



## Committee Report

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

**From:** Kara Van Myall  
Director of Planning and Development

**Date:** October 15, 2020

**Re:** Letter of Support for WOWC's RED Application

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### Staff Recommendation:

The Letter of Support for the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus's RED Application report is for information.

### Background:

In late August, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs announced that applications for the "Targeted RED (Rural Economic Development)" grant program was open and that submissions would be accepted between September 21 and October 9<sup>th</sup>. This is a cost-sharing funding program that supports activities to create strong rural communities across Ontario and open doors to rural economic development.

This is not the same as the "Regular RED program" and is targeted specifically for projects that support economic diversification and competitiveness. This targeted RED intake is for not-for-profit regional organizations or upper-tier municipalities with economic development projects that support multiple counties/regions/districts/Indigenous communities or the province. It should be noted that the emphasis is on projects that benefit a region and not solely one municipality or community as typical in the other RED program.

### Activity types

- entrepreneurship or business succession
- business retention and expansion
- attraction and retention of workers, immigrants or youth
- skills training and development
- collaborative marketing and outreach
- sector or value chain development

The maximum provincial cost-share for eligible costs is 70%, to a maximum of \$75,000 per project.

## **Current Situation - Western Ontario Wardens Caucus (WOWC):**

WOWC proposed to area economic development colleagues (Bruce County) that the WOWC prepare an application to expand the “ConnectON: Agri-food and Manufacturing Systems Asset Mapping” across the Western Ontario region. The proposed project is developed from a pilot undertaken by the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA), which is a not for profit organization, working in partnership with various like-minded groups. This partnership resulted in the development of ConnectON which is an agricultural asset mapping tool.

Municipalities, cities and regions in the Golden Horseshoe, Greater Golden Horseshoe, and Eastern Ontario participated in original asset mapping for the agri-food and manufacturing sectors. There are 43 agri-food sector municipal partners with over 73,000 businesses from across the value chain included in the data base. This information was instrumental in the Agricultural Systems mapping of the Greater Golden Horseshoe and many other municipal and provincial projects.

The manufacturing sector was recently added to the ConnectON platform and has 24 municipal partners and over 47,000 records from production to distribution. With provincially and municipally generated location-based business data the various components of the manufacturing and agri-food value chain - production, processing, distribution and food access can be identified.

The purpose of this project is expand this program into the Western Ontario region to support economic development, emergency preparedness and response, assist in mapping the Agricultural System outside the Greater Golden Horseshoe and promote economic recovery post-Covid by asset mapping the agri-food systems and manufacturing sector for member municipalities of the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus.

Sound preparation and decision making requires data. Although data is available from many sources, there continues to be challenges in accessing, interpreting, and developing solutions based on reliable, meaningful data at the provincial, municipal, sector and organizational level. By completing data collection, data refresh and mapping for Western Ontario, stakeholders will be able to inventory, access, sort, filter and map the agri-food and manufacturing sectors municipally, regionally and across Western Ontario. Using appropriate and focused data will support analysis for trends, gaps, strengths, weaknesses, policy direction and the development of resources (ie. response and resiliency maps, directories, strategies, marketing materials, etc.) that support economic recovery and growth, emergency preparedness and response and planning.

## **Recommendation:**

Staff recognized the value that could be leveraged with Bruce County joining the partnership and as a result provided a letter of support for the WOWC’s Targeted RED application. Completing the WOWC municipal members agri-food and manufacturing mapping project will result in current, accurate data that can be used to inform and strategize provincial and municipal solutions for economic development, planning and pandemic response and recovery.

Mapping will support the expansion of the Agricultural Systems approach for planning purposes across the province. Results will help demonstrate the economic impact and value of the agri-food and manufacturing sectors and strengthen the recovery post-Covid to the provincial, regional and municipal economies.

### **Implementation:**

Specifically, this project will build on the success of the agri-food and manufacturing asset mapping initiative: ConnectON ([www.connecton.ca](http://www.connecton.ca)) currently established in the Golden and Greater Golden Horseshoe, Ontario East and the City of Ottawa.

Highlights of what this work will include are the following:

- Collect business data and map upper tier and single tier municipalities that are members of the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus and refresh and add new data for municipalities that are current participants.
- Obtain, upload and refresh Farm Business Registration data for these areas
- Obtain and upload third party data as it is available (ie. OMAFRA Food processing/manufacturing data)
- Establish data sharing agreements with municipal partners and organizations
- Identify and provide login credentials for new users
- Establish regional viewing for Western Ontario Wardens Caucus members
- Develop partnerships with municipalities and economic development organizations to support long term sustainability

### **Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:**

There are no financial considerations currently. There is no staffing, legal or IT considerations associated with this report.

### **Interdepartmental Consultation:**

There were no interdepartmental considerations for this report.

### **Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:**

Goal #3 - Find creative new ways to engage our public

Goal #6 - Stimulate and reward innovation in Economic Development

### **Report Author:**

Jill Roote, Manager of Economic Development, Planning and Development

### **Departmental Approval:**

Kara Van Myall, Director of Planning and Development

### **Approved for Submission:**

Sandra Datars Bere, Chief Administrative Officer