

*Exploring Progressive Solutions:  
Innovating Within the Regional Cannabis Sector*  
**A 3-YEAR REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

## **BACKGROUND RESEARCH FINDINGS AND FEEDBACK SESSION**

*Prepared for licensed producers & processors  
Breakfast Meeting, April 23, 2025  
Dr. Tracey Harvey, Selkirk Innovates*



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

mitacs

# Agenda

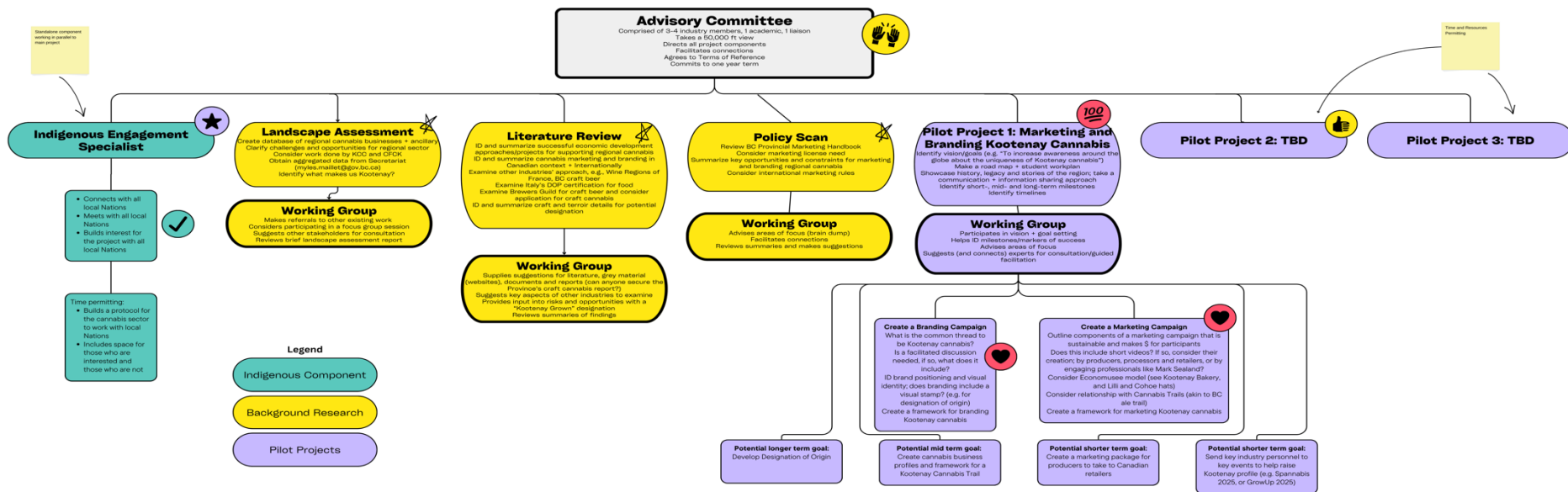
- Logistical Overview & Introductions
- Meet the Research Team
- Background Research Summaries & Feedback
  - Literature Review
  - Policy Scan
  - Landscape assessment

10 min break

- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis & Feedback
- Open Discussion
- Wrap-up & Next Steps

# Exploring Progressive Solutions Project Plan

Overarching goal: To better understand the barriers and opportunities in developing the regional cannabis sector and to co-design, co-pilot and co-evaluate viable action plans generated by diverse stakeholders



# Meet the Research Team



Dorothy Beale



Denis Gertler



Ron LeBlanc



Tracey Harvey

# Literature Reviews – Key Insights

**Goal:** Summarize the most relevant research on regional cannabis economic development and branding/marketing models

## *What the Literature Tells Us*

### 1. Cannabis Economic Development:

- Post-legalization studies focus heavily on national metrics (tax revenue, public health, youth use)
- Little attention paid to rural or legacy-producing regions' transition and their informal economies
- Barriers include federal bureaucracy, stigma, and disjointed governance

