

To:	Warden McQueen and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	June 25, 2020
Subject / Report No:	EDTC-CW-11-20
Title:	Economic Recovery Plan
Prepared by:	Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Culture Steve Furness, Manager of Economic Development
Reviewed by:	Kim Wingrove, CAO
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All
Status:	Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CW124-20; Endorsed by County Council July 9, 2020 per Resolution CC63-20

Recommendation

1. **That Report EDTC-CW-11-20 regarding Economic Recovery Plan be received; and**
2. **That staff be directed to implement the Economic Recovery Plan through the Grey County Economic Development Working Group; and**
3. **That staff be authorized to proceed with the Plan prior to Council approval as per Section 25.6 of Procedural By-law 5003-18.**

Executive Summary

The Grey County Economic Development & Tourism Working Group has been coordinating efforts since March 17 with regards to Covid-19 related resources and communications. Several actions have been taken to assist our business communities throughout the stages of this pandemic. The Working Group turned it's focus to recovery on April 24 and began taking immediate actions, while developing a staged plan to accomplish three key outcomes: share facts, build confidence and support business.

With the support of Council on May 28th, staff worked with the Finance Department to propose a refocus to approved 2020 economic development and tourism budgets.

Background and Discussion

The Federal and Provincial governments have been quick to act in the wake of Covid-19 to support business through access to emergency loans, wage subsidies and individual benefits, in addition to interest and penalty relief, energy savings and tax credits.

Locally, Grey County and its member municipalities have provided information and resources to business, developed the Community & Business Resiliency Map, completed surveys, provided results and comment to upper levels of government, hosted webinars and introduced fee and penalty deferrals to improve cash flow.

Through survey responses, consultations and stakeholder engagement, we understand that most businesses were able to achieve liquidity through federal, provincial and municipal supports. What is most needed today are facts, confidence and support to move forward towards profit once again.

Less than one year ago, staff were working hard to change the narrative around job creation, with an unemployment rate hovering around a two percent, our region did not have the people needed to fill the jobs available. Today, we work to save jobs and save business.

Economic Recovery Plan

Through the Economic Development & Tourism Working Group, staff have developed a draft phase one recovery plan to assist in regional recovery. Given the continued uncertainty and quickly changing environment, the recovery plan should be read as a high level guidebook, which will remain flexible to allow for quick action pivots to apply resources where they have the greatest impact.

Underlying the entire plan is the need to enable our local entrepreneurs through facts, confidence and support. The fundamentals of this plan mean staff are turning our focus inward to begin, focusing almost entirely on our own people: entrepreneurs and residents.

Goal: To assist local businesses and the community recover from the initial economic impacts of the pandemic and support sustainable economic development.

- Businesses feel confident in reopening their businesses and that they are supported by their employees and customers;
- Local businesses have the resources and ability to take advantage of e-commerce opportunities;
- Businesses have access and understand government support programs for themselves, their business and employees.
- Business owners are optimistic that the local economy will recover.

Key Action Items:

To date, the Plan includes 27 action items in addition to data tracking. The following items were actioned immediately:

- All-Sector Business Impact Surveys: [April](#), [May](#)
- [Business Resource Page](#)
- [Business Toolkit Resources](#)
- [Community & Business Resiliency Map](#)
- [Access to PPE](#) – Local Vendor Form for inclusion on Resiliency Map
- [Small Business Transition Program](#) (Starter Company Plus)
- [Ask a Professional Series](#)
- Regional Retention - [Grey Bruce Class of 2020](#)

The following action items will be actioned immediately:

- [SHOPHere Program](#)
- [Ontario Live](#)
- Business Toolkit
- Marketing Communications – Industry & Consumer
 - [Information blasts to business and community partners](#)
 - Buy local campaign (with Grey Bruce Huron Strong)
 - Capacity campaign – promoting trails and outdoor space
- Infrastructure Development & Destination Protocols (Downtown toolkit)

As per the plan, many of the items in the plan require staff time as the resource. There are several free programs and opportunities to be leveraged through partnerships. There are also several items that will require a budget.

Though these actions are new as a result of the pandemic, the root of this work is well aligned to our usual practice of providing support to industry and consumers. As such, these types of line items were already included in the approved 2020 economic development and tourism budgets, it is the focus and message that have shifted to specifically deal with economic recovery amid the pandemic.

Budget Re-Focus

Following a review with the Finance Department, economic development and tourism staff have identified a combined \$135,000 available to refocus on Covid-19 recovery. Through the approved 2020 budget, these funds were allocated to marketing, communications, stakeholder engagement, travel and training. The recovery refocus will

see this budget refocused to specific pandemic recovery related marketing, communications and business support.

At the same time, The Business Enterprise Centre has received endorsement from the Province to amend the Starter Company Plus Program to assist small business with transitions through the pandemic. This approval allows staff to refocus the \$58,000 grant fund in small increments (up to \$2500) for entrepreneurs, while also enhancing meaningful training opportunities with professional services (ie. Human Resources, Legal, Accounting, Public Health etc).

Through the approved 2019 and 2020 budgets, each member municipality currently has \$40,000 for implementation of their CIPs. Several incentives within the CIP could be focused for recovery to help businesses, downtowns and public spaces transition to meet new pandemic standards; including:

- Buildings and Land Improvement Grant
- Startup Space Leasehold Improvement Grant
- Vacant Building Conversion/Expansion Grant
- Façade, Signage & Property Improvement Grant
- Destination Infrastructure Grant

Future Forward

Looking ahead, the renovations for the Sydenham Campus are now complete and the original intent of the Campus is poised to become even more relevant in the post-pandemic environment.

The Business Enterprise Center and the Catapult Grey Bruce both support small business recovery and transition, and are critically important today to assist business transition through this crisis. Catapult will be able to provide a level of service we don't currently have locally, particularly through private sector mentors who are able to provide advice and guidance to business where staff cannot.

The IT infrastructure has also been upgraded throughout the Innovation Wing and could provide connectivity for business and members of the public. In line with recent Council conversations, access to reliable and affordable broadband is critical.

With an unemployment rate moving from two to eight percent in only a few months, new training opportunities and programs will be critical. We are well connected to community training groups and can be mobilized quickly when the economy opens up. For example the Tenneco Employee Action Center will be operating from the Sydenham Campus, and other groups are likely to come forward with training and skill enhancement programs.

The re-opening of the Campus will be aligned with County return to work planning and will follow the guidance of public health.

With the endorsement of Council, staff will begin immediately actioning items outlined in the economic recovery plan. While implementation is happening, the working group will be thinking ahead to consider what future phases of recovery look like. We anticipate recovery will span 2021 and therefore any further consideration of programs and initiatives will be included in budget deliberations.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

There are no legal or legislated requirements relating to this report.

Financial and Resource Implications

The proposed budget associated with the Economic Recovery Plan has been refocused from approved 2020 economic development and tourism budgets and will not require further levy. With this re-direct, it is expected that the economic development and tourism budgets will end the year on budget, despite absorbing a significant deficit from Sydenham Campus, which was accounted for prior to identification of funds.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal – Economic Development and Tourism staff, Director of Corporate Services, Deputy Treasurer, Financial Analyst
- External – Economic Development Working Group, Grey Bruce Public Health, Catapult Grey Bruce

Appendices and Attachments

[Economic Recovery Plan](#)