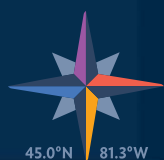


BRUCE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Annual Report 2024



BRUCE
county





The
Daily
Grind

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THE AI TRIFECTA

1

Time

Rebellion
Automation
Accuracy

2

Patterns

Complexity
Creative Possibilities

3

Generating

Imagining
Potential

Introduction

The Bruce County Economic Development Annual Report 2024 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 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 third year in 2024, the team worked with community and regional partners to complete projects to support growth. The report presents an overview of the programs and initiatives undertaken with municipalities and community partners towards business development, investment attraction, resident attraction, community development, tourism development and workforce development.

2024 at a Glance

BUSINESS to BRUCE



48

Training Seminars
and Webinars



315

Business
Consultations



2,558

Entrepreneurs
Trained



143

Businesses
Started, Expanded
or Sustained



363

Cruise and Connect
Attendees Aboard
the ChiCheemaun



63

Jobs Created



70

Bridges to Better
Business Attendees



102

Int. Women's Day
Event Attendees

6 job fairs
supported



985

job seekers

164

employers



Bruce County
Economic Development

FREE TRAINING

Branding and Storytelling

Learn how to
make your brand
stand out to
connect with your
customers.



377 Facebook Posts
2,375,896 Post Views



SPRUCE & BRUCE

66 Grants

awarded to businesses

\$526,040

amount of private
investment in
improvements

\$1 : \$3.20

average rate of return

\$173,066

in funding awarded





Facebook Reach: **1,922,134**
and Followers: **33,785**



Instagram Reach: **179,275**
and Followers: **23,910**

Over 30 million impressions
on Explore the Bruce
rewards and seasonal
marketing campaigns.

\$378,842

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

1,703 Visitor Experience
Surveys completed.

14,773 printed brochures
distributed to visitors.



3 Awards Won

- 2 awards from the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association
- Social Media / App award for the *Explore the Bruce Rewards App* from the Economic Developers Association of Canada



200+ events attended by the
Bruce County Economic Development team

Economic Development Websites	Pageviews	Users
BusinessToBruce.com	18,403	7,765
ExploreTheBruce.com	1,543,929	642,097
InvestInBruce.ca	6,232	3,260
Living.BruceCounty.on.ca	28,243	22,858

**1,596,807
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 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 developed joint projects. Municipal staff worked together to overcome challenges facing all of us.
- ⚙️ The County created an Economic Development Orientation program that supported local municipal economic development staff in getting established in the region. The program had three participants in 2024.
- ⚙️ Bruce County partnered with Destination Ontario for a marketing campaign focused on visiting during shoulder seasons, it was the most successful campaign Destination Ontario has run in the last three years.
- ⚙️ Economic Development worked with a diverse group of partners, including Investment Agencies, local business associations and industry groups, to raise the profile of the entire area.

Successes





Agriculture Sector

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



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 2024 Farmers Week and connected with agricultural operators and support businesses.
- The team met bimonthly 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.
- In 2024, in partnership with Bruce County Federation of Agriculture and Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the County installed share the road signage at the entrance to the County. This project not only supported safety on our roads but supports the work our agriculture sector is doing.

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.

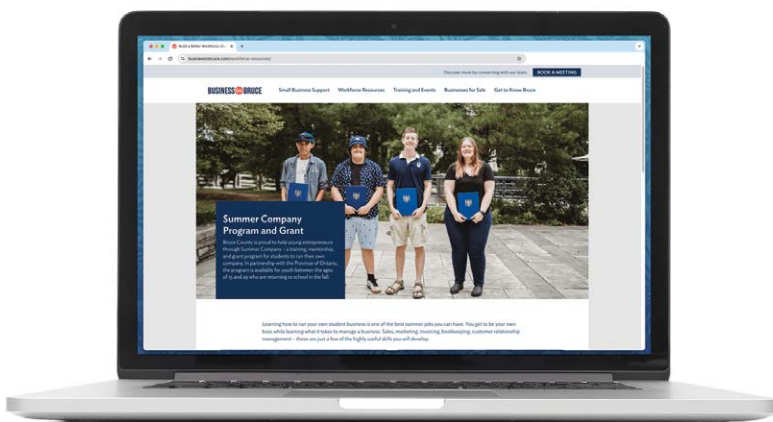
Upgrades were made to the Business to Bruce website at [BusinessToBruce.com](https://www.businesstobreuce.com) for a more seamless experience! With dedicated webpages for each grant, program, and event, plus an updated library of free training materials featuring upcoming sessions and past recordings, it is a one stop shop for business supports.