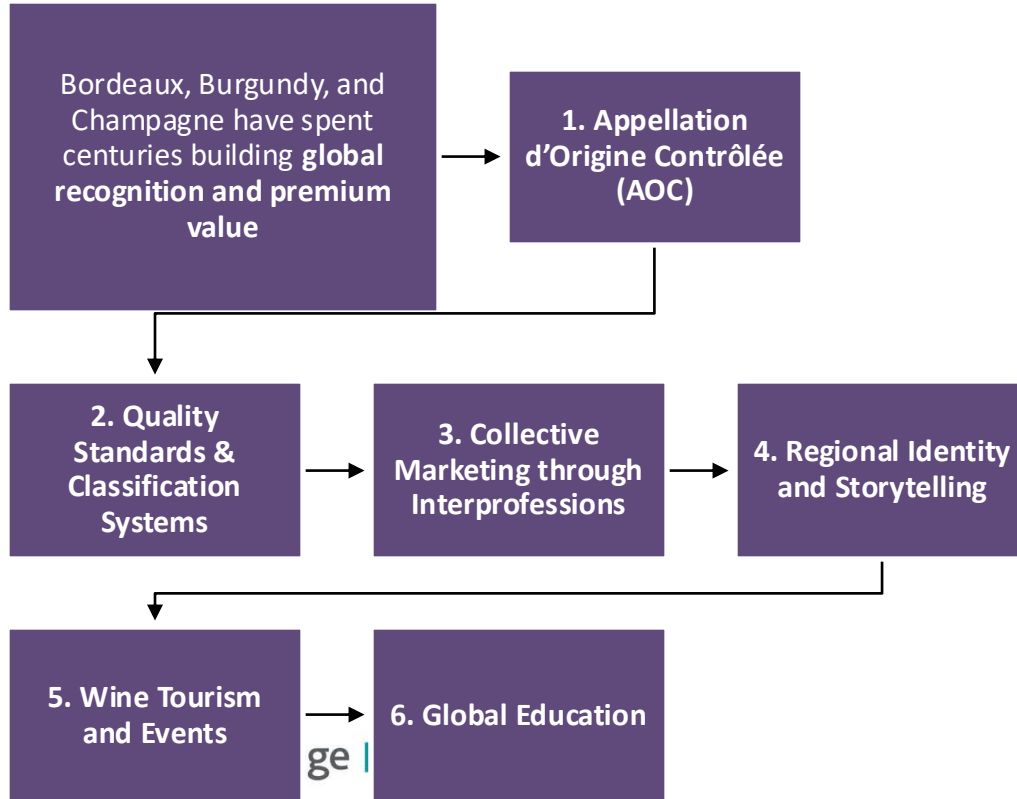
### 2. Regional Branding / Marketing Models:

- Wine and craft beer sectors (e.g., BC Ale Trail, VQA, French appellation systems) show strong success by combining **place-based identity & quality assurance & collaborative marketing**
- **Cause-related** marketing, and **story-telling** communicate values and build trust
- **Cannabis tourism, farmgate, consumptions spaces, and Geographic Indication** models (e.g., in California, Oregon) are emerging



*Nelson Museum Archives and Gallery, Grow Show, 2021*

# Case study: Promoting Wine Regions of France



*"Wine is deeply embedded in French culture, enjoyed in restaurants and at home, and seen as a source of national pride"*

# Let's get your Feedback

Literature Review  
[Mentimeter](#)

# Cannabis Policy Scan – Key Insights

**Goal:** Highlight the **regulatory opportunities and constraints around marketing & branding Kootenay cannabis** — especially what's in local vs. provincial and federal control. We also looked at regulatory models.

## Federal:

**Constraints:** Strict prohibitions, no celebrity endorsements, plain packaging & labeling

**Opportunities:** Information promotion like “brand-neutral” **education-based marketing and storytelling** about place, people, and processes. Terroir, heritage and production methods = regional differentiation



*Image from Reddit of a Farmers Market in Paraguay*

## Provincial:

**Constraints:** BCLDB limits product listings, no provincial/regional promotion

**Opportunities:** Direct Delivery and farmgate sales, event permitting.

BCLDB could support regional identity and develop educational programs to celebrate regionally grown cannabis. Public patio consumption permitted w/smoking, reserved campsites.

**Consumption spaces = cannabis infrastructure** & give people a reason to visit and stay

## Local:

**Constraints:** No public consumption in many areas. While promoting cannabis consumption on public patios is allowed provincially, Nelson's current zoning regs do not accommodate such spaces

**Opportunities:** Nelson could be a leader in cannabis tourism. Local governments could introduce **cannabis-friendly economic development strategies** (e.g., lounges, festivals, events, tourism)



