

BRUCE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Annual Report 2023





#IWD2023
#EmbraceEquity

BUSINESS & BRUCE
Find Yourself in
Bruce County.

Women's Empowerment
Dedicated to
Ending Violence
Against Women

BUSINESS & BRUCE
The heart says
'grow'; the math
says 'here'.

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Introduction

The Bruce County Economic Development Annual Report 2023 provides a yearly update on the economic development programs and initiatives undertaken towards economic growth and prosperity across Bruce County.

Bruce County Economic Development aims to influence and support business growth, attract investment, foster community improvement, sustainably develop tourism, and secure a reliable and skilled workforce currently and into the future.

As the Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan 2022-2026 entered its second year in 2023, the team worked with community and regional partners and developed numerous action plans to execute a robust set of actions in the future. The report shows the overall illustration of the programs and initiatives undertaken with municipalities and community partners towards business development, investment attraction, community development, tourism development and workforce development.

Year at a Glance

BUSINESS **to** BRUCE



51

Training Seminars
and Webinars



340

Business
Consultations



2,057

Entrepreneurs
Trained



93

Businesses
Started, Expanded
or Sustained

8

Economic Development
Action Plans Formulated



45

Jobs Created

56

Bridges to Better
Business Attendees

111

Int. Women's Day
Event Attendees



Bruce County
Economic Development



281 Facebook Posts

477,992 Post Views



SPRUCE **&** BRUCE

76 Grants

awarded to businesses such
as The Silo Grill House



\$1 : \$3.67

Average Rate of Return

\$545,330

Leveraged Amount
(Bruce County and
partnered municipalities)

\$154,030

in Funding Awarded

explore the BRUCE



Facebook Reach: **1,132,877**
and Followers: **33,420**



Instagram Reach: **640,600**
and Followers: **15,851**

Over 7 million impressions
on ExploreTheBruce.com
from 4 Explore the Bruce
Visitor Seasonal Campaigns

1,914 Visitor Experience
Surveys completed

16,000 printed brochures
distributed to visitors



3 social media influencers

visited tourism attractions and **five municipalities**
featuring **25 businesses** and **10 downtowns**



16 signs updated

at Saugeen River Access Kiosks

Economic Development Websites	Pageviews	Users
BusinessToBruce.com	25,872	5,734
ExploreTheBruce.com	1,363,930	426,233
InvestInBruce.ca	4,662	1,755
JobsInBruce.ca (redirected to Connect2Jobs as of June 1, 2023)	3,196	856

1.39 million
pageviews across all
websites managed
by Economic
Development



Mission

To provide workforce, community, and business development services to ensure that the County's attraction value remains high, that it is positioned towards growth, and that opportunities exist for visitors, residents, investors, and businesses.

Values



Inspire

To create a culture of innovation and opportunities



Attract

To connect to a broad range of people who are potential prospects



Support

To collaborate and encourage success for all

Long-Term Goals

1. Growth of Tax Base / Tax Assessment

Increase the tax base by promoting Bruce County as a place to live and attract entrepreneurs to the area.

2. Growth of Population Base

Increase the population base by attracting visitors and entrepreneurs to the area and providing business opportunities.

3. Diversify the Economic Base

Foster, position, and promote entrepreneurial opportunities in Bruce County through cluster development around Bruce County's key sectors: tourism, energy, and agriculture.

4. Business Retention and Expansion

Support and foster local opportunities, efforts, and advancement by attracting new entrepreneurs and supporting business expansions.

Audiences

The County supports motivating people to visit, live, invest, and start or move a business here.



VISITORS

Bruce County inspires curiosity, nurtures exploration, and celebrates discovery. Visitors have an emotional bond with Bruce County that has the potential to last a lifetime.



ENTREPRENEURS

Bruce County entrepreneurs see tried and true as an invitation to try something new. Their tinkering leads to invention, their art becomes industry, and their sweat becomes equity. In Bruce County, energy, nature, and innovation all combine to create fertile ground to make what is dreamed possible.



