



**southwest
economic alliance**

Job Creation Partnership Proposal

Southwestern Ontario Intelligent Region Initiative: Community Engagement and Benchmarking Phase

Project Sponsor:	Southwest Economic Alliance (SWEA)
Target Group Served:	Unemployed Individuals
Community:	Southwestern Ontario (defined as Dufferin County in the East to Essex County in the West, Bruce/Grey in the North to Elgin County in the South – 16 upper tiers and seven separated cities)
Operating Year:	2013/2014
Program Start Date:	March 1, 2014
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Attachments

1. Job description, Community Engagement Coordinator (JCP Placement)
2. List of eligible municipalities (participation to be confirmed)
3. Memorandum of Understanding with participating municipalities
4. Cisco Canada Statement of Work
5. Communications Plan
6. Diagnostic and High Level Service Strategy for Grey County (pilot benchmarking report)

Project Summary

In an effort to find a common branding or narrative for Southwestern Ontario, the members of SWEA determined that the region should increasingly be known for its knowledge-based, diversified economy.

Taking cues from the successes of three of the region's communities being recognized internationally as Intelligent Communities by the Intelligent Communities Forum of NYC, the Alliance determined that a region-wide effort to be recognized as a Smart, Connected, Intelligent Region would further its aims to build a more diversified, more sustainable economy.

The Intelligent Region initiative has several components:

- Benchmarking each of the SWEA communities for their level of preparedness for the strategic application of broadband and ICT technologies to their local economies (the first pilot has been conducted in Grey County by Cisco).
- Using the results of the benchmarking to develop a road map for broadband and ICT applications in the local economy. This will include a high level of community engagement.
- Annual benchmarking under the framework of the Intelligent Community Forum. This will provide annual measurements for the scope and effectiveness of the community investments. The ultimate aim is to link all community benchmarks into a regional benchmark that will enable the region to be recognized internationally as an Intelligent Region.
- Because access to ultra-high speed broadband connectivity is inconsistent, SWEA has partnered with the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus in their project known as SWIFT, with the mandate to coordinate a region-wide, ultra high speed fibre optic in all areas, regardless of population density. The SWEA project will supply the field-level Return On Investment data required to justify such an investment.

Project Objective

The Intelligent Region project is designed to encourage diversification of local and regional economies through the increased use of broadband and ICT technologies. This is an essential component of developing a knowledge-based economy. It is also a key component of investment attraction and retention, especially in the entrepreneurial sector.

The project intends to:

- Encourage small and medium scale business investment by ensuring that companies can develop locally but conduct business globally using information and communications technologies.
- Support ICT-enabled business clusters to retain and attract youth, attract immigrants, and retain and attract skilled workers, all of whom may need an upgrade in skills to meet the demands of knowledge-based enterprise.
- Encourage upgraded investments in existing sectors, such as agriculture, food processing and manufacturing, while attracting investment in new types of businesses such as technology, media, life sciences and alternative energy.
- Collectively, the initiative will energize local businesses, create a renewed sense of purpose and possibilities, and develop a brand narrative around the idea that an entire region is re-inventing itself based on the strategic use of ICT.
- Provide detailed Return On Investment data in support of investments to build a region wide ultra high speed fibre optic network known as SWIFT.

By deploying a team of JCP Placements across the region, SWEA is intending to build a team of community engagement specialists with specific knowledge of supporting community and economic development through the use of advanced ICT applications. These will be valuable as resources to municipalities and their varied public and private sector stakeholders, especially in rural and remote parts of the region.

Detailed Project Positions

The experience of the Grey County pilot demonstrated that community engagement was the key to ensuring the benchmarking activity returned meaningful, community-based results.

