

Enhanced Spruce the Bruce Program

Planning & Development Committee

March 17, 2022



Background: Spruce the Bruce (STB) Program

- Community development program
- Goal of building healthy, vibrant, attractive communities
- Started in 2010
- 2010-2021: nearly \$1.5 million in funding awarded to businesses in downtown cores and community partners across the County
 - 2021: over \$250,000 in grants awarded
- 2021: Reviewed its impact and opportunities

Current (2021) Grants - Community Stream

- Focus on businesses within the community's downtown CIP

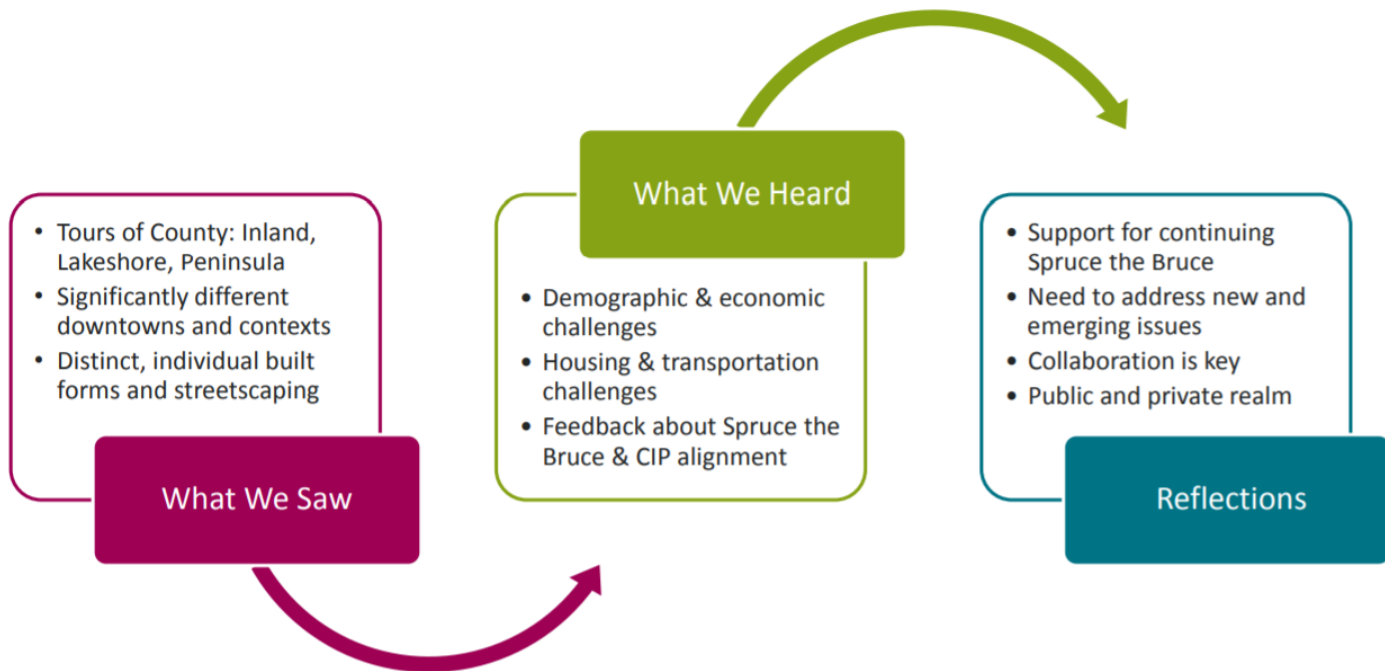
Grant	Eligibility
Façade Improvement & Sidewalk Patio	Businesses in downtown CIP
Perpendicular Signage & Awning	Businesses in downtown CIP
Collaborative Marketing	Businesses in downtown CIP / municipal & community partners
Destination Infrastructure	Municipal & community partners
Community Signage	Municipal & community partners
Streetscape Beautification	Municipal & community partners

Research & Analysis: 2021

- MDB Insight Inc. hired to review the STB program
 - Conducted key informant interviews with all eight lower-tier municipalities
 - Reviewed best practices in seven comparable communities
 - Highlighted six popular approaches to community development
 - Conducted research around economic realities for consideration
 - Completed an analysis of the STB program's history and impact
- Bruce County staff met with local economic development staff to discuss MDB's Responses and gain additional feedback