# Case Study: California's Cannabis Appellations Program (CAP)

## Origins & Intent:

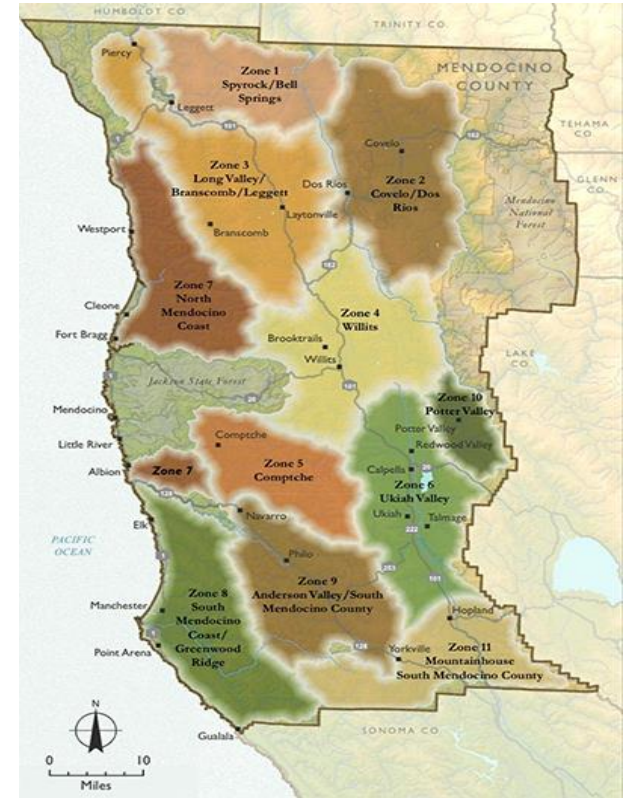
- Rooted in Emerald Triangle legacy
- Craft cannabis from distinct geography and history
- CAP = Protected designation of origin + cultivation standards

## Timeline Highlights:

- 1996–2016: Medical and Recreational Legalization milestones
- 2017: Medicinal & Adult Use Cannabis Regulations & Safety Act mandates framework
- 2022: Regs take effect
- 2024: Revised in-boundary cultivation rules

## Key Elements:


- Petitioners: 3+ businesses/region
- Requirements:
  - Outdoor/in-ground only
  - Geographic/climate data
  - Legacy/reputation evidence
- Goal: Stop mislabeling & promote quality



Mendocino Appellations Project outreach map at the California Department of Food & Agriculture meeting in Ukiah, Calif. on Sept. 10, 2018

# Case Study: Cannabis Quality Alliance Models – California & Jersey

## California Certification Models:

- **Sun + Earth Certified** 
- Regenerative, ethical
- 3-tier: Brown, Green, Gold
- Complements CAP

## OCal Program (CDFA):



- Comparable to USDA organic
- Aligns w/ USDA standards
- Robust guidance & support

## Jersey's Quality Framework (Emerging):

Led by Cicada Cannabis



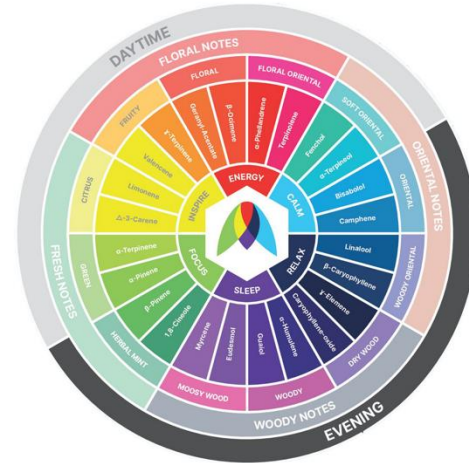
Based on EU-GMP + ICH Q8–Q11

### Three Pillars:

- Physiochemical
- Physiological
- Physical

### Goals:

- Define Critical Quality Attributes & Critical Process Parameters
- Align w/ appellations
- Avoid irradiation
- Improve pricing & consistency



# Let's get Your Feedback

Policy Scan [Mentimeter](#)



# Landscape Assessment – Key Insights

**Goal:** To map the **current state** of the regional cannabis economy



*“We are not competing for market share in BC and Canada; we are competing globally. So, if we form a cohesive unit, people will see that around the world, and we become Team Kootenay or Team BC, and that is stronger than to be an individual”*

*Kootenay Grower, January 2025*

*Images taken from Kootenay farms*



A map of British Columbia, Canada, showing its regional divisions. The map is outlined with a thick black border. The regions are labeled as follows:

- Northwest** (top left)
- North Coast** (middle left)
- Nechako** (top center)
- Northeast / North-east** (top right)
- Cariboo** (center)
- Vancouver Island and Coast / Île de la Colombie et de la côte** (bottom left)
- Thompson-Okanagan** (center right)
- Lower Mainland / Sud-ouest** (bottom center)
- Central Kootenay** (bottom right, shaded green)
- Kootenay Boundary** (bottom right, shaded green)

The map also shows topographical features like mountains and rivers, and a network of roads.