SWEA proposes to utilize JCP Placements to create a network of 30 Community Engagement Coordinators with the following responsibilities:

- ♣ Reach out to a broad spectrum of community stakeholders with information about the concept of using information and communications technologies to enhance community and economic development.
 - Upper and lower tier municipal employees
 - Other MUSH sector partners (education, health care, social services, etc.)
 - Small and Medium businesses
 - Agriculture and agri-business corporations and organizations

- Local and regional organizations such as Chambers of Commerce, Community Futures agencies, workforce planning groups, adult education and literacy groups, settlement agencies, etc.
- The general public, through community groups, service clubs, etc.
- ♣ Prepare a full spectrum of these stakeholders for the benchmarking phase. This will include focus groups, one on one interviews, online surveys, all undertaken by consultants from Cisco Canada and the Smart+Connected Communities unit of Cisco based in Lima, Peru.
- ♣ Support the Cisco team during the field interview phase.
- ♣ Collect specific data about ICT use, connectivity issues and corporate aspirations for future ICT use. This data to be shared with the SWIFT project to enable the development of a regional asset map to support the architecture of a fibre optic network.
- ♣ Assist the Cisco team during the report validation phase by returning to stakeholders for additional information and clarifications.
- ♣ Prepare a series of community meetings and follow up interviews with stakeholders to present the findings of the benchmarking study and encourage understanding of the identified strategies for ICT development
- ♣ Conduct a series of town hall meetings or seminars to engage the community in development of next steps and a “road map” for local ICT development as identified in the benchmark report.
- ♣ (see job description in Appendix 5)

What JCP Placements Will Learn

During the course of a 42 week placement the JCP placements, working with the job title Community Engagement Coordinator, will receive both formal and on the job training in the following areas:

- ♣ Identifying and communicating with relevant community stakeholders in a municipal governance framework.
- ♣ Structuring and communicating value propositions in a multi-stakeholder environment.
- ♣ Municipal best practices in the area of community and economic development and stakeholder relations.
- ♣ The logistics and techniques of organizing multi-stakeholder consultations across a wide range of platforms including public meetings, video and audio conferencing, private interviews and social media.
- ♣ Brand building, marketing and promotion of community projects using traditional and social media on a local and regional basis.
- ♣ Identifying, collecting and collating data from multiple sources, packaging it for use by a variety of stakeholders.
- ♣ The key tools and techniques associated with the use of information and communication technologies in community and economic development.

JCP placements will be selected for their basic computer skills but will receive further training in the use of productivity software, presentation software, audio and video conferencing, GPS mapping, online surveys and social media platforms.

At the completion of the project, JCP placements will have developed skills applicable to the following career opportunities:

- ♣ Municipal government
- ♣ Social enterprise
- ♣ Not for profit organizations, service groups and business associations
- ♣ For-profit businesses where stakeholder relations are a key part of growth strategies

The intent is to make each Community Engagement Coordinator a local go-to resource for ICT development information in their community, thus enhancing their prospects of local employment as study findings are implemented.

Project Team

This phase of the project will be managed by a team of four individuals (three FTE).

- a. Project Director – High level partner coordination, stakeholder relations, presentations to municipal councils, presentations to town hall meetings, managing quality of project reports, primary liaison with MTCU. Reports to SWEA board. It is proposed that this position will be filled by the current President & CEO on the basis of one third of his time and compensation.
- b. Field Manager—responsible for coordinating hiring, training and supervision of all JCP placements, maintains liaison with all municipal mentors and advisory committees, organizes and chairs monthly team conferences, prepares monthly activity reports. Reports to Project Director. Full time.
- c. Field Coordinator, administrative & bookkeeping support – supports all activities of the Field Manager plus manages administrative and bookkeeping requirements of the project. Reports to the Field Manager. Full time.
- d. Communications Director—responsible for developing and implementing a project communications plan, supplying a coordinating common messaging and branding, monitoring the communications activity of the Community Engagement Coordinators. Reports to the Project Director. Part time under terms of a services agreement.

Partner Organizations

This phase of the Intelligent Region Initiative is a partnership of:

- ♣ Southwest Economic Alliance
- ♣ Participating municipalities in the SWEA defined region
- ♣ Cisco Canada and the Cisco Smart+Connected Communities unit in Lima, Peru
- ♣ The SWIFT broadband initiative of the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus

In the next phase, partnership will be expanded to participating departments of universities and community colleges located in the region.

Southwest Economic Alliance

Formed in 2006, SWEA is an economic development alliance of municipalities, post secondary institutions, broader public sector organizations and private sector companies and organizations. Its primary focus is regional research, cooperative undertakings, regional branding, and regional capacity building. SWEA has been developing its Intelligent Region initiative since late 2012, first through advocacy efforts, then through a pilot study conducted in Grey County in mid-2013.