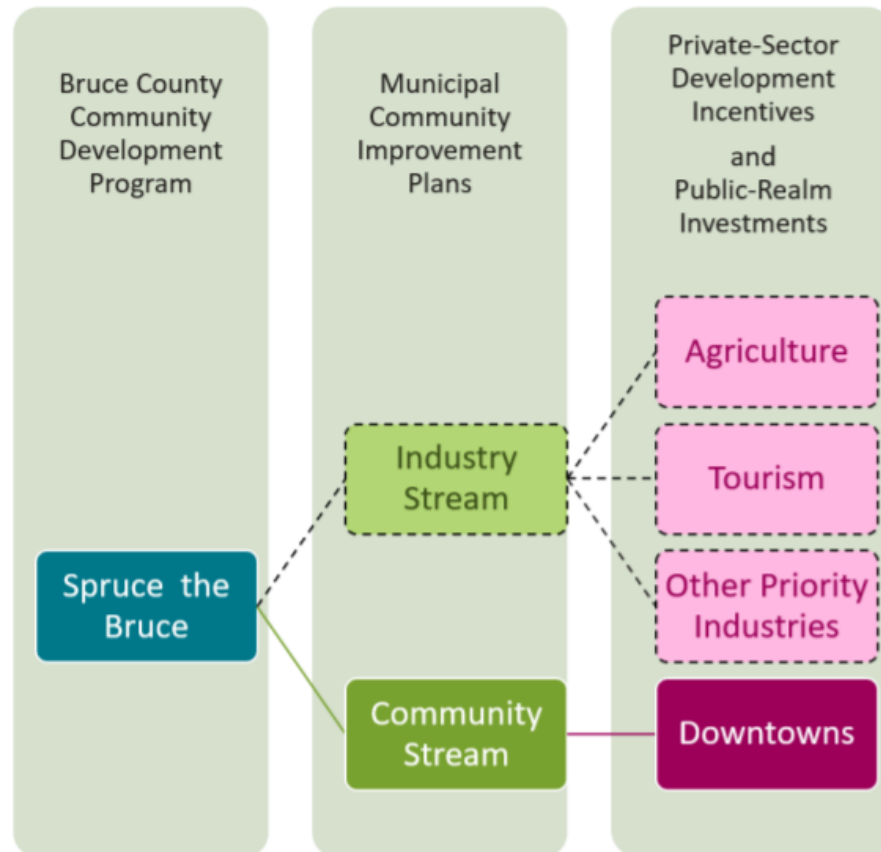
Findings: What We Saw & Heard





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Recommended Structure



Responses

- Modernize policy
 - Enlarge the scope of potential CIP incentives across geography and economic sectors
 - Facilitate innovative investment opportunities
 - Expand geographic scope of CIP's
 - Support municipalities to update their CIP objectives, incentives, etc.
 - Encourage municipalities to change their local zoning by-laws to permit additional uses as-of-right
- Expand financial incentives
 - Expand STB to include an industry stream
- Double-down on collaboration
 - Continue to fund STB through the community stream

Where we are Today

- August 2021: Spruce the Bruce Community Development Program Review – recommended directions endorsed by PDC
- November 2021: ‘Enhanced Spruce the Bruce Program’ report presented at PDC meeting
 - PDC directed staff to gain additional insight and feedback from municipalities
- **March 2022: ‘Enhanced Spruce the Bruce Program – Local Consultation Follow-Up’ report**

Municipal Feedback on Enhanced STB program

- Collected feedback from all municipalities
- Organized comments in relation to specific grants or topics
- Compiled and analyzed comments, questions, and feedback to understand the areas of concern or address opportunities to provide clarity
- Reviewed each concern or question through additional research and analysis

1. Community Stream: Commercial Building Interior Renovation

Comments:

- Property owner benefitting from value increase.

Discussion:

- Increases likelihood of property to be purchased or leased
- Can help with regulatory issues such as Ontario Building Code Act.

