaningful conversations, cultural exchange, and friendship building between newcomers, Connectors, and community partners.

Resource Fairs:

- **CBU Resource Fair: September 3** - Participated in the student orientation service fair at CBU to introduce new and returning students to the wide range of community resources, programs, and opportunities available in Cape Breton.

- **NSCC Sydney Waterfront Campus: September 4** – Engaged with incoming NSCC students at the Sydney Waterfront Campus during the orientation fair, highlighting local supports, networking programs, and ways to get involved in the broader Cape Breton community.

Upcoming Events in Q3 of 2025-26:

- Business & Breakfast – Succession Planning - Sydney: **October 7**
- Cape Breton Partnership Investor Summit – Baddeck: **October 23**
- Perseverance & Prosperity Luncheon with CBU & CB Regional Chamber of Commerce – Sydney: **October 29**
- CB LIP Partner Update Event – Membertou: **December 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 (July 1 – September 30, 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:



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Lan Zheng (Nov 18, 2025 13:29:36 AST)


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Addendum(s):

- **CBRM REN Metrics (July 1 – September 30, 2025)**

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Addendum I - CBRM REN Metrics: July 1 – September 30, 2025

Activities	Q2 Metrics Q2 July 1st - September 30th, 2025		YTD Since April 1
	In Progress	Completed	Total Completed
Business Support, Sustainability, & Growth	Total: 12	Total: 21	Total: 45
Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) Surveys Completed		4	13
Continuous Improvement & Business Advisory Services	2	9	17
Business Quick Support		3	7
Succession Planning & Support	2	0	0
New Businesses Supported in Navigating Resources	7	1	2
Microloan Participants	0	2	4
Other Business Support Services	1	2	2
Major Projects & Strategic Sector Support	Total: 28	Total: 5	Total: 9
Sector Development Projects	20	4	5
Major Economic Development Projects	8	1	4
Addressing Talent Needs (Labour & Population)	Total: 22	Total: 80	Total: 271
Projects Assessing Local Labour Market	0	0	0
Cape Breton Job Board Advertisements		0	105
Immigration Advisory Services	0	40	69
Immigration Applications Submitted	22	10	24
Business Immigration Quick Support		30	73
Newcomer & Talent Retention Programs	Total: 4	Total: 83	Total: 343
Connector Program Matches	2	16	41
Newcomers Welcomed Through the Welcome Network	2	67	118
Local Immigration Partnership Members		0	145
Events Aimed at Talent Attraction & Retention		0	39
Other Activities Addressing Talent Needs	0	0	0

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.