

Meeting Minutes

City Council Economic Vitality Subcommittee Meeting

May 12, 2025 | 8:00 a.m.

City Hall 5th Floor Large Conference Room

175 S. Arizona Ave., Chandler, AZ



Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:11 a.m.

Roll Call

Subcommittee Attendance

Vice Mayor Christine Ellis
Councilmember Angel Encinas
Councilmember OD Harris

Staff Attendance

Joshua Wright, City Manager
Micah Miranda, Economic Development
Chelsey Faggiano, Economic Development
Michael Winer, Economic Development
Alexis Apodaca, Mayor and Council Office

Guest Attendance

Dawn Castle, ASU
Kristin Irwin, ASU
Robert Jewett, ASU
Brett Kennedy, ASU
Abigail Murray, ASU
Kristin Slice, ASU
Carly Wakefield, Chandler Chamber

Discussion

1. Presentation and Discussion of Arizona State University (ASU) Office of Government and Community Engagement, ASU Chandler Innovation Center (ACIC) and the Chandler Endeavor Program.

MICAH MIRANDA, Economic Development Director, introduced the group and said the purpose of the meeting was to provide City Council with an update on the exciting activities happening with Arizona State University (ASU) here in Chandler.

KRISTIN IRWIN, Associate Vice President of ASU Government Community Engagement, began the meeting by providing an overview of how ASU stays ahead of the curve in higher education and how the university serves as an economic engine for the local, regional, and global communities it has a presence in.

IRWIN continued by outlining ASU's mission of building a strong talent pipeline, stating that over 21,000 students are set to earn degrees this spring, and that the university is focused on continuing to collaborate with industry stakeholders to ensure graduates are highly employable. She outlined specific university partnerships and recent funding awards that help ASU contribute ecosystem growth across all sectors.

BRETT KENNEDY, Assistant Director of Operations at ACIC, then provided an overview of the facility and programming that has occurred onsite since its reactivation in March 2023.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS asked what specific ASU courses are offered onsite.

KENNEDY responded, saying the fabrication shop supports multiple classes, including a robotics class and a sculpture class. He also mentioned a certified public manager program that uses classroom space, and said several other ASU classes utilized space at ACIC throughout the last semester.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS asked where students travel from to get to ACIC.

KENNEDY responded, saying most of the students travel from Tempe's main campus and that about 10 percent travel from ASU's Polytechnic Campus.

KRISTIN SLICE, Director of Community Entrepreneurship for Edson E+I, then provided an overview of how the city and ASU have partnered to create Chandler Endeavor, an incubation program designed to be open and accessible to all entrepreneurs in the community, regardless of their company's industry or stage. The program emphasizes empowering entrepreneurs with evidence-based tools and community support.

Key highlights include:

- The program engaged 1,275 people in the first year, with the number growing to 1,393 in the second year, exceeding initial goals.
- The initiative focuses on high engagement and retention, with 295 repeat participants.
- Over 360 co-working space users and nine dedicated space users are part of the program, with efforts to cultivate mentorship and local leadership through an "entrepreneur in residence."
- Chandler Endeavor has raised \$37,000 in seed funding donations to support local startups.
- The model avoids traditional barriers, offering continuous engagement and accessible resources to founders through open cohorts, monthly forums, and an online community.
- The program also promotes inclusion, excellence, and the development of networks, with Chandler gaining recognition as a regional leader in innovation.
- Looking ahead, there is a focus on expanding internships and developing Chandler as a magnet for innovation, further engaging with national partners and enhancing the local startup ecosystem.

SLICE continued by stating the program's success is evident through its high retention rate, community involvement, and impressive funding milestones. She concluded by outlining the ongoing efforts to foster

program growth, and sharing a quote from one of the entrepreneurs involved, emphasizing Chandler Endeavor's role as a "lifeline" for entrepreneurs navigating a rapidly changing world.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS asked the group where they see this continued partnership between the City of Chandler and ASU going in the future and what is needed from the City of Chandler to keep it flourishing.

SLICE responded, saying that what ASU needs right now are advocates—people who truly understand the unique approach they are taking and can clearly communicate why it matters. Additionally, she mentioned continued support for entrepreneurship at this moment—not just for individual businesses, but to build sustainable, de-risked resources that empower people throughout their journey.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS asked how the ASU team would redefine “innovation” as it relates to the work being done at ACIC.

IRWIN responded, saying ASU is at a pivotal moment where innovation touches everything—education, healthcare, business, and beyond. She continued saying that Chandler and ASU have both led by example, and now is the time to be thinking of how to stay ahead of the curve. She stated that ACIC can be a central hub for this evolving partnership and the key is maintaining a shared willingness to think boldly, take risks, and pioneer new solutions to lead and thrive across many sectors, together.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS asked how outreach is being conducted to get founders involved and how many of the founders participating in the Chandler Endeavor program have already gone through a similar program.

SLICE responded, saying they want founders to take advantage of every resource available to them, because entrepreneurship is so big, there are so many challenges, and there are also so many opportunities. As for finding founders, they utilize traditional channels/media like ASU News, but rely on referrals, word of mouth, and grassroots marketing efforts.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS asked how the team stays in touch with founders to be a continued resource.

SLICE responded, saying ASU is focused on growing alongside engaged entrepreneurs while continuously improving their data and ability to garner feedback to create resources that meet today's challenges.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS asked what efforts can be made to increase ACIC usage among ASU students, either through classes or events.

ABIGAL MURRAY, ACIC Operations Manager, responded, saying most of the ASU student usage comes from the fabrication shop; however, they do have over nine different student organizations utilizing the facility and partner on several ASU led events. She then talked about programming and workshops that are occurring at the K-12 level in collaboration with Chandler Unified School District.

SLICE added that about 20 to 30% of the participants in Chandler Endeavor programs are ASU students.

IRWIN said the university is evaluating additional programs that could be moved to ACIC.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS thanked ASU for what they have accomplished thus far. He then asked the group if they could look at utilizing ACIC to host programs and workshops to further career development in skilled trades.

MIRANDA responded, saying he will coordinate discussions on programming that can be hosted to meet this request.

MIRANDA inquired about ASU's transportation investment in transporting students to the ACIC facility.

DAWN CASTLE, Executive Director, responded, saying their anticipated spending in fiscal year 2025 is approximately \$50,000.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS inquired about whether Chandler Flex could be a solution for ASU students needing transportation and asked Miranda to further explore.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS stated he is interested in looking into increasing the city's funding contribution for the Chandler Endeavor / ACIC partnership and asked staff to draft a proposal outlining opportunities for City Council consideration.

MIRANDA stated he will work with ASU and the City Manager's Office to brainstorm ideas on additional programmatic funding that could be presented to Chandler City Council and noted that while funding is crucial, stability in funding is important too.

The consensus of the council subcommittee was to continue supporting the program and to review the program and funding recommendations before presenting an amended proposal for City Council consideration.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m.



Recording Secretary