



# Committee Report

<b>To:</b>	Warden Hicks and Members of Grey County Council
<b>Committee Date:</b>	November 25, 2021
<b>Subject / Report No:</b>	EDTC-CW-18-21
<b>Title:</b>	Sydenham Campus Update
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Culture
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Randy Scherzer, Deputy CAO
<b>Lower Tier(s) Affected:</b>	All
<b>Status:</b>	

## Recommendation

1. **That Report EDTC-CW-18-21 regarding the Sydenham Campus Update be received for information.**

## Executive Summary

As County operations return to in-person delivery, Sydenham Campus is gearing up to officially launch. Over the past eighteen months, the Campus has undergone significant renovations while staff develop the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem and business support pipeline.

## Background and Discussion

Following initial renovations and business planning, Sydenham Campus was prepared to launch operations in Spring 2020. With the onset of the pandemic, the launch was paused and staff were redirected to other county operations. Over the course of the pandemic, site plan approval was received, significant renovations were completed to bring the property in compliance with accessibility and classrooms were transformed to house the Innovation portion of the Campus.

At the same time, Business Enterprise Centre staff and Catapult Grey Bruce began to develop the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem. In 2021, the duo ran an incredibly successful mentorship pilot program which resulted in 15 mentor/mentee matches across Grey and Bruce. The ecosystem also grew to include complimentary partners:

Business to Bruce, Bruce Community Futures Development Corporation, Saugeen Economic Development Corporation, Georgian College, The Hub, BDC and Futurepreneur Canada, and expanded beyond the region's borders to officially join [Start-Up Communities Canada](#) under Catapult's leadership.

In March of this year, staff executed a contribution agreement with FedDev Ontario following the successful approval of a grant application to the Community Economic Development and Diversification stream. Funding in the amount of \$845,000 will support entrepreneurs and SMEs from Grey County and adjacent rural communities with targeted and specialized capabilities and advisory supports as follows:

- \$500,000 to establish a maker space and device lab at the Sydenham Campus for use by SMEs.
- \$345,000 to provide small business advisory services and acceleration programming, tailored to SMEs, that is not otherwise available locally.

The eligibility period for this funding runs from March 7, 2019 through to March 31, 2024.

### **Business Enterprise Centre (BEC)**

Over the past ten months (January to October), Business Enterprise Centre staff key performance indicators have included:

- Inquiries – 599
- Consults – 119
  - New Business – 6
  - Existing Business – 34
  - Repeat Client – 24
- Workshops – 27
- Events – 11
- Starter Company Plus Grants – 9
- Summer Company Grants – 6

Staff also noted a spike in consultations with individuals purchasing a local business. 2021 recorded eight consults where the average in years past has been one or two.

Grey County's BEC has now entered the final six months of its three-year contract with the Province. Staff have high hopes of renewal given the significant impact programming and expertise provides for small businesses and communities, along with the positive return on investment this program achieves at both the County and Provincial levels.

Over the past several years, the BEC has developed its reputation in the region as the first point of contact for small businesses looking to start and/or grow. With its increased visibility and track record of success, the BEC will continue to play a critical role in regional economic development supporting directly, the thousands of small businesses calling Grey County home. This niche support will also play an important role in post-pandemic recovery as small businesses struggle to recapture their place in the market.

As part of this recovery effort, Grey County's BEC joined forces with its 53 colleagues across the province to launch [Small Business Centres Ontario](#), a communal digital platform to share e-learning opportunities and virtual events, once again providing our local businesses with greater access to resources.

### **Catapult Grey Bruce**

Catapult Grey Bruce "opened its doors" virtually in January 2021 with the launch of the mentorship program offered in partnership with the Business Enterprise Centre. Since that time, Catapult has hit several of its initial milestones to grow the ecosystem, support pipeline and organization including:

- Convened the first ecosystem meeting.
- Hosted a virtual "Mentor Mash" for 20 female entrepreneurs with Georgian College's Henry Bernick Entrepreneurship Centre (HBEC).
- Launched monthly newsletters which are currently reaching about 131 subscribers with a 60.45% open rate (exceptional).
- Hired a full time executive director in June 2021.
- Hosted its first AGM and fundraising golf tournament in August.
- Opened "The Crashpad" - a coworking space for entrepreneurs in Sydenham in October.

Additional key performance indicators achieved:

- Consults with existing businesses - 40
- Organizations engaged - 21
- Mentors engaged - 29

Now, Catapult is working towards growing its programming and reach to support both innovation and entrepreneurs wanting to scale. In the next three months we will:

- Host a "Grand Opening" open house on December 2 from 10 AM - 2 PM
- Launch Fast Lane Plus accelerator
- Reboot and grow the Grey Bruce Tech Network into a more robust and thriving community for entrepreneurs and individuals interested in technology

## Legal and Legislated Requirements

There are no legal or legislated requirements with this report.

## Financial and Resource Implications

Impacts of the pandemic mean the original business plan, premised on two anchor tenants, will not likely materialize. As a result, revenues are not as expected and the budget impacted, requiring county support of \$150,000 to \$200,000 annually.

The budget, which includes an annual transfer to reserve for future capital, also provides the funding shortfall for BEC and sees increasing operational costs, specifically around utilities. Outside of these key expenses, staff limit spending to control costs. Staff are working with the Manager of Climate Change Initiatives to determine further solutions for retrofit and any funding envelopes available to reduce costs while also acting as a demonstration project.

Furthermore, given the rise in entrepreneurship and the growing need among employers with regards to staff and training, the needs assessment for Sydenham campus is also changing and aligning more and more to the Innovation mandate. As noted above in the BEC and Catapult statistics, this transition is already proving successful with increased supports for SMEs and resulting economic impact, reaching right across the region.

Heading into 2022, staff are re-envisioning how Sydenham Campus will operate and best serve the changing needs of regional businesses by investing in the Centre as the County's key economic recovery tool. Industry consultations are getting underway as service providers are discussing collaboration opportunities and a path forward. As such, Grey County Economic Development department will temporarily be seconding internal staff resources to Sydenham in a move to boost regional recovery efforts through the Centre. This will include a more strategic focus on building-use by clients, enhanced marketing efforts and more purposeful development of the maker space/fabrication labs and entrepreneurial programming. Staff are coordinating with the housing department to include Sydenham on a regular maintenance rotation and are budgeting an additional part-time staff to lead leasing and rentals as a measure of increased revenue generation.

All items noted in this report are included in annual budgets for Council consideration.

## Relevant Consultation

Internal: Economic Development, Business Enterprise Centre, Planning, Housing

☒ External: Catapult Grey Bruce