

Report ITR-PCD-01-15

To: Chair Arlene Wright and Members of Planning and Community Development Committee

From: Geoff Hogan, Information Technology (IT) Director

Meeting Date: January 15, 2015

Subject: **Connected (Intelligent) County / Connect It Your Way 2015 Work Plan**

Status: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution PCD17-15; Endorsed by County Council February 3, 2015 per Resolution CC35-15;

Recommendation(s)

WHEREAS encouraging diversification of local and regional economies through the increased use of broadband and information and communications technologies (ICT) is an essential component of developing a knowledge-based economy;

AND WHEREAS leveraging high speed, high capacity communications technologies (broadband) across a wide range of sectors achieves above average rates of economic growth, job creation, social diversification and environmental innovation;

AND WHEREAS initial results of the County's Economic Development Action Plan indicate that the implementation of high quality broadband needs to be a priority of Grey County;

AND WHEREAS the Connected County (Intelligent Community) initiative will require a dedicated one year contract resource to build on the work completed to date;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT report ITR-PCD-01-15 be received;

AND THAT the community engagement facilitating a Connected County (Intelligent Community) in Grey County be continued;

AND FURTHER THAT the one staff continue to be seconded to the project for calendar 2015;

AND FURTHER THAT the future plans for the Connected County (Intelligent Community) initiative be recommended to the 2015 budget deliberations.

Background

In order to be viable and prosper in today's global economy, communities and regions must have the tools to grow their economies from within so they can compete for investment on the global stage. The ability of business and government to adapt and innovate using the skills and creativity of the local labour force to leverage high capacity broadband to access to the Internet is what powers wealth creation, entrepreneurial activity, job creation and overall community prosperity in the new global economy.

As more and more people become aware of and reliant on Internet-based services and information, the demand for more robust Internet service is increasing dramatically. Continued innovations in e-health, e-government, e-commerce and entertainment are extending the societal reach of and dependence on the Internet, which is, in turn, fueling an unprecedented revolution in how we all live, work, and play.

Success Factors

Worldwide experience shows that extending ultra-high speed broadband to as much of the population as possible produces significant and measurable economic and social benefits. Communities that connect to and embrace the so-called "Internet of Things" are rewarded with many so called 'Intelligent' outcomes and attributes (as reported by the [Intelligent Community Forum](#)).

There are five key success factors that indicate a community is on track to becoming "intelligent" and can successfully leverage the broadband economy. These success factors are¹:

1. Broadband Connectivity

Broadband is the new essential utility, as vital to economic growth as clean water and good roads. Communities need a clear vision of their broadband future and to craft policies to encourage deployment and adoption.

¹ Intelligent Community Forum

2. *Knowledge Workforce*

A knowledge workforce is a labour force that creates economic value through the acquisition, processing and use of information.

3. *Digital Inclusion*

As broadband deploys widely through a community, there is serious risk that it will worsen the exclusion of people who already play a peripheral role in the economy and society, whether due to poverty, lack of skills, prejudice or geography.

Communities need to promote digital inclusion by creating policies and funding programs that provide marginalized members of the community with access to digital technology and broadband, by providing skills training and by promoting a compelling vision of the benefits of engaging in the broadband economy.

4. *Innovation*

Broadband is to innovation what fertilizer is to crops. Competitive communities work to build the local innovation capacity of new companies and entrepreneurs, recognizing that private sector investment is what generates wealth and produces job growth in modern economies. Failure to innovate means failure to compete.

5. *Marketing and Advocacy*

Like businesses facing greater global competition, communities must work harder than ever to communicate their advantages and explain how they are maintaining or improving their position as wonderful places to live, work and invest in growth businesses. Effective marketing shares this story with the world, while advocacy builds a new vision of the community from within.

Connecting Grey County

The County has been working on the groundwork for becoming an intelligent community since 2012. Under the banner of the Connected County project, Grey County has been a leader in regional initiatives such as piloting a benchmarking process with Cisco's Smart and Connected Communities team for the Southwest Economic Alliance's Intelligent Region Initiative and the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus' Southwest Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) initiative. Staff have been exploring local options for leveraging these initiatives here in Grey County and have been learning from the experiences of other communities locally, regionally, and globally.

Master Class Outcomes

On November 7, 2014, Grey County hosted an ICF Master Class with Robert Bell at the Falls Inn in Walter's Falls. Over 80 local leaders and community stakeholders participated in a very interactive session, producing a broad range of ideas for moving Grey County forward towards becoming an intelligent community. These ideas can be broken down into 5 categories:

- Communications (one-to-many marketing, internal to the county)
- Advocacy and Community Engagement
- Promoting Broadband Extension and Adoption
- Digital Inclusion
- Economic Development

These themes reflect the interests and skills sets of potential champions in the room who could and should be included as key drivers in moving the Connected County initiative forward. These champions are our best bet for promoting and engaging our community through leveraging existing networks and opportunities to share information, engage in conversations, promote available technological solutions and ensure that all members of our community are included in our vision for an intelligent future.