Bridges to Better Business



The Bruce County Economic Development Facebook page had 4,533 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.





Left to right: Daxton Brunet - Dax's Cleaning Services, Vikki Ernest - Horsin' Around Honey Co., and Laura Hackett - Revive and Heel

SummerCompany

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

- **Abetti Botterell** - Saugeen Sizzle and Shine (Southampton)
- **Charles Nuhn** - EditorTCRD (Walkerton)
- **Daxton Brunet** - Dax's Cleaning Services (Warton)
- **Jack Westbury** - Jackstream Mobil Washing (Southampton)
- **Kasen Beitz** - Clean N Cruise Detailing (Chesley)
- **Lincoln Bui** - Kincardine Student Lawn Care (Kincardine)
- **Vikki Ernest** - Horsin' Around Honey Co. (Chesley)

StarterCompany **PLUS**

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

- **Laura Hackett** - Revive and Heel (Lucknow)
- **Tori Hamilton** - Attuned Therapy + Wellness (Kincardine)
- **Will Haney** - Northern Sustainable Farms (Tiverton)
- **Robert Blank** - Artefact Landscapes (Southampton)
- **Nick Veenstra** - Saugeen Valley Media (Paisley)
- **Cassidy Radic** - The WOMB (Walkerton)
- **Tyler Knechtel** - Junction 4 & 19 (Walkerton)



- **Rebecca Walsh** - September Artisan Market (Sauble Beach)
- **Evan Walker Ertl** - Borosilicate Flame Working (Saugeen First Nation)
- **Lisa Holland** - Kayakomat, Lake Huron Edition (Kincardine)

Bruce County celebrated the success of its sixth 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 three-month mentorship opportunity with a seasoned tourism innovator.