INVESTORS

Bruce County is ripe with opportunities for those looking to invest. The Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan drives towards attracting new investment and pushes investors to become Bruce County Explorers.



RESIDENTS

Bruce County residents are the dreamers who take the roads less travelled and encourage their children to look under rocks, curious about what the path ahead looks like. The Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan 2022-2026 welcomes new residents who want to explore farm life in the morning, beach life in the afternoon, and bright, starry skies all night long; who want to turn alternatives into sustainable choices; and who collaborate with their neighbours to create welcoming, thriving communities.



The Macro Approach

The Bruce County Economic Development team have been actively involved in implementing the Macro Approach outlined in the Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan 2022-2026:

- ⚙️ The Joint Regional Working Group of economic development professionals (comprised of County and municipal EDOs) met regularly and discussed the challenges and synergies in working together and supporting each other.
- ⚙️ Numerous stakeholders were consulted in the development of eight action plans including local EDOs, BIAs, Chambers of Commerce, RTO7, Provincial and Federal agencies, CFDCs etc.
- ⚙️ Bruce County connected with relevant provincial and federal ministries and organizations to continue to raise the County's profile.
- ⚙️ Bruce County supported and partnered with various Chambers of Commerce and BIAs on after-hours events, the Saugeen Student Start-Up Student Program, Hawks' Nest, and training supports.

\$363,000

in external funding was leveraged to support Economic Development work in Bruce County.



- Bruce County piloted a new Job/Career Fair Support Program, one with the Municipality of Brockton and the other with the Township of Huron-Kinloss, which had 650 job seekers and 130 job seekers, respectively. The Municipality of Brockton had 24 employers, and the Township of Huron-Kinloss had 18 employers.
- Bruce County supported the development of the Saugeen Sparks Centre, a new youth centre in the region aimed at sparking interest in the skilled trades and helping youth explore various trade opportunities.
- Bruce County partnered with Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) for several digital advertising campaigns, including *Dare to Do Winter*, *Book and Look*, *Hidden Gems*, and *Fall Getaways*. These campaigns resulted in 9.6 million impressions, 180,090 clicks, and a 1.76% click-through rate.



Job Fairs were held in Brockton and Huron-Kinloss



Saugeen Sparks Centre



Successes





Agriculture Sector

Bruce County Economic Development is working with various partners on actions that sustain and grow the industry. Bruce County will be playing the following roles in supporting the agricultural sector:



PROMOTER

Promoting the opportunities and successes within the sector to sustain growth.



CONNECTOR

Connecting various partners, not only in agriculture but adjacent to promote the growth of the sector.



EDUCATOR

Helping decision makers understand the sector, its key opportunities, and challenges.



ENABLER

Supporting the agricultural businesses and operators in accessing the information and resources they need to succeed.



ORGANIZER

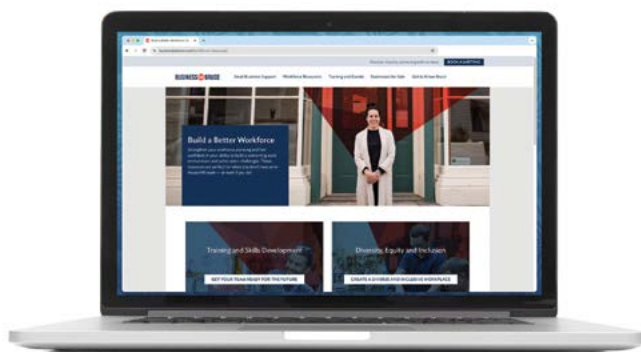
Bringing together various partners to implement projects.

- \$47,650 was provided to 28 organizations directly supporting agriculture as well as youth education, fall fairs and horticultural societies.
- Bruce County Economic Development team participated in the 2023 Farmers Week and connected with agricultural operators and support businesses.
- The team met quarterly with the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture and discussed ongoing needs and support opportunities. This led to better communication and development of various joint support projects.

