



# Staff Report to Council - for Information

**Title:** Starter Company Plus Program Update - 2025

**From:** Claire Dodds, Commissioner of Community Development

**Date:** May 1, 2025

**Report Number:** CDO-2025-009

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## Report Purpose:

This report is for information.

## Report Summary:

The 2024-25 Starter Company Plus program in Bruce County supported 46 aspiring entrepreneurs with training, mentorship, and business planning support, resulting in 22 completed applications and the awarding of ten \$5,000 grants.

## Background/Analysis:

The Starter Company Plus program, in partnership with the Province of Ontario, provides local businesses the opportunity to access the resources that they need to get started or expand their business in Bruce County. The program provides one-on-one guidance, business planning support, mentorship and training led by industry professionals experience the world of entrepreneurship. Participants who complete the program are eligible for one of the ten available \$5,000 grants.

The 2024-25 program received 46 applications, with all applicants given the opportunity to participate in the training and business planning support. From this group, 22 applicants submitted completed applications at the end of the program which included a comprehensive business plan and a recorded business pitch.

Participants were scored on participation, completed business plans and their business pitch to determine which companies would be provided with the \$5,000 grant. Economic development staff from each local municipality were involved in scoring businesses from their community.

An aftercare plan for both successful and unsuccessful applicants was developed that ensures that each entrepreneur continues to receive mentorship and ongoing training to support them throughout their first year of operations.

The following 10 applicants were awarded a Starter Company Plus program grant:

**1. Andrew Dzenis: Grey Bruce Craft & Trade, Hepworth**

Grey Bruce Craft & Trade specializes in high-quality home improvements, delivery expert craftsmanship and reliable service.

**2. Bryan Vanderspek: Spek Electric, Walkerton**

Spec Electric provides expert residential electrical services, ensuring safe, reliable, and efficient solutions for homes of all sizes.

**3. Joshua Ritchie: Ritchie's Pizzeria, Saugeen First Nation**

Ritchie's Pizzeria serves hand-tossed pizzas made with high-quality ingredients, with a focus on providing quick and customer focused service.

**4. Kaitlyn Jackson: Blissful Bites, Kincardine**

Blissful Bites is a small-batch home bakery specializing in cakes, cookies, and pastries made with high-quality ingredients sold online at local events and markets.

**5. Kristine Windle: Bruce Grey Print House, Walkerton**

Bruce Grey Print House is a full-service print shop offering high-quality printing, design, and branding solutions for residents and businesses.

**6. Laila Huber: Greenstreet Leather, Port Elgin**

Greenstreet Leather handcrafts premium leather bags, belts, and accessories while offering hands-on workshops where individuals and organizations can create their own custom pieces.

**7. Lorilee Bowman: SoupHer Girl, Chesley**

SoupHer Girl crafts delicious, homemade, ready-to enjoy soups made with fresh, nutritious ingredients.

**8. Michael Holder: Smith Enniskillen Company Limited, Kincardine**

Smith Enniskillen has developed a patented food product formulated with carefully selected ingredients to support mental wellness and overall well-being.

**9. Nicole Egan: The Secret Bar (& Pop-Up Event Company), Wiarton**

The Secret Bar (& Pop-Up Event Company) is a mobile, pop-up bar and event company serving handcrafted cocktails.

**10. Robert Anderson: Braeburn Maple, Lion's Head**

Braeburn Maple produces high-quality, pure maple syrup using sustainable practices.

Since 2017, a total of 72 entrepreneurs have received grants through this program, with many others benefiting from training and support.

**Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:**

Grants and program delivery funds for this program are provided by the Province of Ontario through the Small Business Enterprise Centre program.

The number of grants increased from 8 to 10 for the 2024-25 program intake with 10 more committed for 2025-26.

**Interdepartmental Consultation:**

No additional departments were consulted.

**Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:**

Growth and Innovation - Promote responsible growth

**Link to Departmental Plan Goals and Objectives, if any:**

This project supports the implementation of the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

**Report Author:**

Manpreet Kaur Sangha, Economic Development Officer

**Departmental Approval:**

Jeffrey Loney, Economic Development Manager

**Approved for Submission:**

Claire Dodds, Commissioner of Community Development

**Attachments:**

None