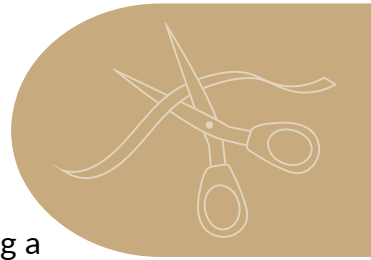


GRAND OPENING RIBBON CUTTING & CEREMONY

Guide for Businesses





LET'S CELEBRATE

One of the most exciting events for a business, whether new or existing, is celebrating a grand opening, a new location or a recent expansion. Okotoks Economic Development is available to assist with your event if your business:

- Is within the first year of opening
- Has recently moved to a new location
- Has recently expanded or completed major remodeling

WHAT IS A RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY?

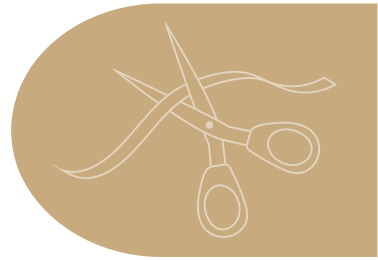
A ribbon cutting ceremony is a formal event with a specific time for guests to be at your business to celebrate. The owner and/or manager greets guests and cuts the ribbon. Public officials may also be chosen to participate in the ceremony and asked to say a few words. Consider decorating your space to enhance the event. Visit the Town's online Business Directory to access a list of local businesses who can fulfill all your event planning needs: okotoks.ca/business-directory

SETTING A DATE

Allow yourself plenty of time to organize the details of the event. Planning should begin at least three to four weeks ahead of the actual event date. Before choosing a date, here are some important things to consider:

- Coordinate the date with Okotoks Economic Development at least two to three weeks in advance. This allows time to include your event in the Town's monthly e-newsletter and share on our Economic Development social media page.
- The best days of the week for good attendance are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Mondays tend to be too busy for most people to leave the office and many people take Fridays off to start their weekend early.
- Avoid planning your event on holidays when many local businesses and government offices are closed.
- Avoid holding a weekend event as most people have personal plans.
- An application form must be submitted in order to reserve your date and the business must have a valid Town of Okotoks business licence in advance of scheduling.
- Go to okotoks.ca/ribbon-cutting to apply.





SETTING A TIME

The time of day you choose for your event is also critical to its success and will help determine the type of event you'll host. For example, morning functions have an entirely different atmosphere than a late afternoon reception. Consider the following when making your decision:

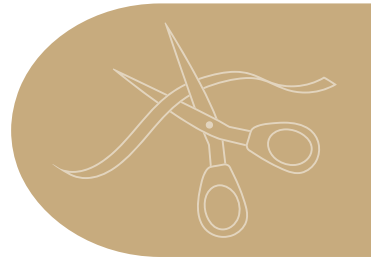
- Morning events should begin no earlier than 8 a.m. and are often held as a business opens for the day.
- Lunchtime events (11:30 a.m. ribbon cuttings) are usually successful since most people eat a mid-day meal. However, luncheons require more advance notice in sending out invitations.
- Many people schedule lunch arrangements weeks in advance and will need to be notified as early as possible to get your event on their calendar.
- Late afternoons are popular if the location accommodates people to drop by at their convenience after work. The best time for an afternoon event is starting at 4:00 p.m.
- Try to avoid mid-morning and mid-afternoon time periods. Many people are unable to break away from work in the middle of the day.

INVITATION LIST

The invitation list should include people who are important to you and to the success of your business. Inviting the 'right' people will vary depending on the event but they might include some of the following:

- Employees and their significant others
- Family, friends and personal associates
- Current and potential customers
- Contractors, suppliers and vendors
- Those who helped you get started (e.g. your banker, accountant, lawyer, Chamber of Commerce members, etc.)
- Fellow business people in your area and neighboring businesses
- Local government officials (e.g. Mayor/Town Council) by selecting their attendance in the grand opening & ribbon cutting application





INVITATION LIST

Once you have identified your guest list, follow these tips when sending invitations:

- Prepare an invitation that is simple and to the point. Make sure all of the basic information is included – who, what, where, when and why.
- If desired, include an RSVP. This will give you an idea of how many people may attend and how much food/beverages to have on hand.
- Allow a sufficient amount of time for guests to reply to your request. A week to 10 days is suggested for most events, although two weeks would be preferable.
- Be sure to include a map or clear instructions on how to get to your event. A street address alone isn't always sufficient.
- Will parking be an issue? Indicate on the invitation where you would like guests to park.