Business Development and Entrepreneurship

Through Business to Bruce (Small Business Enterprise Centre Program) in partnership with the Province of Ontario, Bruce County supported entrepreneurs and existing businesses by providing business consultations, training, seminars, webinars, hosted various events and numerous outreach activities. All this led to supporting start-up businesses, retaining existing businesses, and job creation.

In addition to regular entrepreneurial business foundational and retention webinars, Business to Bruce delivered the 'Closing the Gap' and 'Adjusting to the Workforce Landscape' training series to support employers with resources on hiring and immigration pathways.



Upgrades were made to the Business to Bruce website at [BusinessToBruce.com](https://www.businesstobreuce.com). The 'Build a Better Workforce' pages were added to provide businesses with additional resources to create a welcoming work environment and solve talent challenges.

The Bruce County Economic Development Facebook page had 4,066 followers and promoted various programs and events. It highlighted past program and grant recipients and informed businesses, entrepreneurs, and students about the availability of various programs such as Spruce the Bruce, Summer Company, Spark, and Starter Company Plus. International Women's Day and Bridges to Better Business events, along with numerous in-person and virtual training sessions, were shared across all social media channels to encourage registration and highlight the benefits of attending events.



Bridges to Better Business

SummerCompany

The Summer Company Program, in partnership with the Province of Ontario, awarded five entrepreneurs with a \$3,000 grant each.

- **Benjamin Brewer** - Doggy Date (Point Clark)
- **Carter Snobelen** - Huron Hydroblast (Ripley)
- **Fox Turcotte** - Fox Tails (Port Elgin)
- **Sabawoon Shinwari** - Walkerton Auto Detailing (Walkerton)
- **Teghan Kauk** - Kauk Pressure Washing (Walkerton)

StarterCompany **PLUS**

The Starter Company Plus Program, in partnership with the Province of Ontario, provided eight startup businesses with a \$5,000 grant each, along with mentorship and training.

- **DBA Laura Lane, Courage Coach** - Ulukau International (Wiarton)
- **Ashley Simmons** - Sensational Skills Occupational Therapy (Kincardine)
- **Emily Montag** - Dr. Emily Montag Family Chiropractic Care (Teeswater)
- **Katelyn Poulson** - Pure Elegance Bridal (Port Elgin)
- **Julie Mackenzie** - The Bridge Learning Centre (Walkerton)
- **Eileen White** - Elementary Curriculum Digitizers Inc. (Wiarton)
- **Edison Vargas** - Mi Hermano Barbershop II Inc. (Southampton)
- **Kevin McKague** - Mill Pond Café and Eatery (Cargill)