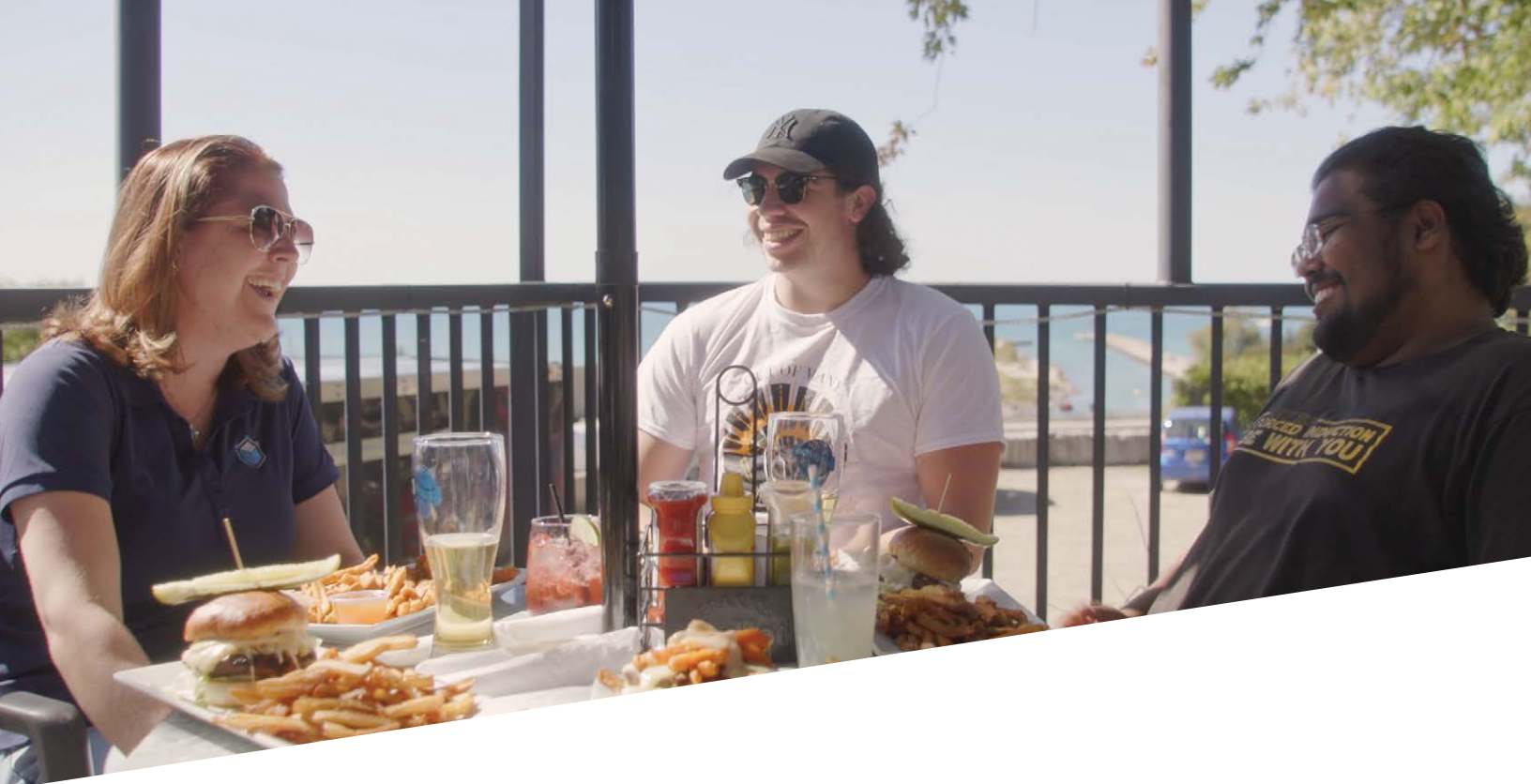


Energy Sector

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

Bruce County Economic Development received a Rural Economic Development grant from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Agribusiness/Rural Affairs to support the development of the Energy Transition Cluster which will commence in early 2025. The team continued to build networks and relationships with a focus on energy sector development by participating in various conferences, Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging, Canadian Nuclear Association, Hydrogen Business Council, etc.

In 2024, Economic Development had a dedicated focus on supporting the growth of the Medical Isotope Supply Chain in the area. In addition to participating in the Southwestern Ontario Isotope Council, the County was a bronze sponsor of the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging. During attendance at the Canadian Radiotheranostics Leaders Summit, the economic development team had the opportunity to connect with the Canadian Supply Chain and talk about the opportunities here in Bruce County.



199 new newsletter subscribers



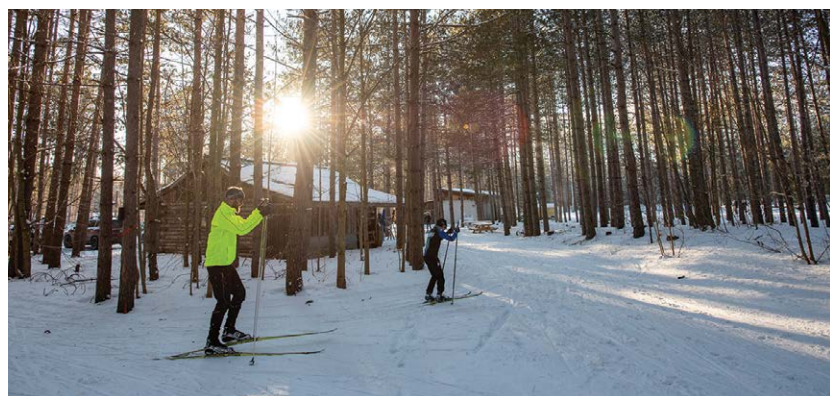
Resident Attraction

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

The Resident Attraction Campaign called *Call Bruce County Home* ran from July 11 to October 3 and resulted in 1,299,783 impressions and 25,321 clicks.

