



Council Report

Report Number:	ED2024-034
Meeting Date:	July 23, 2024
Title:	Rural Economic Development Fund Agreement
Description:	Funding for Fenelon Falls Downtown Revitalization 2.0 Confirmation of the Rural Economic Development funding and signing requirements by the Mayor and Clerk
Author and Title:	Carlie Arbour, Economic Development Officer - Community

Recommendations:

That Report ED2024-034, **Rural Economic Development Fund Agreement**, be received; and

That the Mayor and Clerk, following a review of agreements to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor, be authorized to execute agreement(s) with the Province of Ontario for the Fenelon Falls Downtown Revitalization 2.0 project.

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

Downtowns serve as the central gathering place and heart of a community. It is where new businesses start up and expand into, events are held, residents connect, and visitors explore. Council has committed to supporting Downtowns through the Corporate Strategic Plan, prioritizing downtown revitalization, intensification and beautification. The municipality has also invested in significant capital reconstruction and beautification projects in multiple downtowns in recent years.

In 2014, Council approved the launch of its first Downtown Revitalization project, developing five-year action plans for four different communities. The project ran the implementation of the plans and was completed in 2021. Since implementation was completed, staff continue to work with and support Downtown communities using the Kawartha Lakes Downtown Revitalization Framework (Appendix A) adopted in 2022.

Downtown Revitalization programs utilize a four-point approach to stimulate a community's economic, social and physical prosperity: Economic Development, Leadership and Management, Marketing and Promotions, and Physical Improvements.

Fenelon Falls was one of four communities that took part in a comprehensive Downtown Revitalization program between 2014 and 2021. The community embraced the program and used the developed Action Plan as a strategic map to create a thriving downtown environment.

Following the success of this first Action Plan, the Fenelon Falls community champions have maintained the foundational Downtown Revitalization committee structure and remained engaged in practices utilizing the four-point approach.

In 2023, the Fenelon Falls community champions engaged staff from Economic Development, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) (now Ministry of Rural Affairs) and the Fenelon Falls and Area Chamber of Commerce to explore the opportunities to undertake a phase two Downtown Revitalization Project. Utilizing existing resources, the community has undertaken much of the background work to scope the project and collect necessary data that feeds into the project. The community has reached their level of capacity to move the project into its next stage.

In February 2024, the municipality (lead) and the Fenelon Falls and Area Chamber of Commerce (co-applicant) submitted an application for Downtown Revitalization funding to the Rural Economic Development Fund (RED) (Appendix B). Staff have received notification that the application has been approved.

This report seeks Council's direction to execute the Rural Economic Development Fund agreement for the Fenelon Falls 2.0 project.

Rationale:

Project Details: Fenelon Falls Downtown Revitalization 2.0

The Fenelon Falls Downtown Revitalization 2.0 project is a one-year project that will build on existing community momentum and develop a new downtown action plan and collaborate with community groups to implement the evidence-backed plan.

The goals of the project are to:

- Support BR+E (Business Retention and Expansion) of downtown businesses for year-round vibrancy
- Encourage private investment in the downtown
- Support the labor force: creating and retaining jobs using gathered data
- Improve the downtown business mix to meet changing population needs
- Encourage visitors to extend their stay and spend in downtown area year-round

The project will follow the OMAFRA Downtown Revitalization program, completing Stage 2: Collecting and Assessing and Stage 3: Action Planning and Prioritizing. This includes hiring a project coordinator, data collection, analysis, and the development of an evidence-based action plan aligned with community needs.

Upon completion of the next Action Plan, the project will kick-start implementation, including business training and support, development of marketing collateral, partnership building, and place-making initiatives. The Action Plan will be a five (5) year implementation timeline and implemented according to community capacity and resources.

This initiative promotes community-led engagement, displaying successful partnerships between local communities and the municipality. While the primary objective of the project is the development of the Action Plan, the plan itself will be founded in collaboration with the local community organizations and stakeholders with support from economic development. The project aims to leverage the collective strength of local community organizations, integrating their efforts into the broader framework of the Action Plan. The level of engagement and coordination among these groups will serve as a key indicator of the project's success.

This project will use the Kawartha Lakes Downtown Revitalization framework and serve as a delivery model for other communities within Kawartha Lakes, demonstrating how to initiate their own Downtown Revitalization projects. Success will be measured by the adoption of similar approaches in additional communities, indicating the project's broader influence, including Lindsay, Bobcaygeon, Coboconk, and Omemee.

Co-Applicant Details

The project was designed and applied for in partnership with the Fenelon Falls and Area Chamber of Commerce. Recognizing the significance of place-based implementation, the Project Coordinator will be hired as an employee of the Chamber of Commerce.

City of Kawartha Lakes Economic Development will take a leadership role in overseeing RED project deliverables and the formal Downtown Revitalization process, supporting the Project Coordinator and the Community in working through the well-defined program phases.

Other Alternatives Considered:

Council could choose not to support the recommendation. This alternative is not recommended. The Fenelon Falls community has worked closely with Economic Development Staff and OMAFRA over the past year to undertake the planning of a phase two Downtown Revitalization. These projects see best results when championed and designed by and with the Community. A decision to sign the funding agreement supports the work the community has undertaken to prepare for this next step.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

Downtown Revitalization aligns with the three following Strategic Priorities of the Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan:

Exceptional Quality of Life – “Maintain community hubs such as parks, buildings and active spaces for social, healthy interactions” This project will improve the downtown as community hubs in Fenelon Falls.

Vibrant and Growing Economy – The Strategic Plan identifies the importance of “support[ing] downtown revitalization, intensification and beautification.” This project will touch on all four pillars of downtown revitalization through planning and quick action implementation.

Good Government – “Secure and advocate for provincial and federal funding for municipal infrastructure and service delivery needs, and critical community infrastructure and project investments”. This project is receiving provincial funding to support projects and community investment.

Financial/Operation Impacts:

Funding through the RED Program is 50% of eligible project costs. The Downtown Revitalization Project 2.0 was approved for \$35,000. The municipality’s contribution of funds for this project will come from the Special Project budget for Downtown Revitalization (\$30,000). The Fenelon Falls Chamber of Commerce is a co-applicant on this project and has committed to contributing financially and in-kind to the project.

Consultations:

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Fenelon Falls and Area Chamber of Commerce
Fenelon Forward
Manager, Economic Development

Attachments:

Appendix A – Downtown Revitalization Program Framework



Kawartha Lakes
Downtown Program F

Appendix B – Rural Economic Development Fund Application



Adobe Acrobat
Document

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