Selkirk College | SELKIRK INNOVATES

A bar chart comparing production levels (kg) for three years (2022, 2023, 2024) across four regions. The y-axis represents production in kg, ranging from 0 to 1,400,000 in increments of 200,000. The x-axis lists the regions: Mainland / Southwest, Vancouver Island / Coast, Thompson / Okanagan, and Kootenay. For each region, there are three bars: dark green for 2024, light green for 2023, and medium green for 2022. The Mainland / Southwest region shows the highest production, followed by Kootenay, Thompson / Okanagan, and Vancouver Island / Coast.

Region	Production3 (kg; 2024)	Production3 (kg; 2023)	Production3 (kg; 2022)
Mainland / Southwest	1,180,000	1,130,000	1,180,000
Vancouver Island / Coast	140,000	160,000	140,000
Thompson / Okanagan	380,000	300,000	260,000
Kootenay	800,000	670,000	530,000

**Licensed Producers by Class**

Region	Total	Standard	Micro	Nursery	Medical Sales Only
Mainland / Southwest	50	28	16	3	5
Vancouver Island / Coast	68	27	35	5	3
Thompson / Okanagan	78	38	34	6	3
Kootenay	32	12	19	2	2

# Landscape Assessment: What's on the Ground Today



*Images taken from Kootenay farms*

## Assets:

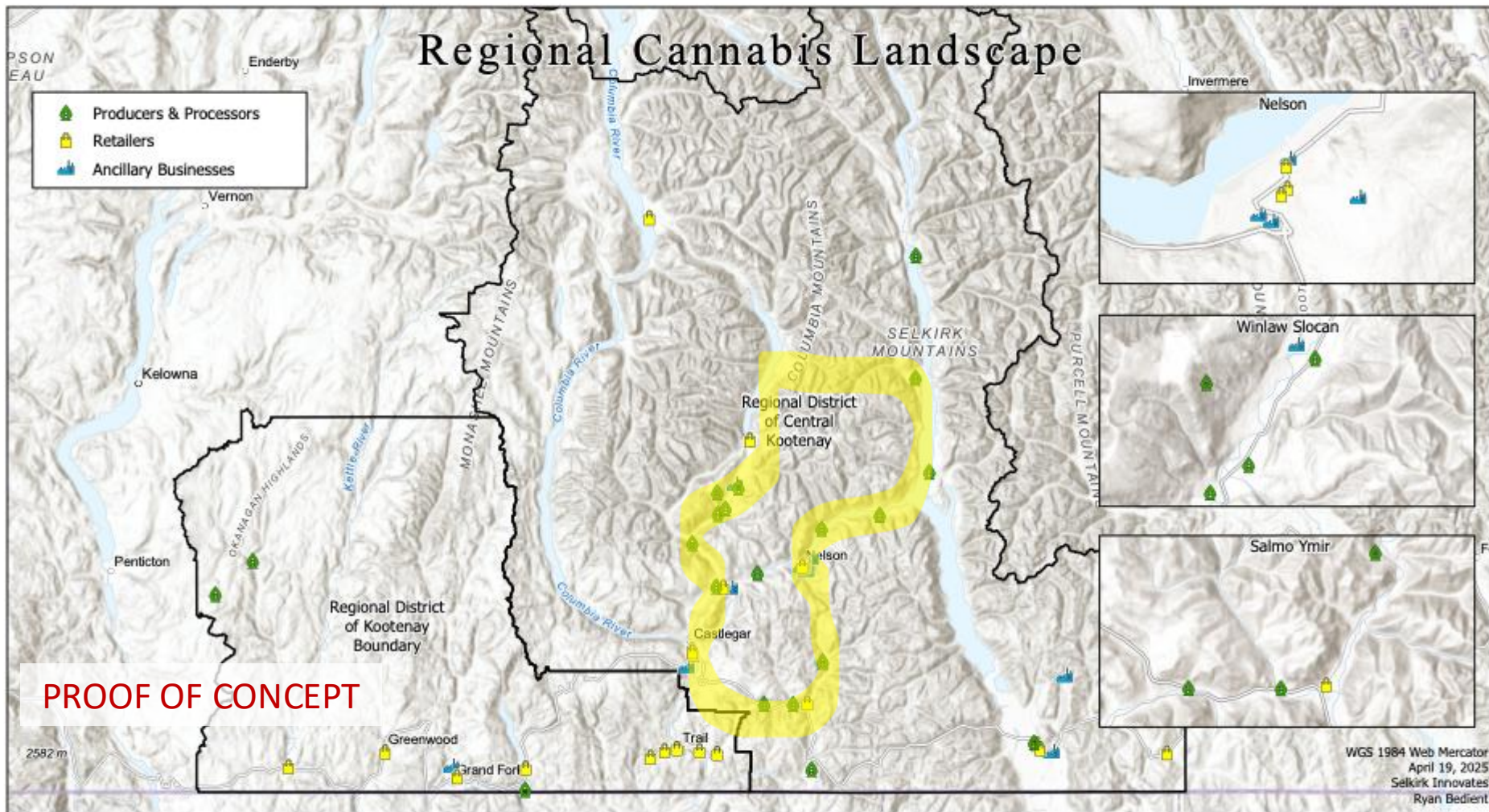
- Craft Cannabis modelled after premium wine is the region's focus
- Informal and formal collaborations & notable community resilience
- Regional industry employs about 550 people (273 Full-time)
- About half the region is 90-100% Domestic; almost all of you sell in BC
- Strong interest in cannabis tourism (i.e, tours, farmgate, accommodation, events, consumption, samples) & regional identity development
- More than half the businesses grow in living soil, and all pursue at least one sustainability initiative