Response:

Clarification that the Commercial Building Interior Renovation grant should be focused on projects in the downtown that:

Offer incentives to downtown and commercial private property owners that propose significant commercial projects that substantially renovate, restore, improve and update a building or structure (for example: flooring, drywall, ceilings, electrical, plumbing, etc.); and

Meet all building and other required permits and is in conformance with all applicable health and safety standards.

2. Industry Stream: Business Accessibility Adaptability

Comments:

- AODA is provincially-regulated, so should be provincially funded.

Discussion:

- Ontario Trillium Foundation's Community Building Fund – Capital Stream grant exists for Not-For-Profit corporations only.

Response:

Clarification that the Business Accessibility/Adaptability grant should be focused on projects in which:

A commercial building's interior or exterior is renovated and / or upgraded to remove barriers for people with disabilities; and

The renovations / upgrades are compliant with the requirements of the AODA.

3. Industry Stream: Residential Improvement

Comments:

- If the grant would duplicate efforts by Bruce County's Human Services Department's Home Repair Program.

Discussion:

- The Home Repair Program would not be a duplicated effort, as the program criteria and eligibility differ.

3. Industry Stream: Residential Improvement cont'd

Comments:

- If the grant is available to any housing project in any zoned area if directly related to long-term or seasonal long-term accommodation for workforce and if it's available to existing units and greenfield areas

Discussion:

- MDB noted a best practice regarding residential grants to include offering incentives for upper floor apartments in mixed-use buildings for rental options.
- Rental units available in downtown and mixed-use buildings increases employment opportunities for individuals and reduces the reliance on a vehicle.

3. Industry Stream: Residential Improvement cont'd (3)

Response:

Clarification that the Residential Improvement grant should be made available to support projects in downtowns or mixed use (commercial-residential) zones that permit residential uses, for:

New residential units, or renovations or additions to increase occupancy in existing or redeveloped mixed-use buildings where the units are offered to rent long term only (i.e. grant eligibility criteria may include a minimum period for which units must be available for long-term rental, and repayment clauses and contract enforcement may be required in partnership with local municipalities); and

Where the improvements meet zoning and all building and other required permits and is in conformance with all applicable health and safety standards.

4. Industry Stream: Agri-Food Innovation

Comments:

- If the grant is intended to include value-added processing on farms.

Discussion:

- MDB noted a best practice of offering value-added agriculture uses, as it encourages economic diversity.

Response:

Clarification that the Agri-Food Innovation grant would include value-added processing on farms.

5. Industry Stream: Enhanced Product Development

Comments:

- If the grant is a duplicate to the Patio Installation grant, and if a business outside the downtown CIP is eligible to receive community stream grants (ex. Façade Improvement, Perpendicular Sign, etc.).

Discussion:

- The Community stream is focused on the downtowns, the Industry stream's focus is broadened to expand beyond (and include) downtowns.
- The Patio Installation grant is available to businesses in the downtown only (as are the other community stream grants for businesses).
- The grant is intended to support tourism product or experience development or enhancements that would assist tourism businesses outside of the downtown core. It would support projects such as Façade Improvement, Perpendicular Sign, Patios, etc.

5. Industry Stream: Enhanced Product Development cont'd

Response:

The Enhanced Product Development grant should be renamed to 'Product & Experience Development/Enhancement' and clarification that the grant could be available municipality-wide for projects completed by a tourism business that:

Develop or enhance existing products or experiences which are specifically related to improving the value and experiences for tourism-based customers.

6. Program Structure: funding the enhanced Spruce the Bruce

Comments:

- Concerns around spreading the current budget across the Community stream and the new Industry stream. Noting less funding available for downtowns, and not enough funding for the Industry stream.

Discussion:

- MDB concluded that the most successful CIPs expand across geographic boundaries to include downtowns and rural areas.
- There is a potential to dilute the impact on downtowns or not offer enough funds for an impact on the Industry stream.
- Typical budget is \$125,000 and is approved for 2022
- Support the Bruce Business Sustainability fund (2020-21) showed the interest and support for grants similar to those in the Industry stream

6. Program Structure: funding the enhanced Spruce the Bruce cont'd

Response

It is recommended that the concern about funding a broader Spruce the Bruce program be addressed for this year by transferring \$125,000 of the unspent STBBSF to the 2022 Spruce the Bruce Program budget. That increase would align with the 2019 and 2020 pandemic funding levels (\$250,000) and would align with the Support the Bruce fund goals to help with the stability of Bruce County businesses as they continue to navigate uncharted territory.