Robert Bell suggested that interested people get involved in teams around each category. The County should convene and host one or two meetings to bring these interested people together to flesh out the ideas and select concrete initiatives that the group would like to see move forward and that can be accomplished within 6-12 months. The goal is to create "quick wins" and momentum that will inspire others to participate in a creating, facilitating and achieving community-driven goals.

Work to Date

Grey County Council allocated \$100,000 from reserve to explore a Connected County (intelligent Community) initiative. To date the following activities have occurred:

1. Completed the I-Canada iCat assessment (details in [CAOR-PCD-14-12](#))
2. Completed Cisco's Smart and Connected Communities (S+CC) benchmarking in conjunction with the Southwest Economic Alliance (SWEA) Intelligent Region Project (details in [ITR-PCD-01-14](#))
3. Worked closely with the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus' South West Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) project
4. Hosted a keynote talk featuring Robert Bell, one of the co-founders of the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF)
5. Hosted an ICF master class with Robert Bell of the ICF – for details on the master class see [ITR-PCD-01-14](#)

6. Hosting one of SWEA's Community Engagement Coordinators (CEC) to gather data for SWEA's regional benchmarking project (August 2014 – March 2015)

Next Steps

The ICF Master Class and other research has identified that the following activities are necessary to advance the project:

- Identify local broadband projects to align with regional SWIFT project
- Work with community stakeholders (identified at the Master Class and through community outreach) to:
 - Work on a communication plan
 - Work on a advocacy and community engagement plan
 - Work on digital inclusion (including youth, seniors and vulnerable persons to address barriers to participation in the broadband economy)
- Create an Open Data policy for the County and promote the data for use by the community and private sector ([*video that explains open data](#))
- Work closely with Economic Development to staff to ensure alignment of Connected County activities with the new Economic Development strategy and achieve the goals of building a knowledge workforce and improving the conditions for innovation in Grey County

This is time consuming project that requires dedicated staff to achieve the above outcomes. The County currently has a staff member seconded to SWEA that will have time available beginning in March. This report proposed that the secondment be extended to the end of 2015 and funded from the one time funding reserve.

Alignment with Economic Development Strategy

Staff working on the Connected County initiative have been working closely with Economic Development staff throughout the development of the draft economic development strategy. The draft economic development strategy will focus on a number of foundational components required to ensure that Grey County is investment ready. Establishing and promoting the conditions for an intelligent and connected community dovetails neatly and completely with the goals of the draft economic development strategy by ensuring the required broadband infrastructure is in place, creating conditions that may be favorable to youth retention as well as opportunities for “second careers” for retirees, and creating an environment that promotes skill development, public and private sector innovation, and opportunities for full economic and social participation from all members of our community.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology (IT)

Considerations

It is recommended that a plan be developed to pursue local broadband construction in alignment with the regional SWIFT project. Local options for improving access are being identified by a consultant and staff will provide a report with recommendations at the February 2015 Planning and Community Development meeting.

Budget spent to date on the Connected County initiative (approximately \$70,000) has come from the one-time funding reserve. As currently presented, the Connected County (Intelligent County) budget includes funding for a staff resource to work on this project until the end of the calendar year (2015). Without dedicated staff resources, it will not be possible to move forward with this project.

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

Goal Number One of the Corporate Strategic Plan is to expand the prosperity base of the County. This means enhancing and diversifying economic opportunities within the County, becoming “investment- ready” and ensuring the foundation is in place for sustained success. Our shared vision of sustained community and regional prosperity encompasses:

Economic Opportunity and Growth

Wealth generation and the creation of work are the basic building blocks for livable, healthy communities where human initiative and stable families can flourish. Opportunities for entrepreneurial initiative, business expansion and training for jobs that offer upward mobility are critical to this success.

Community Sustainability

Communities that are vibrant, strong and offer hope to their residents are communities in which neighbourhoods are safe, the environment is clean, housing is affordable, social support services and cultural/recreational opportunities are accessible, and civic spirit is nurtured by participatory decision-making, innovative design and celebration.

Community Partnerships

Economic opportunity and social/cultural development rely on broad community participation, both at the individual level and at the institutional level. Engaged individuals, governments and the private and not-for-profit sectors working together to

provide relevant, accessible and coordinated programs and services that build towards the community's strategic direction.

The Intelligent Community program is wholly consistent with this strategic direction.

Attachments

Background Reports:

[ITR-PCD-05-14](#) - Intelligent County and Broadband Initiative

[CAOR-PCD-14-12](#) - Towards an Intelligent Region

[ITR-PCD-01-14](#) – Intelligent County Initiative

Respectfully submitted by,

Geoff Hogan

Director of Information Technology