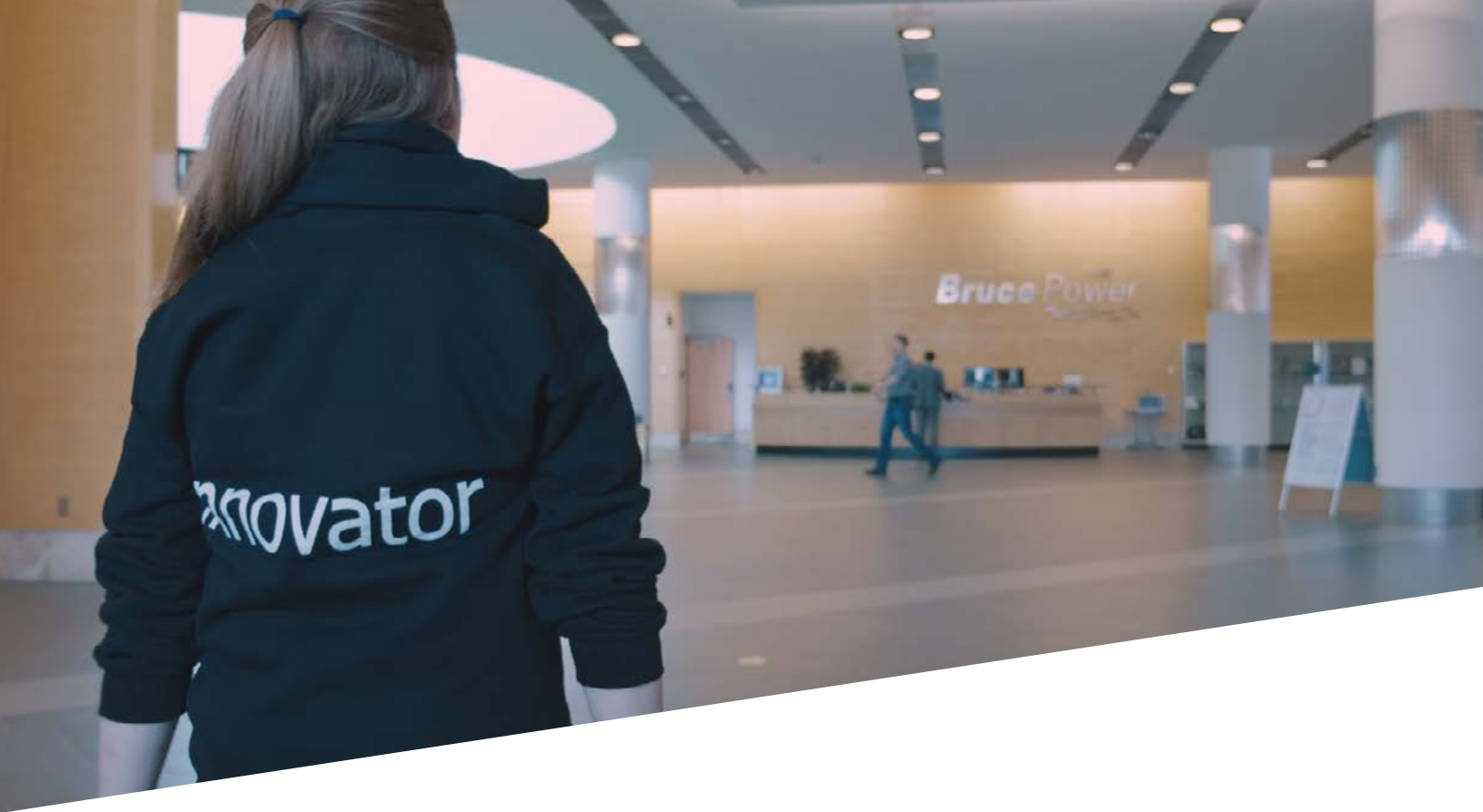
Little Blue House Coffee Co.



**TOURISM
INNOVATION
LAB**
BRUCE COUNTY

Bruce County celebrated the success of its fifth annual Bruce County Spark Grant and Mentorship Program in partnership with Tourism Innovation Lab. The goal of the program is to nurture new, innovative ideas that enhance current tourism offerings; create high-quality, low impact tourism experiences; address gaps in tourism products and service; motivate longer stays and repeat visits; and increase shoulder season visits and tourism spending. Each finalist received a \$3,000 grant along with a valuable three-month mentorship opportunity with a seasoned tourism innovator.

- **Lisa Mills & Janice Vilaca** - 173 High Street (Southampton)
- **Daniel Banko** - Little Blue House Coffee Co. (Tiverton)
- **Courtney Morrison** - Grassroots Farm Life (Lucknow)



Energy Sector

Bruce County Economic Development is working towards driving growth in the energy sector through attraction, retention, and expansion.

