



Staff Report to Council - for Information

Title: Small Business Enterprise Centre Program Extension

From: Claire Dodds, Commissioner of Community Development

Date: February 15, 2024

Report Purpose:

This report is for information.

Report Summary:

Bruce County has received a one-year extension to continue to operate the Small Business Enterprise Centre (SBEC) for the 2024/2025 operating year from the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade. The SBEC Program is comprised of the Core, Starter Company Plus and Summer Company programs. The SBEC Core program provides business resources, training and mentoring to entrepreneurs, businesses, and youth. The Starter Company and Summer Company programs provide micro-financing to individuals including adults and youth to start, expand, or purchase a small business.

Background:

Bruce County operates the SBEC Program, branded as Business to Bruce. This extension to the current agreement of the SBEC Program will start on April 1, 2024 and continue until March 31, 2025 and is detailed below:

SBEC Core

This program provides business advisory support and skills development to entrepreneurs and small businesses to improve the success rate and longevity of small businesses and build growth and prosperity in local communities. The services are focused but not limited to clients starting a business or expanding an existing business. This includes one on one support, as well as training sessions.

Starter Company Plus

This program provides training, mentoring and grants of up to \$5,000 of the funds to approved participants to start, expand or buy a small business. It aims to address local and/or regional economic development needs, and where appropriate focus on special industries and sectors.

Summer Company

This program provides training, mentoring and grants of up to \$3,000 to youth entrepreneurs who wish to start a full-time business over the summer. It aims to inspire

youth to choose entrepreneurship as a career option and equip them with tools to succeed.

In previous cycles, Bruce County received three-year agreements to operate the SBEC. The current agreement, starting during the 2022/2023 fiscal year, instead provided a two-year agreement with an option for an extension of one year. The County was notified in January 2024 that we were successful with obtaining the one-year extension to continue to deliver SBEC services to the period ending March 31, 2025.

Any further extension of the SBEC program will require a new agreement with the province. County staff will engage provincial staff in discussions about entering into a new agreement to extend the SBEC program beyond 2025 through the next fiscal year.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

The Corporation of the County of Bruce is receiving a total of \$196,373 from the province to administer the program from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025. The County will deliver SBEC Programs including SBEC Core, Starter Company Plus and Summer Company.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

None

Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:

Growth and Innovation - Promote responsible growth

Link to Departmental Plan Goals and Objectives, if any:

The SBEC supports the Business Development initiatives outlined by the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Report Author:

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Departmental Approval:

Jeff Loney, Economic Development Manager

Claire Dodds, Commissioner of Community Development

Approved for Submission:

Christine MacDonald, Chief Administrative Officer