The *Live Here* Campaign ran from November 6 to December 22 and resulted in 2,011,592 impressions and 9,231 clicks.

The *Work Here* Campaign ran from November 6 to December 22 and resulted in 1,805,394 impressions and 11,479 clicks.



Investment Attraction

Bruce County Economic Development is working towards implementing the actions outlined in the investment attraction 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.

The investment attraction website, InvestInBruce.ca, is dedicated to fostering business attraction and investment in the region and was marketed to showcase diverse industries, investment opportunities, and economic development supports available in Bruce County.

In May, a familiarization tour with Invest Ontario was held, showcasing four investment ready properties to their site selection team.

In September, the County partnered with the University of Waterloo and trained economic development staff, local municipal economic development officers and local municipal council members on Investment Attraction, Readiness, and Foreign Direct Investment. The goal of this training was to build the capacity of the team at the County, local municipal staff involved in economic development and local elected officials on the generalities of investment attraction, as well as the specifics around Bruce County's new investment attraction framework. This training had over 30 participants.

The Bruce County Economic Development team worked with local municipalities to identify the priority areas for investment.



For the first time, Bruce County worked on **Investment Attraction related collateral** and designed 5 booklets focusing on general Bruce County, Small Business related, Energy Transition, Agri-food processing, Medical Isotopes and Large-Scale Tourism. These marketing materials both print and digital will be used at various points and locations to showcase Bruce County's sectoral strengths.

Bruce County joined the Ontario Food Cluster, a partnership of 15 municipal governments or government groups alongside the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness and Agri-Food Canada. It will provide Bruce County with access to high-quality food processing leads, that would be costly to generate independently.



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.



The influencer partnerships on Instagram resulted in 240,469 total views and 157,745 accounts reached.



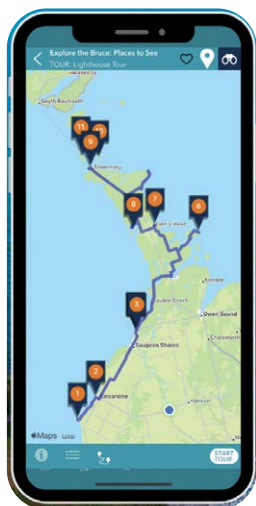
Several digital campaigns ran throughout the year to highlight travel etiquette, shoulder season promotion (spring, fall and winter), activities and attractions.

Campaign (digital ads or influencer)	Partner	Timing	Engagement
Escape, Explore and More	RT07	Jan 15-Mar 10	30,337
Spring into Endless Adventure	RT07	May 10-Jun 24	8,189
Discover Summer Wonders	RT07	Jun 27-Sep 20	23,571
Why Hiking in Bruce County is the Best	RT07	Sep 21-Nov 30	14,598
Explore the Bruce Rewards (app)	RT07	Jun 26-Oct 26	43,210
Winter Influencer	RT07	January	1,223
Summer Influencers (x2)	RT07	June-July	4,771
Fall Influencers (x4)	RT07	Sept-Nov	5,086
Why Boat Tours and Scuba Diving on the Bruce Peninsula is the Best	Destination Ontario	Aug 26-Sep 22	258,786

Tourism Sector

Bruce County Economic Development is working towards supporting tourism 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.

