



Economic Development Staff Report

Report Number: A09-2023
Report Title: Transfer Payment Agreement for Rural Economic Development (RED) Program
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Reviewed By: David Brenneman, CAO
Final Review: Senior Management Team

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report A09-2023 respecting the Transfer Payment Agreement for Rural Economic Development (RED) Program, authorize the Mayor and Clerk to enter into an agreement with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) for funding under the RED program, as attached to this report.

Background:

Last February, Staff applied for a grant through the OMAFRA RED program. With these funds, the Township of Woolwich will be able to hire a coordinator in 2025 to support the implementation of the outcomes of the Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) report and action plan.

From 2022 - 2023, Woolwich completed a BR+E survey and developed a report with action items. The BR+E is a structured action-oriented, community-based approach to business and economic development, which will support businesses across all ten communities within the Township, including businesses across all sections of the value chain (suppliers, producers, makers, sellers, etc.).

A BR+E Implementation Coordinator will execute priority projects that address the BR+E's findings, and keep the program on track and on schedule, which will help the Township of Woolwich build and improve relationships with the local business community by executing quick and short-term wins related to economic recovery.

Comments:

The municipality's Economic Development Division will lead the project and hire a BR+E Implementation Coordinator to execute the Action Plan and reach related milestones.

The BR+E plan also collaborates with several organizations within our local and surrounding community to support the implementation of some of the action items, such as:

Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures will provide guidance and mentorship from previous BR+E experience as well as provide business support and consultation services as part of the project.

Both the Downtown Elmira and St. Jacobs Business Improvement Areas will liaise with their business networks to increase the reach and effectiveness of the overall project. They will support business communication of opportunities for training and funding.

Explore Waterloo Region will support the project to further reach the local tourism industry and will support the execution of strategic initiatives to address pertinent business issues and opportunities.

The Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin will support ongoing workforce data sharing and industry knowledge.

The Small Business Centre will support local business training and networking opportunities.

The above partners will strengthen the overall project effectiveness, and this will result in a collaborative, implementation plan.

The Woolwich BR+E Implementation project will result in several short-term outcomes including building stronger relationships with existing businesses and strengthening relationships between organizations, it will let the business community know they are valued and show that the Township is implementing projects to address the findings of the BR+E survey. These short-term impacts will lead to increased business competitiveness which will lead to greater business investment and job creation.

The Woolwich BR+E Implementation project will also result in several long-term outcomes including increased competitiveness of existing businesses, enabling business development resulting in job creation, and an overall enhanced environment for business growth in the area. Additionally, many Woolwich businesses are deep-rooted family enterprises, and this project will result in a greater relationship and strengthened trust with the municipality for years to come.

Interdepartmental Impacts:

None.

Financial Impacts:

The Township is responsible for 50% of expenditures (\$22,500) of the total \$45,000. These applicable expenditures and revenues will be included in the 2025 budget.

Strategic Plan Impacts:

This report and initiative support the Planning for Growth and Exploring Economic Development Opportunities within the Strategic Plan because it will enable us to hire a BR&E Implementation Coordinator, who can help facilitate and ensure the Economic Development Strategic Plan goals are met.

Conclusion:

Staff recommends that the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to enter into an agreement with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) for funding under the Rural Economic Development (RED) program.

Attachments:

1. Transfer Payment Agreement for RED program
2. Woolwich BR+E Report – Action Plan