



To: SCOR EDC Board of Directors
From: Kimberly Earls, Executive Director, SCOR EDC
Date: November 27, 2025
Subject: Operations Report # 2025-11

The staff report is submitted to SCOR EDC Board of Directors to report on initiatives and issues supporting our regional strategic priorities which are:

1. Infrastructure supporting economic development
2. Human capital supporting economic development
3. Sector development (agriculture, food, manufacturing)

It is Recommended that the Board of Directors, Receive this report for information.

1. Infrastructure

1.1 Rural Transit: Discussion with WOWC Regarding Transit

- During a recent meeting, with the SCOR EDC Chair and WOWC Chair and the Executive Director of WOWC, the Executive Director at WOWC requested access to SCOR EDC's business plan for inter-community rural transit, which was developed with by Dillon Consulting to ensure a comprehensive and actionable strategy was in place for SCT. This plan represents a significant investment by SCOR EDC and is a key component of the region's long-term transit approach.
- While WOWC has expressed interest in taking a leadership role in transit planning, this is a relatively new area for them compared to organizations such as SCOR EDC, the Rural Ontario Institute, which have been advancing this file since 2011 and municipalities themselves who have been invested in transit for some time.
- **Board Decision Required:** Direction on sharing of SCOR EDC inter-community transit business plan with WOWC.

1.2 Short line Rail Expansion

- Economic investment inquiries related to shortline rail have increased, driven by changes in tariffs and trading partners. As trade expands with European and other international markets, the importance of ports, and by extension, freight rail, has grown significantly to support evolving logistics and supply chain needs. To better understand business impacts, the Executive Director has been meeting with Railway Association of Canada (RAC) members and businesses along the current shortline. SCOR will also administer another economic impact survey and update our rail land inventory database to ensure accurate, actionable information for future planning.

2. Human capital

2.1 Workforce Planning and Development Board of Grand Erie and The Business Resource Toolkit

- The Business Resource Toolkit is a digital tool kit created by Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie, Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development board and SCOR EDC
<https://workforceplanningboard.org/business-resource-toolkit/>

2.2 Strategic Partnerships with Dr. Tara Vinodrai and Team at Communities of Schools and the Workforce Planning Boards

- SCOR EDC continues to strengthen its relationship with Dr. Tara Vinodrai and Karen Chapple at Communities of Schools. Dr. Vinodrai, formerly a professor at the University of Waterloo and a key contributor to the Masters of Economic Development and Innovation program now leads an expert team at the University of Toronto.

This collaboration focuses on enhancing a tariffs mapping tool developed by Dr. Vinodrai's team. SCOR EDC will contribute additional regional data to improve the tool's accuracy and usability. In addition, we are bringing in regional Workforce Planning Boards to leverage the Employer One Survey data. This ensures we avoid duplicating efforts while creating strong partnerships that complement each other's work.

By combining university expertise with workforce insights, SCOR EDC and its members gain actionable data that will deliver significant value to our organization and stakeholders. This integrated approach supports informed decision-making, strengthens advocacy, and reinforces SCOR EDC's commitment to collaborative, efficient solutions.

2.3 Follow up with MCU and Fanshawe College

In the SCOR EDC meeting with Minister Quinn at AMO he indicated that the ministry was undertaking a review of funding of colleges and universities. SCOR EDC Chair has reached out to Peter Devlin and he and the Executive Director will be meeting with the President and Dean of Simcoe Campus or Woodstock Campus at an upcoming meeting. Coordination continues on this meeting and follow up.

2.4 Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario program (CIRRO)

- CIRRO coordination and planning is progressing across region. SCOR EDC expects to have a full update at our next meeting. As a reminder this is a program offered by the Ministry of Rural Affairs. Although the names indicates retention in rural areas for newcomers it is really more of an integration platform.

2.5 Skilled Trades Week

- SCOR EDC participated in Skilled Trades Week by attending several regional events, promoting additional activities across the area, and connecting with Skilled Trades Ontario. These engagements provided valuable opportunities to strengthen relationships and highlight the importance of skilled trades to our regional economy, particularly as many large employers rely heavily on these professions to maintain operations and growth

3. Sector development

3.1 Trade Impacted Community Fund

SCOR EDC submitted an application to the Trade Impacted Communities Program to secure funding that supports economic resilience and diversification in our region. This program is designed to assist communities affected by shifts in trade patterns, helping them adapt through workforce development, infrastructure improvements, and business support initiatives.

The application emphasizes SCOR EDC's strategic focus on agri-food and manufacturing sectors, aligning with provincial priorities and leveraging our strong regional networks. If successful, this funding will enable us to implement projects that strengthen supply chains, create new market opportunities, and enhance competitiveness for local businesses.

3.2 Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium

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The Resource Advisory Committee Chair Zach Gable and I met with the Vice President of the Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium to explore partnership opportunities. Beginning in the new year, SCOR EDC will undertake collaborative roles to support manufacturing and supply chain initiatives across the region, strengthening our ability to address workforce needs and enhance competitiveness.

3.3 Employer One

Employer One meeting EMO and GE. The EmployerOne survey will have a soft launch in select areas this December, with a full regional rollout scheduled for January 2026.

4. Internal Operations

4.1 Over the past four weeks, the Executive Director participated in the Cyber Integration for Business Bootcamp, a program designed to strengthen organizational cybersecurity practices. It is important that we adopt best practices to safeguard sensitive information and maintain compliance. The bootcamp included approximately 100 participants and covered topics ranging from foundational cybersecurity principles to advanced integration strategies. Key areas included data protection, risk management, and secure communication protocols. The program also provided ongoing resources such as slide decks and video follow-ups, which will serve as reference material for implementing improvements within SCOR.

5. Other information

- The Executive Director was invited to speak at the Thames Centre Chamber of Commerce event alongside Kapil Lakhotia (London Economic Development Corporation) and Cara Finn (Middlesex County). This opportunity allowed SCOR EDC to share regional priorities and highlight collaborative efforts to strengthen economic development across the region.
- SCOR EDC continues to participate in the Oxford County economic development group. Comprised of SCOR EDC, CF Oxford, Oxford Small Business Centre, EDO's from Tillsonburg, Ingersoll, Woodstock and Rural Oxford. At the most recent meeting SCOR EDC provided its Lead Handling Protocol to the Oxford Group for review and adoption if they so choose.
- SCOR EDC Chair, Vice Chair and Executive Director have completed most deputations for partner counties and lower tiers in Oxford. Remaining is Oxford County later in November
- October 20th met with Current Oxford County Warden, B Martin, J Kyle, E Ketchabaw, to discuss Oxford County economic development
- The Executive Director attended a series of training meetings entitled “understanding CUSMA and other changes in trade agreements”. The training sessions focused on understanding CUSMA and recent changes in trade agreements. These sessions provided insights into how evolving trade frameworks impact regional economic development, supply chains, and market access, ensuring SCOR EDC remains informed and prepared to support businesses navigating these changes.
- Visit to Power Co site. The Resource Advisory Committee meeting included a tour of the Power Co site. Rail was one of the factors in Power Co’s location decision, and as part of our ongoing regional infrastructure work, we periodically tour the site to maintain strong relationships and ensure alignment with rail and economic development initiatives. Thanks to Elgin County Manager of Economic Development C Krahn for coordination on this event.
- Provided Letter of Support for County of Brant funding application related to manufacturing sector supply chain.