In February, the team launched the **Explore the Bruce Rewards App** to enhance visitor experiences in Bruce County by incentivizing exploration of destinations, attractions, and businesses. The app encourages year-round visitation, showcases tourism assets, increases visitor spending and length of stay, disperses visitors to less-trafficked areas, and promotes Bruce County as a top tourism destination. Less than a year after launching the Explore the Bruce Rewards App, Bruce County won the Economic Developers Association of Canada (EDAC) award under the category for *Social Media / App*.



Explore the Bruce Rewards App:



6,979
views



11,610
points collected at



251 
businesses, attractions
and events



Brochure Swap

The annual Tourism Brochure Swap is a collaborative networking event that brings together tourism-related businesses, organizations, and municipal partners to exchange tourism promotional materials like brochures and flyers. It was attended by over 140 participants. The event aims to foster collaboration and strengthen relationships among local businesses in Bruce and Grey Counties, providing a vibrant platform for information exchange.

This year, the Brochure Swap partnered with Saugeen First Nation #29 for the first time to host the event at the James Mason Memorial Culture & Recreation Centre in Southampton. This collaboration enriched the experience, allowing for the sharing of brochures from each other's tailgates, as well as a captivating Pow Wow Regalia Fashion Show, Ladies Drumming Group and blessing from an Elder.



Workforce Development and Attraction

Bruce County Economic Development is working towards supporting Bruce County employers for workforce development and attraction needs.

In partnership with Newcomer Centre of Peel, Bruce County Economic Development welcomed a group of professionals from the Newcomer Centre of Peel for a familiarization tour designed to showcase local workforce opportunities on September 17. The event aimed to help participants assess whether relocating to Bruce County could be their next step, with a focus on the region's growing job market, strong sense of community, and exceptional work-life balance.

45 participants visited Walkerton, Paisley, Saugeen Shores, Bruce Power, and Kincardine, where they met with elected officials, CAOs, municipal colleagues, businesses, and community organization members.



The tour concluded with the Kincardine's Welcoming Week event, a celebration that invites community members to come together and reaffirm their commitment to inclusivity. Attendees represented a range of industries, such as agriculture, healthcare, engineering, customer service, and general labour. The diverse group, with backgrounds including Ukrainian, South Asian, and Middle Eastern, were drawn to Bruce County's expanding job opportunities, especially in sectors like agriculture, energy, and tourism.



Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership (GBLIP)

The GBLIP was successful in applying for funding from Immigration Refugee Citizenship Canada to extend programming for another three years. Leadership of the initiative will also transition from Grey County over to Bruce County starting in April 2025.

GBLIP's commitment to fostering inclusivity, supporting newcomers, and promoting diversity across the region was apparent in their 2024 initiatives:

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **Welcome Packages:** 12 municipalities in Grey and Bruce Counties added Welcome Packages to their websites.
- **Welcoming Week (September 13–22):** Events included a quiz, colouring contest, and promotional video, plus Kincardine's *Welcome Meet & Greet* and other partner event promotions.
- **Diversity Celebrations:** Supported the Grey Bruce One World Festival and Multiculturalism Day at Grey Roots.

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

- **#ImmigrantsWork Project:** GBLIP collaborated with World Education Services to create a program to encourage and support employers to consider hiring newcomers. This initiative is extended to June 2025, offering training modules for employers and developing an Employer Navigator tool.
- **Diversity & Belongingness Conference:** Held September 25 in Owen Sound with over 130 attendees from diverse sectors, the conference featured workshops on cultural awareness, a panel discussion with local business leaders, and powerful stories from newcomers.

Partners included Bluewater District School Board, Owen Sound Police Services, Sanatan Centre, Welcoming Communities Grey Bruce, and YMCA of Owen Sound Grey Bruce.

- **Newcomer Readiness Project** in collaboration with Western Ontario Warden Caucus: 12 municipalities completed a self-assessment tool to evaluate their resources for supporting newcomers, with data now under analysis.