In September, a diverse group of more than 25 private and public organizations joined together in an initiative led by Hydrogen Optimized Inc., Grey County, Bruce County, and the City of Owen Sound to advance the creation of a Grey-Bruce Hydrogen Hub to explore ways to establish Grey-Bruce as a leader in clean hydrogen technology, production, and use. The group aims to develop a Hydrogen Strategy for the region in 2024.



Bruce County Economic Development continued to build networks and relationships with a focus on energy sector development (such as participation in various Hydrogen conferences, CNA, etc.)



88,066

views of the *Call Bruce County Home* videos on YouTube

Resident Attraction

Bruce County Economic Development is working towards developing actions that will influence potential residents to move to the area.

Bruce County Economic Development used Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube to promote a resident attraction campaign called *Call Bruce County Home*. It ran from November 22 to December 31 and resulted in 1,334 page views, 88,066 video views on YouTube and 2,509 click-throughs on Facebook.

In partnership with Newcomer Centre of Peel & Object Enterprises Limited, Bruce County implemented Phase 2 of the Virtual Familiarization & Connection Sessions for Local Employers and Newcomers. The goal was to connect employers and employment opportunities in Bruce County with job seekers from the Newcomer Centre of Peel facilitating connections leading to meaningful employment opportunities.



Investment Attraction

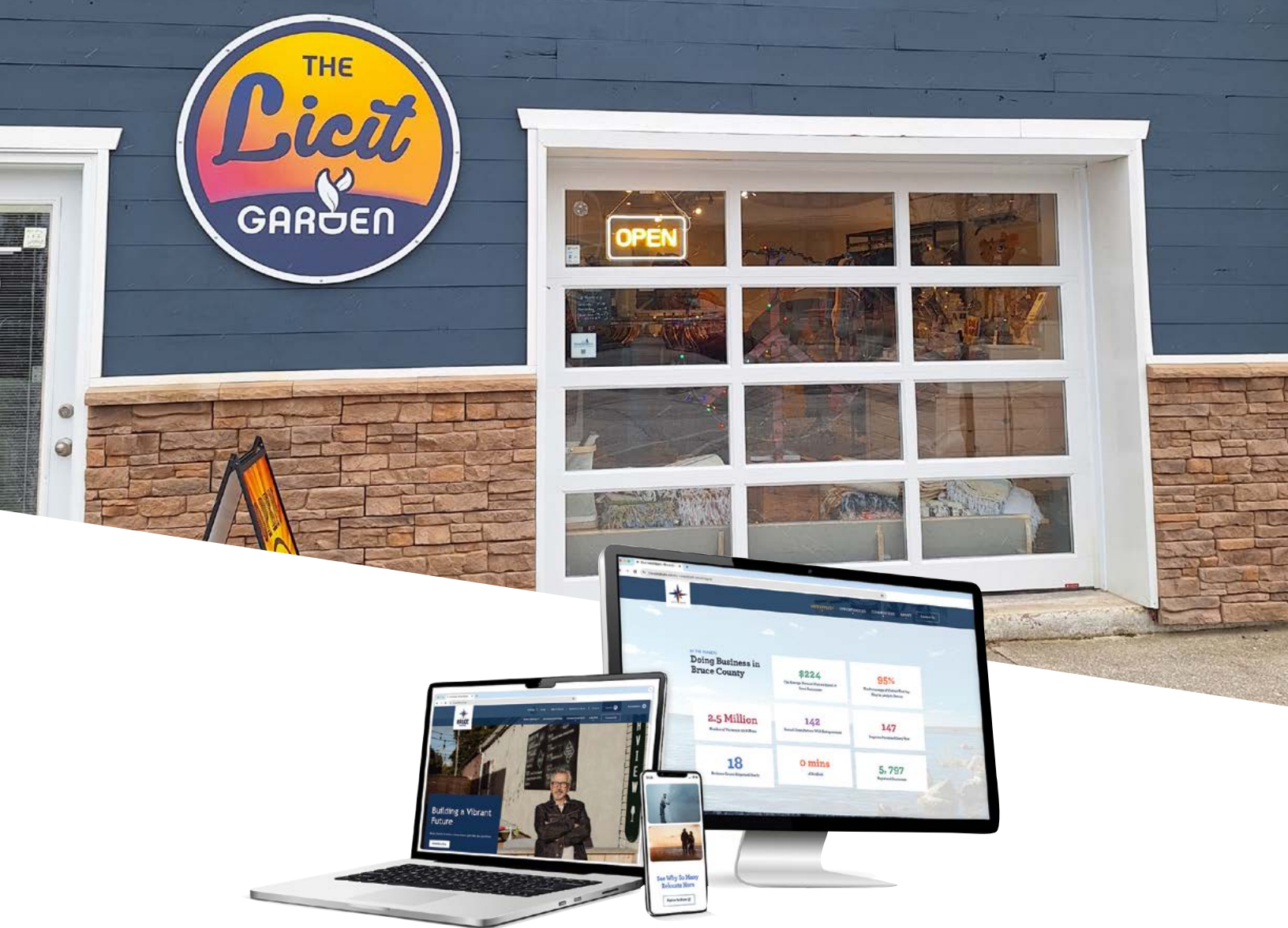
Bruce County Economic Development is working towards creating an investment attraction process and required framework to attract new investment to the area. This includes but is not limited to target setting, attracting and converting leads, converting projects, partnerships, and building capacity internally and externally.