## Challenges:

- More than half of businesses supplement with another business = not sustainable
- Top challenges are taxes, regulatory & bureaucratic hurdles, and access to capital
- Big revenue spread, with half under \$1M revenue, and half over
- Lack of coordinated marketing or export framework
- Stigma still exists



# Regional Cannabis Landscape





# Let's get Your Feedback

Landscape Assessment  
[Mentimeter](#)





# SWOT Analysis

- **Goal:**

- to capture **opportunities, challenges, and gaps** that may influence sector development
- To inform our proposed strategies and focus

- **Our Approach:**

- We started with the 2019 SWOT analysis "*Slocan Valley Cannabis Synopsis- The Business of Transition- A Grassroots Perspective*" and updated it based on project scoping conversations & background research

*A cannabis tour with Cannanaskis Tours at Calgary's Heritage Park.  
(Photo: Kyle Thiessen/Cannanaskis Tours)*

# Strengths and Weaknesses

## Strengths

1. Kootenay Reputation
2. Pristine environment = excellent weed
3. Scenic Location
4. Collaborations
5. Strong Genetics
6. Skilled Workforce
7. Government Support
8. Entrepreneurial spirit
9. Community Engagement
10. Business Support
11. Tourism backed
12. Education Ideals

## Weaknesses

1. Geographic Isolation
2. Diverse Opinions
3. Inexperienced Businesses
4. Operational Inefficiencies
5. Funding Challenges
6. Low Marketing Capacity
7. Housing issues
8. Cash flow delays
9. Failed Co-op models
10. Ego driven industry
11. Professionalism gaps
12. Over inclusivity

# Opportunities and Threats

## Opportunities



1. International Medical Markets
2. Micro License Growth
3. Regional Identity Development/Regional Marketing
4. Quality Standards Certification
5. Regional Appellation
6. Cannabis Procurement Map
7. Governance structure: Non-Profit Society
8. Cannabis Tourism
9. Marketing Storytelling: Kootenay Documentary
10. Educational "Promotion": Kootenay Podcast
11. Budtender Marketing-Product Education
12. Events & Competitions
13. New Market Niches
14. Cross-industry Collaboration
15. Knowledge Sharing

## Threats



1. Marketing Regulations
2. Market Saturation
3. Domestic Market Challenges
4. High Taxation
5. Lack of Recognition
6. Export Impacts
7. Stigmatization
8. International Market Volatility
9. Fixation on THC
10. Farmgate Barriers
11. Scale Challenges
12. Losing Kootenay Brand
13. Advocacy ROI

# Let's get Your Feedback

SWOT Analysis [Mentimeter](#)

# General Discussion Period



# Next Steps

1. Share summary of feedback, and what we heard
2. Apply feedback to draft components
3. Share / make available final documents
4. Join us at the May Breakfast meeting
  - Location: TBA
  - Date: Proposed for **Wednesday Friday May 30, 2025**
  - Time: 8:30 am
  - Purpose: to pitch 3-5 Action plans (with timelines, rough costs & deliverables identified)