



Committee Report

To: Warden Janice Jackson
Members of the Planning and Development Committee

From: Mark Paoli
Director of Planning and Development

Date: June 17, 2021

Re: Workforce Development & Attraction Strategy Update

Staff Recommendation:

The Workforce Development & Attraction Strategy Update report is for information.

Background:

The “Find Your Career in Bruce County” Workforce Development and Attraction Strategy (WDAS), endorsed at the October 15, 2020 Planning and Development Committee, was created to address the workforce challenges faced by businesses across the County. This Strategy, built on a 4-pronged approach, guides the collective actions through 2025.

The 4-Pronged Approach includes:

1. **Continuous Data Collection** - assessing and defining industry needs now and into the future including labour needs and hiring trends, identifying talent in the region, future labour market needs, and existing education and skills gaps.
2. **Attraction** - ongoing marketing tactics that drive resident attraction to meet current and future needs of business. This includes a broad regional approach in addition to at the local municipal level and in concert with the existing business community.
3. **Retention** - ongoing supports to grow welcoming and diverse communities where people want to live and includes working with businesses to grow cultures where people want to work.
4. **Skills Building** - ongoing measures to combat the skills gaps experienced between industry and traditional education. Including enhancing local skills by bridging skills gaps for short and long-term labour needs, bridge education gaps to address sector-specific skills gaps, support succession planning, and raise awareness among local employers about pathways to employment projects.

This report summarizes the progress made on actions outlined in the strategy. It should be noted that since the launch of the WDAS, some actions have shifted as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Actions with no update are advancing in subsequent quarters.

Summary:

The WDAS includes 29 actions, representing 9 priority areas and organized within a 4-pronged approach. The following section provides updates to the relevant actions advanced between November 2020 to May 2021.

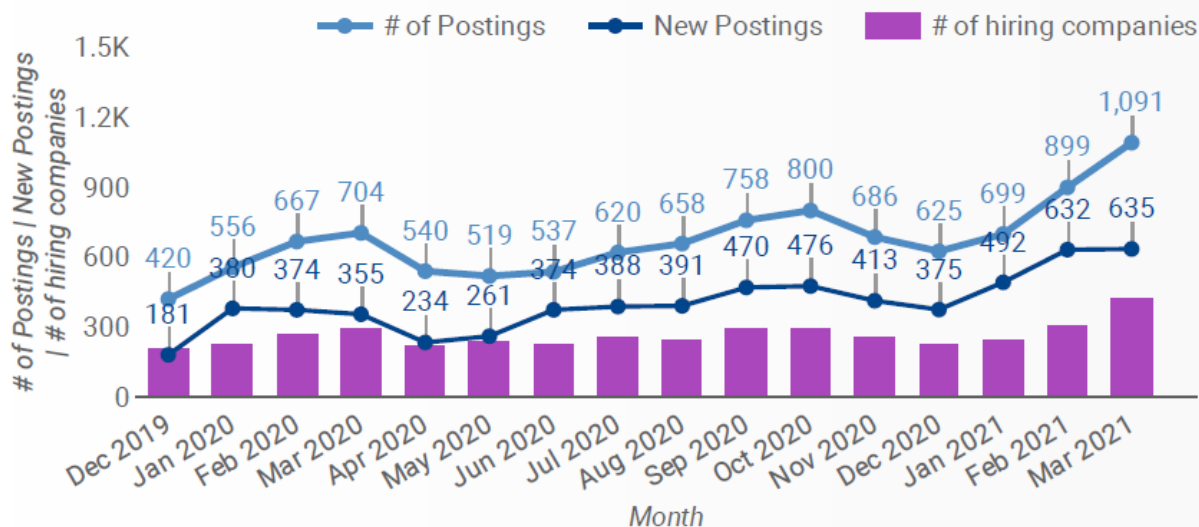
PRONG 1: CONTINUOUS DATA COLLECTION ACTIONS

Priority Area 1: Identify current employer labour needs (primary data)

1. Ongoing analysis of Jobs in Bruce data & other sources of credible information.
 - The [Jobs in Bruce website](#) is continuously monitored and maintained. This includes supporting local businesses accessing the site.
 - The Jobs in Bruce site now includes listings from VPI and Kijiji job board websites.
 - March 2021 saw 1,091 active postings, up from 704 in March 2020.

JOB POSTINGS BY MONTH

How many job postings were active for at least 1 day this month in Bruce County?



2. Connect with employers directly who have high job demand and are struggling to find people.
 - Research and consultation of the 'Shift Yourself' software platform is underway. The software uses a match making tool to connect job seekers and employers to fill vacancies.
 - Consultations with the local employers that sat on the Bruce County Economic Taskforce is ongoing in order to understand changes and implications on the labour force climate due to the pandemic.