EDI SUPPORT

- **Inclusive Community Training:** Delivered *Conversations for a More Inclusive and Welcoming Community* sessions to 66 participants.
- **Brightshores Health System:** Contributed to stakeholder engagement for developing a new EDI framework.
- **PLAY Grey Bruce:** Supported integrating EDI into a strategic plan framework.
- **Early Years Planning Committee IDEA Working Group:** Helped embed EDI into its terms of reference.



Clockwise: Paisley Mill - Accessibility Adaptability Grant, Cindy Lou's - Awning Grant, Casero Taco Bus - Patio Installation Grant

Other Programs and Initiatives

Spruce the Bruce Program

The Spruce the Bruce Community Development Program aims to build vibrant communities by supporting businesses, property owners, municipalities and community partners to revitalize properties, create inclusive spaces and make lasting improvements that instill pride in residents and attract visitors to the downtown. In 2024, the program supported Bruce County communities through:

Program Recognition

During the annual Ontario Business Improvement Area (OBIAA) 'Awards of Excellence' Gala, Bruce County, in partnership with the Municipality of Kincardine and the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie, received two awards in recognition of Spruce the Bruce's leadership role in strengthening and promoting downtown physical improvements and revitalization.

Community Project Support

Bruce County supported the Municipality of Kincardine by managing \$30,000 in one-time grant funding to support businesses. A total of 11 projects were approved, resulting in \$25,310 in grant funding to support downtown businesses in Kincardine.

Community Improvement Plans

Economic Development staff supported four municipalities (Township of Huron-Kinloss, Municipality of Kincardine, Town of Saugeen Shores and Town of South Bruce Peninsula) in updating their Community Improvement Plan. As a result, businesses in these communities became eligible for four additional grants.

Community Brand/Façade Guidelines

The communities of Formosa, Mildmay and Teeswater in the Municipality of South Bruce, completed their community brand and façade guidelines. The community of Tiverton in the Municipality of Kincardine completed their community brand and façade guidelines. As a result, businesses in Tiverton and Formosa became eligible for Spruce the Bruce grants.



Looking Forward to 2025

2025 will be another year of exciting and impactful projects that aim to move the Economic Development Strategic Plan forward.

- Providing business development and entrepreneurship supports to new and existing businesses in all sectors and in all stages through the Small Business Enterprise Centre Program in partnership with the Province of Ontario.
- Continuing the Business Retention and Expansion Program with local municipalities.
- Working with an Investment Attraction Lead Agency to attract potential investments to the County.
- Partnering with Agriculture organizations to bring more information and training to the local agriculture sector.
- Developing services to support innovation and resiliency in Bruce County's Agriculture Sector.
- Partnering with the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture and the Nuclear Innovation Institute to develop a white paper on the opportunities related to energy production and use in the agriculture sector.
- Launching the Clean Energy Transition Cluster initiative that will empower businesses to lead in the transition to net-zero while opening doors to new opportunities.
- Supporting the development of an industry-led Hydrogen Hub for local hydrogen initiatives.
- Expanding the Municipal Job Fair program to include a workforce promotion component for municipalities that do not host job fairs.
- Positioning Bruce County as a Destination Management Organization (DMO) by fostering partnerships, enhancing visitor experiences, and showcasing the County's unique offerings to drive sustainable tourism growth.
- Launching a micro-credential program on dog-friendly tourism to attract and accommodate pet-friendly travelers, enhancing inclusivity in the visitor experience.
- Supporting agri-tourism operators, accommodators and businesses looking to improve accessibility for visitors, through the Spruce the Bruce Community Development Program.
- Launching an Explore the Bruce online merchandise shop to boost brand visibility, recognition, and loyalty while engaging with visitors in new and exciting ways.

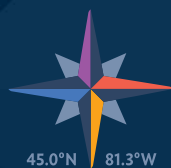


Conclusion

2024 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 2025 with a vision to continue 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.



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Be an explorer.