REFRESHMENTS

Although an added expense, providing food and beverages for your guests adds a nice touch.

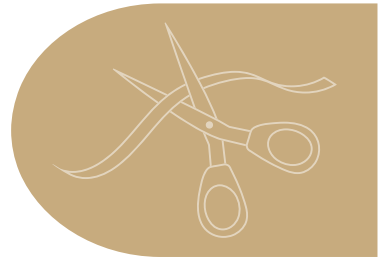
- Coffee, juices and pastries are appropriate choices for morning ceremonies.
- Sandwiches or light buffet items work well for lunch. Hors d'oeuvres or finger foods are appropriate for late afternoon and early evening events.
- For larger events, consider a professional caterer. They can give you good advice and are not as costly as you might think. Check the Town's online Business Directory for a list of local catering companies: okotoks.ca/business-directory

MEDIA COVERAGE

Try the following to increase media coverage for your event:

- Send a media advisory to local news outlets at least a week prior to your event. More time may be needed for print media.
- Your media advisory should include who, what, where, when and why. A sample media advisory is included on page 6 of this guide.
- Hiring your own photographer is recommended so you can send a follow-up press release with photos if media is unable to attend. Check out the Town's online Business Directory for a list of local photographers: okotoks.ca/business-directory





PLANNING YOUR PROGRAM

A brief program of some kind helps get your event started. It provides valuable recognition for you and your key people, makes the event more purposeful and allows you to explain more about your business. Consider these suggestions:

- People generally anticipate spending no more than about a half-hour at a ribbon cutting or grand opening ceremony, so plan your agenda accordingly.
- Limit the number of speakers and the length of their speeches. To help keep the program flow smoothly, set a time limit for everyone asked to participate.
- Conclude your program with the appropriate ceremonial or symbolic activity like a ribbon cutting for a grand opening. This lets guests know the formal program is over and creates good photo opportunities.
- If your event includes an open house or tour of your facility, be sure friendly and knowledgeable employees conduct group tours. Unguided self-tours by your guests are not as valuable as guided tours.
- Consider special promotions, event-only offers, tours and/or door prizes as part of your program. Winning a sample of your product or dinner for two at a nice restaurant can add to your guests' enjoyment and help to increase attendance.
- Send thank-you letters the day after your event to anyone who played a key role in the program. If you collected the names and addresses of guests, consider sending a thank-you note to them as well.

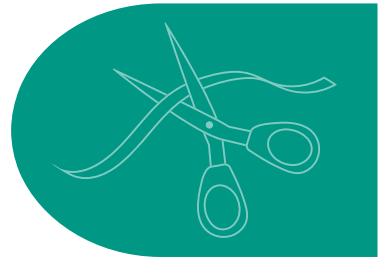
PROMOTING YOUR EVENT

In addition to the invitation, there are a variety of ways to create awareness about your event. Consider the following suggestions:

- Include event information in your business newsletter
- Design and put up posters in your business
- Place an ad in the Western Wheel (call 403-938-6397)
- Promote your event on social media:
 - Create an event on Facebook and invite followers
 - Share invitation on your social media channels
 - After the event, share Okotoks Economic Development's celebratory post to your socials and tag your business and guests in the photo (if known)



HOW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CAN SUPPORT YOU



- Invite Mayor and Town Council.
- Promote event on the Town of Okotoks Community Events Calendar using the information provided on event application form.
- Promote event on the Okotoks Economic Development Facebook page.
- Promote event in the Town of Okotoks Business Beat e-newsletter.
- Provide ceremonial scissors and ribbon for ribbon cutting events.
- Provide camera/pictures taken by our Economic Development staff. Your company photo and name will be featured on the Economic Development Facebook page and in the Town of Okotoks Business Beat e-newsletter after the event.
- Provide a media advisory template and media contact list. Due to a large number of new company openings, members of the media do not usually attend the actual event, but the newspaper may carry your announcement if you send them a release. See page 6.

CONTACT US

Okotoks Economic Development

Office: Town of Okotoks Municipal Centre,
5 Elizabeth Street

Phone: 403.938.8052

Email: ecdevokotoks@okotoks.ca



MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE



Date:

Title

Okotoks, AB - **Your Company** will host a ribbon cutting and open house to celebrate the grand opening of **include details about what you're opening.**

Who: Your Company and the Town of Okotoks Economic Development

What: Ribbon Cutting and Grand Opening for <what you're opening>

When: Date and time

Where: Location information

Finish out your media advisory with information about what makes your company and the opening special. Include valuable details about your company mission but be concise. Your media advisory should not exceed one page total.

-30-

Contact: Name
Company Name
Phone Number
Email Address