3. Open call to employers to connect and provide their job demand requirements.
 - In the fall of 2020, participated in the Four County Labour Market Planning Board's development of "Post Pandemic Economic Scenarios Local Labour Action Plan". The scenarios presented include discussions with the board, its members, businesses and community leaders. This led to identifying initiatives to offset the pandemic impact on the labour market and developed into 4 different scenarios, "And We're Back", "The World As We Know It", "Some Things Never Change" & "Nothing We Can Recognize". Each scenario explores different hypothetical narratives as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and is intended to start a conversation about how the region can overcome challenges and capture opportunities in the wake of the pandemic.
 - Participated in the second annual "Growing Your Workforce" Conference organized by Workforce Planning West, The Western Ontario Wardens Caucus and the Learning Networks of Western Region. The conference focused on solutions for organizations to attract, retain and train talent. The format enabled staff to glean insight into industry needs and skills development directions for local training and industry associations. This included various industry employers, the Ontario Tourism Education Corporation focusing on Tourism Hospitality Emergency Response the Career Accelerator program. Tourism Skillsnet Ontario presented on the current industry situations related to the pandemic. This insight informs support mechanisms needed for local employers.
4. Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership (GBLIP) Activity.
 - The GBLIP Partnership Council struck a sub-committee for "Employment", which includes an action to advance an employer roundtable. The coordination of this roundtable is underway.

Priority Area 2: Identify local education and skills gaps.

5. Collaborate with recruitment companies and local businesses.
 - Bruce County teamed up with Grey County and other community partners to host a Virtual Job Fair on March 10th, 2021. The event exceeded expectations with over 1500 available jobs, 700 job seekers and 123 employers participating (see the "Grey Bruce Regional Job Fair" infographic attachment for details).
 - With the success of the March 10th event, a Student/Seasonal Virtual Job Fair was hosted on April 7th, 2021. The event was targeted to summer students and seasonal employment and delivered over 400 available jobs, 270 job seekers and 51 participating employers (See the "Grey Bruce Student / Seasonal Virtual Job Fair Infographic attachment for details).

6. Connect with the School Boards and local educational institutions & local employers.
 - Participated and supported the “Kick Start Your Career” event on June 1, 2021. The virtual event focused on raising awareness of the trades to youth while also communicating this important message to their parents and guardians. 1316 unique users accessed the event.
 - Active board membership supporting the Launch Pad Youth Activity Centre. This transformative program invites youth to participate in hands on demonstrations of various trades and future job opportunities. Launch Pad has continued to operate, adapt and pivot when necessary due to the pandemic.

PRONG 2: ATTRACTION ACTIONS

Priority Area 3: Identify attraction audiences based on research.

7. Target Newcomers and Immigrants as potential audience.
 - Participation in the “Helping Companies Source Talent and Labour” conference in December 2020 hosted by Bluewater Wood Alliance delivered presentations and experiences from JD Sweid Foods “Hiring Government Assisted Refugees”, Reception House Waterloo Region “Making it Work” and Ministry of Labour Training and Skills Development “The Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program”. Learnings from the session inform future mechanisms to connect employers as they alleviate labour challenges assisting them with the intricacies of hiring newcomers and immigrants.
 - Staff attended and presented at the successful virtual event “Discover Rural Ontario: Grey and Bruce” February 24, 2021. The webinar was informative and engaging. Seventy-Four newcomers joined live. Thirty-Eight people responded to the Evaluation Survey indicating that the event met their expectations and helped them better understand what it is like living in Grey and Bruce. Participants gave positive feedback on the information provided during this forum.
 - “Why choose Grey and Bruce Counties” session was planned and delivered to 41 participants. A session offered to registrants of the Grey Bruce Virtual Job Fair, was a “Get to Know Grey Bruce” presentation where participants learned about the many attributes of Bruce and Grey Counties. This included major employment sectors, the rental and housing market, current job opportunities and how to find them, the Grey-Bruce Local Immigration Partnership and how it helps them, how to access Settlement Services and other useful and important information to the newcomer.
 - A “Live Here” dedicated site on the Bruce County Corporate website is under development. The site includes information geared to the special interests of Newcomers and Immigrants as a way of attracting this important audience.

