



Business Licensing Bylaw Project

Terms of Reference

Executive Summary

These Terms of Reference build on the Business Licensing Feasibility Study, which assessed the operational, financial, legislative, and strategic feasibility of business licensing. The study confirmed that business licensing is legislatively and operationally feasible.

These Terms of Reference define a phased approach to address Governance Committee-identified topics on fees, exemptions, non-resident businesses, compliances approaches, timelines, and data collection at the development permit stage (business licensing topics). If Council chooses to proceed, the adoption of these Terms of Reference authorizes Administration to proceed to a CAO Workshop, focused engagement, and presentation of a “What We Heard” report to Governance Committee.

The phased approach reduces operational and financial risk while maximizing administrative efficiency.

Direction

On January 13, 2026, Governance Committee directed Administration to prepare a Terms of Reference for business licensing and present to Council by end of Q1 2026.

Schedule and Deliverables

- Phase 1: CAO Workshop**
(Q2 – Q3 2026)
- Phase 2: Engagement and Governance Committee Presentation**
(Q3 – Q4 2026)
- Phase 3: Business Licensing Bylaw**
(contingent on Phase 2)
- Phase 4: Implementation**
(contingent on Phase 3)

Project Focus

Adoption of these Terms of Reference authorizes Administration to:

- Develop and present business licensing topics to Council in a CAO Workshop.
- Summarize CAO Workshop discussions to guide focused engagement with business community and Chambers of Commerce.
- Develop and present a “What We Heard” report to Governance Committee.

Project Budget

No budget adjustment is sought through these Terms of Reference. Any future budget requirements will be presented alongside a draft business licensing bylaw.

Principal Risks

Risks are primarily associated with perceptions of regulatory burden, cost uncertainty, and implementation complexity. These risks are mitigated through phased decision-making, Council checkpoints, and transparent communication with Council before any program commitment.



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Direction

1. On January 13, 2026, Governance Committee directed Administration to prepare Terms of Reference for business licensing.

Project Vision

2. To implement the phased development of a business licensing bylaw, based on satisfactory design of the licensing program and thorough consultation with Council and other stakeholders.

Project Scope

In Scope (included in terms of reference)	• Detailed assessment of business licensing topics • CAO Workshop and focused engagement with business community and Chambers of Commerce • “What We Heard” report to Governance Committee
Out of Scope (subject to Council approval)	• Development of a business licensing bylaw • System procurement and configuration • Implementation or launch of a business licensing program

Background

3. Rocky View County currently lacks a complete and reliable dataset of the businesses operating within its boundaries. This makes it challenging for the County to better understand the business community needs and required supports, track trends, or develop targeted economic development initiatives.
4. Administration explored tools to collect business information, such as a business census, voluntary registration programs, and targeted surveys. These alternatives were found to be insufficient because they rely on businesses to voluntarily provide or update their information, which can result in incomplete or inconsistent data and significant administrative effort to maintain accuracy.
5. Business licensing was identified as the preferred approach, providing a formal process to collect accurate and reliable business data and support long-term strategic planning.
6. Decisions to date:
 - a. November 28, 2023: Council approved the Economic Development Strategy providing a vision and roadmap for attracting new investment while ensuring long-term sustainable growth.
 - b. November 19, 2024: Governance Committee received a report outlining the benefits of business licensing and directed Administration to prepare a Business Licensing Feasibility Study.



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- c. May 13, 2025: Governance Committee reviewed and accepted as information the Business Licensing Feasibility Study.
- d. December 9, 2025: Council directed Administration to return to Governance Committee with the Business Licensing Feasibility Study for further review.
- e. January 13, 2026: Governance Committee directed Administration to prepare a Terms of Reference for business licensing and identified business licensing topics for discussion.

Strategic Alignment

- 7. Adoption of these Terms of Reference supports a structured, phased approach. This approach:
 - a. Enhances governance and risk management by separating analysis and discussion from program implementation and ensuring Council input before any commitment.
 - b. Optimizes operational efficiency by providing Administration with a clear framework to prepare for bylaw development if Council chooses to proceed.

Project Objectives

- 8. Provide Council with a phased approach to receive information on the business licensing topics.
- 9. Ensure the CAO workshop discussions inform engagement with business community and Chambers of Commerce.
- 10. Support transparent, risk-aware, and well-informed Council discussion before any development of a business licensing bylaw.
- 11. Maintain administrative readiness and good governance by reducing uncertainty, avoiding duplicative analysis, and clearly distinguishing analysis from potential program implementation.

Business Licensing Program Objectives (if implemented)

- 12. Providing the business licensing program objectives provides an understanding of the purpose and potential outcomes of a business licensing program. The business licensing program aims to:
 - a. Provide an accurate database of businesses operating in Rocky View County.
 - b. Create a sustainable framework for ongoing engagement and communication with the business community.
 - c. Generate reliable data to inform economic development initiatives, strategic planning, and service delivery.



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- d. Foster a thriving and diversified business community that aligns with the Municipal Development Plan, Council's Strategic Plan, and the Economic Development Strategy.
- e. Reduce operational risks by providing reliable data for service delivery and a structured framework for program administration.

Legislative Authority

13. The *Municipal Government Act* authorizes municipalities to pass bylaws for the establishment of a system for licences, permits, or approvals, and the authority to set fees for such licences.

Schedule and Deliverables

Phase	Deliverables	Timing
Phase 1: CAO Workshop	- CAO Workshop to discuss business licensing topics identified by the Governance Committee - Summary of discussion to guide focused engagement with business community and Chambers of Commerce	Q2 – Q3 2026
Phase 2: Engagement & Governance Committee Presentation	- Focused engagement with business community and Chambers of Commerce "What We Heard" engagement report presented to Governance Committee	Q3 – Q4 2026
Phase 3: Business Licensing Bylaw	Development of a business licensing bylaw is contingent on Governance Committee's decision in Phase 2	To be determined
Phase 4: Implementation	Implementation of business licensing program is contingent on Phase 3	To be determined

Roles and Responsibilities

Sponsor:	Executive Director, Community Services
Project Manager:	Manager, Economic Development
Internal Stakeholders:	Departments affected by business licensing
External Stakeholders:	Municipalities for best practices, business community and Chambers of Commerce
Council:	Business licensing topics discussion and decision on the business licensing bylaw



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Project Budget

14. No budget adjustments are sought through these Terms of Reference.

Communications

15. Communication and engagement will focus on internal departments, technical consultation with other municipalities, Council engagement, and focused engagement with business community and Chambers of Commerce. This approach supports informed Council discussion of business licensing topics.
16. Any additional public engagement would be undertaken subject to Council's direction engagement scope, and the expected outcomes, ensuring the engagement aligns with Council's priorities.

Principal Project Risks

17. Risks may include perceptions of regulatory burden, cost uncertainty, and implementation complexity. These risks are mitigated through phased decision-making, Council checkpoints, and clear communication of options prior to any commitment to implementation.

Approvals and Variances

18. Council is the approving authority for the enactment of a business licensing bylaw.