

Council Report

Report Number: ED2021-007

Meeting Date: January 28, 2021

Title: Rural Economic Development Program Application Request

Description: Request to apply for the Ontario Rural Economic Development Program for a business and workforce attraction marketing project

Author and Title: Rebecca Mustard, Manager of Economic Development

Recommendation(s):

That Report ED2021-007, **Rural Economic Development Program Application Request**, be received;

That the project Business and Workforce Attraction be approved for an application to the Ontario Rural Economic Development Program with a total project cost of up to \$100,000 with the City's 50% contribution coming from the Economic Development operating 2021 and 2022 operating budgets; and

That the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute any documents and agreements required by the approval of this application.

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

The Ontario Rural Economic Development program is a cost-share fund to support strong rural communities in Ontario. In Kawartha Lakes, the fund has been used to support a number of projects including downtown revitalization initiatives.

In December, 2020 the fund reopened for applications with a close date of February 1, 2021. An application to the program for a business and workforce marketing project is proposed with funding from the 2021 and 2022 Economic Development operating budget. If funded, the project will be delivered in 2021 and 2022.

Under the City's signing authority, grant applications that propose to commit operating dollars in future years requires the approval of Council.

2016-009 A By-Law to Provide Authority for the Execution of Certain Documents and Affix the Corporate Seal on Behalf of the City of Kawartha Lakes:

3.01 (d): Application forms for grant funding where any municipal funding is included in the current budget or is part of the normal operations of a department where a budget has not yet been approved or it is 100% funded from external sources.

This report provides an overview of the proposed Rural Economic Development program application for a business and workforce attraction marketing project.

Rationale:

The City's Economic Development program has a strong focus on supporting the growth and expansion of existing businesses in Kawartha Lakes. There are times, however, where efforts need to include the strategic attraction of new business and workforce, particularly those that support the economic growth of the existing economic structure.

In 2020, Council received the refreshed municipal brand. The refresh brought together the vision and goals of the Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan and Kawartha Lakes Economic Development Strategy to better express the culture of our community and the future community we are working towards.

At the same time as the launch of the refreshed brand, the global pandemic has accelerated a growing trend of interest in rural communities as a place live and run a business. In December 2020, Kawartha Lakes was listed as one of the hottest real estate markets in Canada. Located 90 minutes north east of Toronto and bordering the Greater Toronto Area, businesses and people are moving to Kawartha Lakes. Our opportunity is to leverage this migration to support sustainable economic growth in Kawartha Lakes.

The proposed business and workforce attraction project will implement the Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan and Economic Development strategy in two distinct ways (1) refining the branding story through the development of digital and other collateral using the refreshed brand, and (2) execution of a marketing, communications and media campaign for strategic business and workforce attraction.

The proposed project will

- Promote the Kawartha Lakes lifestyle as a preferred choice to live, work and raise a family.
- Focus on business decision makers and owners in the five (5) key clusters looking to build their business; (Agriculture and Food; Culture; Innovation; Manufacturing; and, Tourism)
- Reach investment specialists (site selector, real estate etc.),
- Attract young families/ young professionals to support local workforce needs or working from home; and
- Launch a business ambassador program to tell the story of Kawartha Lakes and welcome new residents and businesses to Jump In to the Kawartha Lakes community.

In addition, this project is about economic sustainability and vibrancy. To achieve this, businesses and individuals need to immerse themselves in Kawartha Lakes. This means they not just relocate to the community, but they also change their spending and volunteering resources to invest in Kawartha Lakes.

The local Chambers of Commerce, Business Improvement Area and Workforce Development Board will be key partners in delivering this project. It is hoped that as the project is further developed, other business and community based organizations will also participate.

Other Alternatives Considered:

Council could choose not to commit funds from the 2022 budget, however, this project will be more successful over a longer timeframe. The ability to cost share with provincial funds significantly improves the breadth and reach of this project well beyond what would be possible using only operating funds.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

The project implements the 2020-2023 Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan:

- A Vibrant and Growing Economy

Specifically, to attract new businesses and expand local employment: build a brand to attract both business and people, create an environment to attract business to Kawartha Lakes: support downtown revitalization, and leverage local business ambassadors.

The project also implements a number of action items in the Kawartha Lakes Economic Development Strategic Plan;

- Build awareness of Kawartha Lakes as a destination, develop a digital marketing plan
- Grow the five (5) specific clusters
- Encourage a positive community business culture and build an ambassador program
- Attract and retain a new generation of great entrepreneurs and workforce

Financial/Operation Impacts:

The Rural Economic Development program requires matching contributions. The City's contribution will be made within the approved Economic Development operating budget for 2021. The 2021 operating funds were already in the Economic Development budget for business attraction marketing projects. A successful application to the fund will expand the scope and impact of the work planned for 2021.

The request of this report is to commit up to \$50,000 in municipal operating funds in the 2022 budget.

Consultations:

Coboconk Norland and Area Chamber of Commerce, Bobcaygeon and Area Chambers of Commerce, Fenelon Falls and Area Chamber of Commerce, Lindsay and District Chamber of Commerce, Lindsay Downtown Business Improvement Association

Manager, Communications, Advertising and Marketing

Attachments:

None

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Department Head: Chris Marshall