8. Broaden educational opportunities focusing on Newcomers and Immigrants.
 - The “Making Grey Bruce Home for International Talent” project was undertaken to understand the resources and services international students need to support settlement in the community and to understand the opportunities and challenges international students have finding employment in the region.
 - The project proposes five key recommendations: improve information regarding the location of Owen Sound campus, improve public awareness for opportunities to participate in the Homestay program or private room rental, improve transportation support for students, connect students to community members and organizations to support language and social development and provide supports for international students about employment and immigration in Canada. These recommendations will support student settlement in the community, strengthen resources to aid in their studies and promote employment opportunities in the Grey and Bruce region.
 - The initiative was a partnership with Georgian College, Welcoming Communities Grey Bruce, Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership and Grey County Economic Development from December 2020 to March 2021 and received funding from the Province. Bruce County team member was directly involved in this project and regularly worked and guided the staff person on this project.
9. Grey Bruce LIP Activity
 - Family tours are suspended until Covid restrictions allow this to move forward.
10. Target Millennials as a potential audience.
 - Work is currently underway for a “Live in Bruce” website - a collection of materials and resources for “soon to be” and current residents. The information posted will allow interested parties to make sound and educated decisions of what is available to them in the region.
 - The Be An Explorer Marketing Campaign is being updated to ensure that marketing will also attract Millennials to the area.
11. Target Youth as a potential audience.
 - Jobs in Bruce and employment information provided to the Arran-Elderslie Youth Council for consideration on their new website. Future interaction and support are offered on an on-going basis.
 - Participation with Saugeen District Senior School in establishing employer co-op placement contacts.
 - Outreach to Ontario post-secondary institutes for co-op opportunities with local employers is ongoing. Some of the recent challenges noted by institutions and employers is lack of housing, difficulties and opportunities related to working from home due to the pandemic, necessity to reduce operating hours due to pandemic restrictions and the increase in health-related workplace regulations and practices that are ongoing also related to the pandemic.
 - On-going support of the First Robotics Competition and FIRST Robotics Lego League.

Priority Area 4: Strong messaging to identified audiences with appropriate methods.

12. Showcase success stories of Newcomers and Immigrants through videos and marketing outside the County.
13. Continue support through Business to Bruce program.
14. Continued marketing through Explore the Bruce.
 - Messaging alignment is in place to expand the image of Bruce as not just a place to visit but also a place to work. Given the current pandemic impacts and that people are in a position to choose where they live, a key messaging strategy to push this audience to consider relocating is in place.

PRONG 3: RETENTION ACTIONS

Priority Area 5: Welcoming Communities

15. Work towards the 17 characteristics that describe Welcoming Community into Community Development & Improvement Plans while collaborating with municipalities for continued support of implementation.
 - As part of the Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership Strategy and action plan, staff will work towards making our communities welcoming and inclusive.
 - Working together to break down the barriers to social inclusion and celebrate the value of diversity, the Grey Bruce LIP is supporting the development of an anti-racism / discrimination strategy, leveraging the multi-cultural events within the area to create a valuing diversity campaign and increasing awareness of ethno-cultural groups, including faith-based communities, and their traditions within the region.
16. Collaborate with Welcoming Communities Grey Bruce on projects and initiatives that promote inclusivity, diversity, and anti-racism.
 - Being an active board member of Welcoming Communities Grey Bruce, staff provide leadership on various projects related to inclusivity, diversity, settlement, and anti-racism. For instance, the Pathways to Employment for Visible Minority Newcomer Women (VMNW) project helped VMNW to enhance their skills and connecting women to potential employers thereby providing an opportunity to VMNW. Another one is YMCA Settlement Services project that is providing various settlement services to the newcomers thereby supporting their retention and inclusion.

17. Grey Bruce LIP Activity: Support the formulation of a flexible Settlement Strategy and Action Plan to respond to changing needs in the community as they arise.

- The Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership (GBLIP) Settlement Strategy (2021 - 2025) was received by both Grey and Bruce County Councils in April 2021. The goal of this partnership is to address labour stress issues reported by businesses in all sectors regionally and to foster multiple partnerships that deliver attraction and retention programming in the region.
- Work has begun on the action plan to achieve the objectives outlined in the strategy. Together with stakeholders, the goal for the region is to be known as a welcoming and inclusive Grey - Bruce Community.

18. Grey Bruce LIP Activity: Community dialogues supporting the volunteers from Welcoming Communities Grey Bruce & other partners that support workshops to celebrate cultural diversity.

Priority Area 6: Employer Culture

19. Cultivating Employer Culture to include diversity and inclusion (Newcomers and Immigrant focus).

20. Cultivate Community Culture to include diversity and inclusion (Newcomers and Immigrant focus).

PRONG 4: SKILLS BUILDING ACTIONS

Priority Area 7: Bridge skills and education gaps for short and long-term labour needs.

21. Raising awareness of trades and skilled workforce in local schools, expanding training opportunities locally, and connect future labour market supply with regional stakeholders.

