



Committee Report

To: Warden Mitch Twolan
Members of the Planning and Development Committee

From: Kara Van Myall
Director of Planning and Development

Date: September 17, 2020

Re: Support the Bruce: Business Sustainability Fund Update

Staff Recommendation:

The Support the Bruce: Business Sustainability Fund Update report is for information.

Background:

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an extreme impact on the Bruce economy. While economic data is still being collected to understand the full breath of this impact, the breadth of the impact is starting to be understood from talking to and reaching out to the local business community. These times for businesses are indeed strained.

To date, the economic development team has connected with entrepreneurs in record numbers. As of August 31st, this includes receiving 966 inquiries, conducting 375 one-on-one business advice consultations, and reaching out to another 314 through various stakeholder and/or partner affiliations. That equates to speaking to or engaging with 21% of the Bruce County business community. It should be noted that this solely represents those connections made via the County and that all municipal partner economic and / or community development colleagues are interacting with their local businesses also in record numbers.

The numbers presented typically represent annual figures, however these predominately illustrate activity between mid-March and August 31st. We suspect these numbers to continue to rise through the end of the year and into 2021 as the full breadth of the impact of partial closures and operational shifts are realized.

On May 12, 2020, in an action that to date is unprecedented across Ontario, the Executive Committee endorsed the "Support the Bruce: Business Sustainability Fund". This effort was put forth to help stabilize the Bruce economy. The fund total of 1,750,000 includes an array of grant options built to assist businesses with a variety of mechanisms to combat the adverse economic conditions across the County in the wake of the Covid pandemic and imposed health restrictions. The fund included the Emergency Business Sustainability Loan executed in partnership with local Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDC) to further accommodate businesses experiencing undue pressures of managing cash flow and on-going operating costs.

Following the fund endorsement, reports detailing the individual granting options were brought forward for Committee’s consideration and endorsement.

These options were then endorsed and the final framework for the fund includes those listed in the chart below.

Recommended Action	2020	2021	TOTAL
Emergency Business Sustainability Loan	\$750,000		\$750,000
Spruce the Bruce Funding Increase	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$250,000
Tourism Innovation Lab	\$100,000		\$100,000
Starter Company Plus	\$100,000		\$100,000
Business Pivot/ Adaptation Grant	\$300,000		\$300,000
Business Safety and Supplies Grant	\$250,000		\$250,000
Sub Total by Year	\$1,625,000	\$125,000	
		TOTAL	\$1,750,000

With Council’s support of local business and their endorsement of the Support the Bruce - Business Sustainability Fund, as of August 31st, 317 businesses have been awarded a total of \$1,220,633. Businesses used this financial support to adhere to the economic constraints and health restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It allowed them to pivot, to adapt, to enhance and to reimage their existence.

Over the coming months, staff will bring forward a number of these stories to illustrate the positive impact this funding has had on our business community.

Support the Bruce - Business Sustainability Fund by the Numbers:

Emergency Business Sustainability Loan - Through the Emergency Business Sustainability Loan, 21 businesses were able to access funds for operations under reduced revenue projections.

Spruce the Bruce - Through Spruce the Bruce, 102 local businesses in downtowns across the County were able to access funding that allowed them to continue to operate their businesses under strict health requirements due to the Covid-19 pandemic and not use reserve funding for needed enhancements.

On the ground, this meant, money flowed to allow for:

- Façade improvements that allowed businesses to continue plans to ensure their store fronts look clean, healthful, and appealing.
- New outdoor patios allowing restaurants to continue to operate amid restrictions
- Perpendicular signs necessary to promote the unique store options throughout the commercial cores of Bruce County.
- New awnings used not just for aesthetics but to allow for a mechanism to enhance social distancing and offer a way for business to consumer delivery.

Tourism Innovation Lab - Through the Re-imagine Tourism Innovation Lab “Spark Grant”, 11 tourism-based businesses were afforded the opportunity to enhance their existing business model or offer a new service.

On the ground, this meant money flowed to allow the following and more to happen:

- A new laser maze to add to the activity options in downtown Sauble Beach
- A new interpretive teaching lodge as a new product offering for locals and visitors
- Tandem kayaks to enhance the true explorer adventure
- Private surf lessons perfect to social distance and enjoy all that Lake Huron offers
- A nano-brewery in the Peninsula
- Added garden experience to enjoy in Brockton
- New enhancements to improve the accommodations and experience in Tamarac Island
- Picnic options to enjoy in downtown Southampton and maintain social distance
- Boutique vacation stay options in downtown Kincardine
- An enhanced online option for canoe rentals for excursions down the Saugeen
- A creative option for and access to ice cream in and around Paisley

Starter Company Plus / Business Pivot Adaptation - Through the Starter Company Plus and Business Pivot /Adaptation grant, 49 businesses were supported to adapt their business.

On the ground, this meant:

- New or expanded product lines were implemented by resilient entrepreneurs
- Businesses were able to expand to maintain capacity and increase demand despite pandemic restrictions
- Expanded square footage and undertake interior renovations to maintain capacity
- Pivoting to an online platform including supporting equipment, software, and website upgrades expenditure
- New equipment and or machinery to maintain capacity and demand
- New product lines with the introduction of machinery to support it
- Outdoor patio space beyond the downtown cores
- Point of sale systems including equipment to integrate website sales and inventory monitoring
- Outdoor structures to enhance social distancing measures
- Take out window enhancement or installations
- Website upgrades and/or e-commerce platforms and required software

Business Safety and Supplies Grant - Through the Business Safety Supplies grant, 127 businesses received help to support adherence to pandemic health requirements to keep their staff and customers safe.

On the ground this meant, that the following sectors received operational help with unexpected expenditures related to Covid-19:

- 37 Service sector businesses
- 34 Accommodation and Food services businesses
- 16 Healthcare and social assistance sector businesses

- 23 Retail businesses
- 2 Construction businesses
- 5 Arts and Entertainment
- 5 Agriculture sector businesses
- 2 Manufacturing sector
- 3 Other

Conclusion

These numbers represent a range of business from across the County including all municipalities and to date, most granting options have been well received. The numbers to date represent those processed so far. The Business Pivot / Adaptation grant application review is on-going. The Emergency Business Sustainability Loan is under review as take up has been slow.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

None

Interdepartmental Consultation:

None

Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:

Goal: Stimulate and reward innovation and economic development
Element: Vocally support all industry in Bruce County

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Approved by:



Sandra Datars Bere
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