Participating Municipalities

SWEA has offered direct participation in the project to the 15 upper tier and single tier counties and seven separate cities in its defined region. Each municipality must express its interest in the project by signing a Memorandum of Understanding which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities, including in-kind contributions. In almost all cases, signing of the MOU requires ratification by the municipal council. Depending on size, geography and available resources, each municipality is being offered between one and four JCP placements. The value of in-kind municipal contribution is estimated at \$7,000 for each JCP placement to cover office space, access to computer, telephone and cell phone, and local automobile allowance.

Cisco Canada

Cisco is a global enterprise which supplies high level networking equipment for information and communications technologies. Its Smart+Connected Communities unit provides consulting resources for communities of all sizes around the world seeking to adopt strategic plans for utilizing information and communications technologies in community and economic development.

Cisco provided the pilot phase of the Intelligent Region initiative in Grey County. For the Community Engagement and Benchmarking phase of the project, Cisco will contribute access to its Webex video and audio conferencing service. It will also provide direct training to JCP placements for community engagement techniques, interviewing and surveying processes, and high level understanding of how to use ICT in community development. Cisco will also provide exclusive access to its series of Intranet training tools for use of its technologies and for field work techniques. Cisco will also provide content and expert presenters for a series of workshops and town hall meetings planned for each participating community. The estimated value of the Cisco in-kind contribution is \$50,000.

The SWIFT Initiative

The stated objective of the SWIFT project (Southwest Integrated Fibre Technologies) is the build out of an ultra high speed broadband network based on fibre optic technology, across the entire Southwestern Ontario Region. A project of the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus, the first phase of the project including a highly detail technical feasibility study of the network. The next phase will include governance and legal issues related to a regional

network. SWIFT requires a high level of community engagement to support the estimated \$260 million investment for the network. In return for providing this community engagement, SWEA will gain full access to the technical report and to the expertise of the SWIFT Steering Committee. Both will be valuable to the Benchmarking phase of the SWEA project. SWIFT will also provide content and presenters for the community workshops and town hall meetings.

Expected Results

1. For the duration of Phase One: Community Engagement & Benchmarking, the following deliverables will be achieved:
2. Hiring and training up to 30 eligible JCP placements as Community Engagement Coordinators distributed across 12 or more participating municipalities.
3. For each municipality, at least two town hall meetings and four stakeholder workshops will be coordinated and delivered.
4. For each municipality, a sufficient number of focus groups, face to face interviews, audio and video interviews and online surveys will be undertaken to ensure that reliability of the community benchmarking and diagnostics report.
5. For each municipality, wide-spread distribution of a Cisco Diagnostic and High Level Service Strategy report with eventual ratification by the municipal council.
6. A regional Diagnostic and High Level Service Strategy derived from the community-based findings.
7. Development of a regional benchmarking template for use in subsequent measurement exercises.

Means by Which Success Will Be Measured

1. Monthly meetings of all Community Engagement Coordinators and Project Team Leaders via video conferencing.
2. Monthly written activity reports for each municipality.
3. Monthly financial reporting.
4. Monthly consultation with municipal partners to evaluate progress and learn of any problems or concerns.
5. At least two high level presentations with municipal councils or the appropriate council committee to review results.

Applicant's Background, Mandate and Experience

SWEA is the only regional economic development alliance of

- ♣ municipalities,
- ♣ post secondary institutions, broader public sector
- ♣ private sector companies

It works to transform the Southwestern Ontario economy through leadership, cooperation and capacity-building. It was established in 2006 to serve 15 counties, 7 separated cities. It has entered into cooperation agreements with three other regional organizations (WOWC, SCOR and SOMA) as well as with five universities and one community college

It is engaged in:

- ♣ Regional research and joint initiatives
- ♣ Region-branding
- ♣ Advocacy for policy, planning & capacity building specifically for the Southwestern Ontario region.

It is currently undertaking four key initiatives

1. Establish Southwestern Ontario as an *Intelligent Region*. Pilot phase complete, Community Engagement and Benchmarking phase to begin March 2014.
2. Endow a permanent *Chair in Regional Economic Development for Southwestern Ontario*. Partnership with Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph. One million of \$3 million fundraising target has been achieved through local private investments.
3. Advocate for a regional transportation study to improve access to inter-city rail and bus transportation. Transportation Summit held Nov. 14, 2013 launched the effort.
4. Create a *Centre for Sustainable Food Systems* to support local agricultural entrepreneurship within a regional planning and distribution model. Pilot phase underway in Elgin County through support from Labour Market Partnership program.