In March, Bruce County attended the annual MIPIM event in Cannes, France with more than 26,000 attendees and over 2,400 companies primarily investors and developers. Across the five-day event, Bruce County's delegation focused heavily on generating qualified leads of those interested in investing

in the County. The delegation pitched a variety of different investment opportunities in all of Bruce County's key sectors: Agriculture, Tourism and Energy. Overall, Bruce County's participation raised the profile of the region on the international stage.

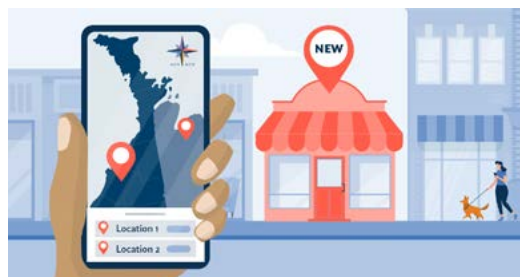
Bruce County partnered with three municipalities that have municipally owned lands for sale. A campaign was developed to market these lands to real estate agents in major urban centres in Ontario. This campaign resulted in 267,616 impressions and 1,018 individuals following through to the website for more information.





A new investment website — [InvestInBruce.ca](https://www.investinbruce.ca) — was launched in August, dedicated to fostering business attraction and investment in the region. The website highlights diverse industries, investment opportunities, and economic development supports available in Bruce County.

In November, the *Bring Your Small Business to Bruce County* Campaign was launched to attract small business investment to Bruce County via Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube. This campaign created awareness of Bruce County as a place to grow a small business and attracted potential entrepreneurs and investors (small and medium size businesses) to Bruce County. The campaign ran from November 22 to December 31.



Bring Your Small Business to Bruce County campaign:



915
Page views



2,627
Video views



1,306
Facebook
click-throughs

Tourism Destination

Bruce County Economic Development is working towards guiding the tourism related decision-making by defining the County's roles and setting priorities around the following four core pillars:

1 Mobilizing Data Collection and Analysis: Creating a knowledge hub by gathering and utilizing research and insights, tourism trends, and utilizing the data to make informed decisions and measure performance.

2 Strengthening Product and Community Development: Improving the visitor experience by strengthening 'unique to Bruce' experiences, supporting physical development and infrastructure improvements and providing value-added opportunities.

3 Enhancing Marketing and Promotions: Creating an outreach plan to attract new visitors to Bruce County, increase their length of stay and increase repeat visits. Developing a process to support communities and businesses to elevate their own marketing plans to reach their target audience.