7. Concerns with updating / expanding Community Improvement Plans

Comments:

- Some municipalities working on updating/expanding their CIPs
- Concern with need to make a municipal-wide CIP for businesses (ex. agriculture) to be eligible for Industry stream grants
- Help from Bruce County requested to update some municipal CIPs

Discussion:

- It is understood the work required among municipalities to partake in the expanded program. If a municipality does not see value in a particular STB grant, they need not include it in their CIP

7. Concerns with updating / expanding Community Improvement Plans cont'd

Response:

Bruce County is offering support and assistance to municipalities who are interested in updating and/or expanding their CIPs and/or Official Plans. It is recommended that staff be authorized to initiate an Amendment to the County Official Plan to add policies that would enable Community Improvement Plans to be established more broadly throughout the County

8. Questions about onboarding for Industry stream grants

Comments:

- If a community must be 'onboarded' into the STB program for their local businesses and community partners to be eligible for the Industry stream grants.

Discussion:

- To add a new community to the Community stream, onboarding (resulting in a community toolkit and branding elements) would be required
- Onboarding is not required for access to the Industry stream grants

Response:

Clarification provided above; no program design changes required.

9. Comments about promotion challenges

Comments:

- Requests and comments for staff to increase collaboration with municipalities and expand promotional and outreach efforts.
- Noting communication challenges to reach agriculture communities.

Discussion:

- Staff will ensure outreach efforts, presentations at Community partner meetings (ex. Chamber, BIA), and communications are increased and go beyond digital means.
- Conducting site visits with municipal staff to businesses and farms will take place.

Response:

No program design changes required, the need for execution of communication and promotion above is noted.

Proposed Grant Changes / Additions

Grant Name	Stream	Status	Eligibility: Who	Potential Locations (*Subject to CIP update)
Façade Building Improvement (Exterior)	Community	Existing	Businesses / Property Owners	Downtown
Fascia Signage	Community	Existing	Businesses / Property Owners	Downtown
Patio Installation	Community	Existing	Businesses / Property Owners	Downtown
Perpendicular Signage	Community	Existing	Businesses / Property Owners	Downtown
Awning	Community	Existing	Businesses / Property Owners	Downtown
Streetscape Beautification	Community	Existing	Municipal & Community Partners	Downtown
Community Signage	Community	Existing	Municipal & Community Partners	Municipality-wide

Proposed Grant Changes / Additions Cont'd

Grant Name	Stream	Status	Eligibility: Who	Potential Locations (*Subject to CIP update)
Community Marketing	Community	Existing	Businesses / Municipal & Community Partners	Downtown
Commercial Building Interior Renovation	Community	New	Businesses / Property Owners	Downtown
Business Accessibility Adaptability	Industry	New	Businesses / Property Owners	Municipality-wide *
Product & Experience Development / Enhancement	Industry	New	Tourism businesses	Municipality-wide *
Destination Infrastructure & Active Transportation	Industry	New	Municipal & Community Partners	Municipality-wide *
Agri-Food Innovation	Industry	New	Farmers & Agri-food businesses	Municipality-wide *
Residential Improvement	Industry	New	Businesses / Property Owners of mixed-use buildings	Downtown & areas with Mixed-Use Zoning

Implementation Considerations

- If the enhanced STB program is endorsed, a variety of changes at the County and local level are required, including:
 - Potential updates to CIPs
 - Passing of related by-laws
 - Revisions to the Official Plan policy wording
 - Coordinated communication and marketing tactics
- Bruce County staff will offer a collaborative and cohesive environment with municipal staff for sharing resources, assessing challenges and timelines, and developing an implementation process

Conclusion

- The recommended Enhanced Spruce the Bruce program has been revised and clarified as noted, and directly reflects the local input received.

Thank you

Questions are welcomed