- The pandemic has impacted programming in this area. Virtual and hybrid events have and are supported and participated in where possible.
- Participated in planning the Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board STEAM Fair Mentor program and assisted in recruiting community mentors to pair with students.
- Origin Recruitment's Immersive Link Virtual Reality goggles and content access to the Career and Cultural videos has been secured. Additionally, beta testing of Edge Factor's new Virtual Reality content has been arranged. The intent is to utilize these tools in the 2021/2022 school year at in person events.

22. Outreach at community-based promotional events to endorse the trades and skilled workforce.
- Support of the “Dream Big Grey Bruce” event hosted by Build a Dream, Blue Water District School Board and Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board.
 - Participation in multiple events including the 6th Annual Skilled Trades Expo, National Apprenticeship Conference, National Strategy to Support Women in the Trades, Education Career Fair, Skills Ontario Business Summit, Young Woman’s Conference, First Nation Metis Inuit Conference and Virtual Competition and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development “Update for Stakeholders on Skilled Trades Strategy Next Steps”.
23. Asset Mapping: assemble a complete inventory of community assets, opportunities, and resources to enable effective utilization.
- Resources for this action have been directed to the development of the “Live in Bruce” website. Relevant information will be centralized into one location for easy access in a consistent streamlined format.
24. Create communication materials to promote and distribute a consistent message about opportunities in the trades and skilled workforce.
- Digital marketing materials will be developed to direct viewers to the Live in Bruce website when published.

Priority Area 8: Support succession planning.

25. Continue to work with entrepreneurs to support them in succession planning largely as a results of retiring baby boomers, through Business to Bruce program.

Priority Area 9: Address sector-specific skills gap

26. Connect with Ontario Immigration to understand the immigration rules around attracting skilled workforce.
- Consulted with the Business Immigration Stakeholder Unit at the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development were facilitated to gain a better understanding of available programing.
 - Potential training for businesses across the County that could benefit from OINP is underway.

27. Connect with Federal Immigration to understand the Temporary Foreign Worker Program around attracting needed workforce.

- Connections made with Citizen Services at Service Canada to learn more about available programming and how local employers can access.
- Consulted with the Program Delivery Branch at Service Canada to understand more about available resources to employers and how to benefit from the Temporary Foreign Worker program.

28. Engage and promote the pathways of trades and skilled workforce opportunities to under-represented population groups, including but not limited to Indigenous communities, visible minorities, immigrants, women, and youth.

- In association with the Four County Labour Market Planning Board, BWDSB, BGCDsb, Quill Network, VPI and Launch Pad multiple trades-based video's (Virtual Workplace Experiences, Career Profile's, and Soft Skills) were created by Edge Factor. The local companies highlighted are Applus, Larson & Shaw, Walkerton Clean Water Centre and Bruce County Transportation Department. These videos will create awareness for students through the school board access membership and for residents through Four County Labour Market Planning Board's community hub. The videos can be found here: <https://edgefactor.com/fourcounty>
- "Pathways to Apprenticeship" presented to Human Services clients in April 2021.
- Consulted with Habitat for Humanity Grey Bruce to learn more about the local Tiny Homes project and potential involvement in February 2021, Huronia Aboriginal Management Board and VPI are supporting this initiative.
- Preliminary discussions with Saugeen First Nation, Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, M'Wikwedong and VPI on developing a resume writing, work preparedness workshop.

29. Partner with local community organizations such as FCLMPB and VPI Inc. on their training programs to help potential workers/clients.

- Support provided for the Four County Labour Market Planning Board's application for a Skills Advance Ontario Construction Training program application in March of 2021. The program was approved and expected to start June 14th, 2021.
- Support provided to Fanshawe Colleges and the municipality of South Bruce's application to the New Skills Development Fund for a Women in Carpentry program. Results of the application are pending.
- The Grey Bruce Community Partners committee is supported on an ongoing basis to share community information with. FCLMPB and VPI are leading members of this committee.

Conclusion:

The pandemic has continued to disrupt the local workforce and made it necessary to pivot the approach on many of the Workforce Development and Attraction Strategy actions. Virtual events have taken place over in-person events where possible. The pandemic has made it necessary to be creative and to try new approaches to service delivery. As a result, the use of a virtual environment has actually increased interactions, enabled greater attendance, expanded a wider reach, supported more connections, and enhanced accessibility.

Employers and communities continue to adapt to the ever-changing landscape with great resilience. A strong and growing workforce is vital to economic recovery and growth in the coming years. Continued efforts toward data collection, attraction, retention, and skills building are key factors to grow and maintain a healthy workforce now and into the future.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

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

Interdepartmental Consultation:

None

Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:

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

Goal #7 Stimulate and reward innovation and economic development.

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