4 Empowering Partners and Advancing Special Projects: These projects will need County resources to help lead, facilitate and/or support.

Several digital campaigns ran throughout the year to highlight travel etiquette, shoulder season promotion (spring, fall and winter), activities and attractions outside the peninsula:

January 4 to February 22:

The ***Dare to Do Winter*** campaign promoted winter activities in Bruce County.

May 10 to July 14:

The ***Book and Look*** campaign encouraged booking in advance on the Peninsula at popular destinations, such as the Grotto, Halfway Log Dump and Lion's Head Lookout.

July 15 to August 9:

Bruce County partnered with RTO7 on a ***Discover Hidden Gems*** campaign that encouraged visitors to get off the beaten path and explore Bruce County's hidden gems.

September 20 to November 17:

The ***Escape the Ordinary*** campaign was launched in partnership with RTO7 to promote Bruce County as a fall destination for visitors, encouraging overnight stays and spending throughout the County.



Tourism Sector

Bruce County Economic Development is working towards defining Bruce County’s role in supporting tourism operators/businesses. Bruce County supports tourism businesses by helping businesses grow, building vibrant communities and attractive downtowns, and promoting Bruce County’s most authentic experiences and tourism attractions.

Through the Tourism Sector Plan, Bruce County Economic Development will focus on actions that sustain and grow the industry and ultimately meet Bruce County’s overall goals:



- Foster stakeholder relationships and provide ‘hands-on’ business support.
- Product development (clustering and matchmaking).
- Community development.
- Increase awareness of Bruce County’s unique tourism offerings, tourism businesses and improve the coordination and impact of tourism marketing efforts.

Bruce County launched a Visitor Survey in 2023. Two prize packs were highlighted on Bruce County’s Explore the Bruce channels. A total of 1,914 surveys were completed.

Explore the Bruce social media content execution built awareness and provided trip inspiration and aided with trip planning. Two digital creator partnerships occurred in 2023 resulted in an increase of 1,103 followers on the Explore the Bruce Instagram channel.



Explore the Bruce followers:

 **33,420**
on Facebook

 **15,851**
on Instagram

 **12,299**
on X (formerly Twitter)



Workforce Development and Attraction

Bruce County Economic Development is working towards supporting Bruce County employers by creating adaptable practices for workforce needs.

A notable success is the partnership with the Township of Huron-Kinloss for the **Women in Construction program** which facilitated two cohorts of 10 women to the future labour force. This program offered a path for women facing barriers to entry into the construction industry. The program not only benefitted individuals but also contributed to the industry's overall growth and contributed to the workforce supporting the current housing deficit.

The Women in Construction program facilitated two cohorts of ten women.

Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership (GBLIP)

Bruce County continued its efforts in supporting Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership:

- During the welcoming week in September, Bruce County team participated in podcast series — ***How Being Welcoming Benefits Economic Development of the Region and SBEC Services.***
- GBLIP, in partnership with M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre, provided an opportunity for GBLIP Partnership council members to attend free training on ***Giiwe Cultural Mindfulness*** to provide the learner with a fundamental understanding of spirituality of the First Nations People in Ontario.
- The ***Train the Trainer Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training*** was delivered to Municipal front line staff at the Walkerton Clean Water Centre.
- Bruce County partnered on the ***Hindu Cultural Open House*** event in Kincardine, organized by the Belong sub-committee of GBLIP, which attracted more than 250 attendees.
- Bruce County supported the ***Cultural Dandiya*** event in Walkerton, which was attended by more than 100 people. The event promoted unity through cultural exchange.