Evidence of Community Support

This project can only proceed if participating communities sign a Memorandum of Understanding ratified by the municipal council or designated municipal committee. The MOU sets out roles, responsibilities and in-kind contributions.

Job Description

Community Engagement Coordinator (JCP Placement)

Reports to: Field Manager, SWEA Intelligent Region Project

Job Summary

Community Engagement Coordinators will be part of a multi-municipality, multi-stakeholder project designed to prepare communities in Southwestern Ontario for an extensive benchmarking study focused on the strategic use of information and communication technologies to improve economic development and overall productivity.

Community Partner Activities

Community Partners are eligible municipalities – counties, cities and towns—which will be the subjects of the benchmarking evaluations conducted by Cisco Canada and the Cisco Smart+Connected Communities unit, based in Lima, Peru. The Coordinator will undertake a range of community engagement initiatives in support of the evaluation team and its study activities.

- ♣ Reach out to a broad spectrum of community stakeholders with information about the concept of using information and communications technologies to enhance community and economic development..
- ♣ Prepare a full spectrum of these stakeholders for the benchmarking phase. This will include focus groups, one on one interviews, online surveys, all undertaken by consultants from Cisco Canada and the Smart+Connected Communities unit of Cisco based in Lima, Peru.
- ♣ Support the Cisco team during the field interview phase.
- ♣ Collect specific data about ICT use, connectivity issues and corporate aspirations for future ICT use. This data to be shared with the SWIFT project to enable the development of a regional asset map to support the architecture of a fibre optic network.
- ♣ Assist the Cisco team during the report validation phase by returning to stakeholders for additional information and clarifications.
- ♣ Prepare a series of community meetings and follow up interviews with stakeholders to present the findings of the benchmarking study and encourage understanding of the identified strategies for ICT development
- ♣ Conduct a series of town hall meetings or seminars to engage the community in development of next steps and a “road map” for local ICT development as identified in the benchmark report.

Skill Enhancement Opportunities

- ♣ Identifying and communicating with relevant community stakeholders in a municipal governance framework.
- ♣ Structuring and communicating value propositions in a multi-stakeholder environment.
- ♣ Municipal best practices in the area of community and economic development and stakeholder relations.
- ♣ The logistics, techniques and technologies of organizing multi-stakeholder consultations across a wide range of platforms including public meetings, video and audio conferencing, private interviews and social media.
- ♣ Brand building, marketing and promotion of community projects using traditional and social media on a local and regional basis.
- ♣ Identifying, collecting and collating data from multiple sources, packaging it for use by a variety of stakeholders.
- ♣ The key tools and techniques associated with the use of information and communication technologies in community and economic development.

Qualifications and Desired Attributes:

- ♣ Some post-secondary education
- ♣ Understanding of the municipal and non-profit sectors in Ontario
- ♣ Excellent communicator – in both written and verbal communication
- ♣ Ability to work in a fast paced environment, meet deadlines and enjoys working on diverse projects and tasks within an extensive team and with multiple stakeholders
- ♣ Well organized with the ability to prioritize work assignments and maintain confidentiality
- ♣ Proficiency in internet technologies and Windows environments
- ♣ Able to learn new programs quickly

The ideal candidate for this position:

- ♣ is enthusiastic, energetic and confident
- ♣ enjoys learning
- ♣ shows initiative
- ♣ is a good problem solver and
- ♣ has a passion for enhancing the quality of life for communities and their citizens.

List of Eligible Municipalities

1. Bruce County
2. Brant County
3. City of Brantford
4. Chatham Kent
5. Dufferin County
6. Elgin County
7. Essex County
8. Grey County
9. City of Guelph
10. Haldimand County
11. Huron County
12. Lambton County
13. City of London
14. Middlesex County
15. Norfolk County
16. Oxford County
17. Perth County
18. Town of St. Marys
19. City of St. Thomas
20. City of Stratford
21. Waterloo Region
22. Wellington County
23. City of Windsor