One World Festival in Owen Sound



Festive Feast at Georgian College



Other Programs and Initiatives

Spruce the Bruce Program

The Spruce the Bruce Program is a community development initiative that aims to promote lasting community revitalization and development. Grants are available to businesses, municipalities, and community groups to help communities thrive as destinations. The program supports communities in the following ways:

Process Improvements

Including each of the eight communities in the grant approval process has streamlined the program, improving efficiency for applicants. This allows them to focus on their projects, eliminate red tape, and quickly collect their grant funding.

Community Project Support

In June, 11 businesses in downtown Kincardine were vandalized, with front windows broken into. Together with the Municipality of Kincardine, the 11 businesses were eligible for a one-time Spruce the Bruce grant to assist with window replacements.

Community Improvement Plan Support

Economic Development staff supported three municipalities (Municipality of South Bruce, Municipality of Brockton and The Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula) in updating their Community Improvement Plan. As a result, businesses in these communities became eligible for the additional grants.

Collaborative Marketing

The collaboration between the County and the municipalities has proven to get the message out to the right people, thus increasing engagement amongst the applicants.

Community Brand/Façade Guidelines

The Communities of Tara and Chesley in the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie have completed their Community Brand and Façade Guidelines.



Regional Support Economic Development Pilot

The Regional Support Economic Development Pilot Project drove an **estimated savings of \$238,000** in potential expenditures for local municipalities. This pilot focused on providing coordination and assistance on key economic projects as identified by local municipalities across Bruce County.

The **Municipality of Arran-Elderslie** redeveloped the Community Improvement Plan, completed a community-wide business census, supported the development of branding and design guidelines for the communities of Tara and Chesley and created an actionable work plan for the previously developed economic development strategic plan.

The **Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula** developed a framework for a new economic development strategic plan, developed a downtown revitalization plan for Tobermory and Lion's Head and redeveloped a community wide Community Improvement Plan.

Additional work completed included support on Community Improvement Plan redevelopment for the **Municipality of South Bruce** and lead generation list development for the **Town of Saugeen Shores**.

Looking Forward to 2024

2024 will be a year of executing the short-term actions within numerous plans and frameworks that the Bruce County Economic Development team have developed in 2023.

- Providing business development and entrepreneurship supports and training opportunities for business start-ups and expansions.
- Supporting existing businesses in all sectors and in all stages through the Small Business Enterprise Centre Program in partnership with the Province of Ontario.
- Launching the Business Retention and Expansion Program.
- Identifying sub-sectors within Agriculture, Energy and Tourism to market and promote for investment attraction.
- Training various stakeholders around Foreign Direct Investment and Investment Attraction.
- Facilitating a Job/Career Fair Support Program in partnership with municipalities.
- Executing various marketing campaigns targeting Pre-retirement, Newcomers and Immigrants, Millennials to fill work opportunities.
- Executing a marketing campaign, *Call Bruce County Home*, targeting seasonal residents who are located outside of borderlines.
- Developing targeted webpages focused on priority investment in Energy on the *Invest in Bruce* website.
- Launching Explore the Bruce Rewards to provide visitors with local tips on the best places to discover, thereby encouraging year-round visitation.
- Continuing to support businesses and communities via Community Development Program, Spruce the Bruce.



Conclusion

2023 was a successful year for the Bruce County Economic Development team. Many new projects and initiatives were undertaken in collaboration with various partners that yielded greater results, leading to economic growth and prosperity.

Economic success requires continuous planning, effort, dedication, and a coordinated approach from several partners and stakeholders. Collaboration through the Macro Approach is leading every economic development initiative, setting the foundation to attract visitors, residents, investors, and entrepreneurs to Bruce County.

The Bruce County Economic Development team is looking forward to 2024 with a vision to execute the actions outlined in key sectors' plans, frameworks around investment attraction, resident attraction and tourism destination along with business development and workforce development and attraction. As the County continues to embark on the journey towards meeting the goals of the Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan 2022-2026, the Bruce County Economic Development team looks forward to building upon the progress made and achieving economic growth and prosperity now and in the future.



BRUCE
county

Be an explorer.