



Staff Report

Report Title: January 2023, The Hub Status Report

Prepared By: Lauren Eby, Business Development Coordinator

Department: Business & Economic Development

Date: Jan. 16, 2023

Report Number: BED-2023-01-1

File Number: C11 BED 23

Attachments:

Recommendation:

That the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby receives for information Report Number BED-2023-01-1 prepared by Lauren Eby, Business Development Coordinator.

Background:

The Hub January Status Report provides information to Council on behalf of the Business Development Coordinator.

The Hub opened in October 2020 and is a space in Huron-Kinloss to co-work and grow business. A regional business supports centre where entrepreneurs can access resources, events, and connections they need to succeed in starting or expanding their business. The Hub provides online programming which includes Start a Business, Business Expansion, Quick Start Entrepreneur, Youth Entrepreneurship and Selling Beyond the Farmgate, which are free and self-paced business courses. Services offered include business consultations, trainings, events, and office and meeting space for rent.

Discussion:

Business Support

Business consultations slowed down in December. Focus turned to planning for 2023, with creating a feedback form to send to businesses, collecting their thoughts and ideas on business trainings and events. This feedback will help guide planning efforts throughout the year to support our business community.

Digital Main Street

The Digital Transformation Grant numbers have been finalized, with 38 grants paid out to Bruce County businesses, totaling \$95,000 in funding for our regional business community. The Digital Transformation Grant was a \$2,500 grant that could be used by businesses to enhance their digital marketing and online presence, the grant application portal is reopening January 16th. The Bruce County Digital Main Street team has done a fantastic job engaging with and supporting businesses throughout this program and will continue to do so until March 31, 2023.

Sprout

The Sprout Youth Entrepreneurship Program concluded in December after a successful eight weeks with our participants. Market research, business basics, emotional intelligence, marketing, financial management, and customer service were topics covered throughout the program. The participants pitched their business idea, or ways they incorporated their learning to their business at the wrap up session which celebrated their dedication to the program. The second portion of the program will be determined in the coming weeks with the participants, with opportunity for them to open their own store or host pop-up shops in the storefront space connected to The Hub.

Homestead Program

The Craft Shack completed the Homestead program, which provided the opportunity to test their business in a physical location and connect to a new market. The Craft Shack occupied space beside The Hub from July 29 – November 29, with 72 customers visiting the store. Amber Alexander, owner of the business, provided feedback on the program and her experience noting "it was a great opportunity to get the feel of operating out of a store front." Amber appreciated the support from The Hub, who assisted in sharing their social media posts and help reach more of the community. The Craft Shack moved their business to Wingham, and we wish them the best in their new location.

Website & Social Media Analytics

1. The Hub's website had 64 visits this month.
2. Instagram reached 422 followers.
3. The Do Business Facebook page reached 2,394 likes.
4. LinkedIn reached 98 followers.

The Hub uses digital marketing platforms to communicate updates, events, resources, and programs to clients and followers.

Financial Impacts:

None at this time.

Strategic Alignment / Link:

The information provided in this report is consistent with and keeping with the Municipality's Vision & Mission. The recommendations contribute to the goals in achieving a prosperous community.

Projects in this report assist staff in achieving the following projects in the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan Action Plan:

P2.2 Business Incubator

Respectfully Submitted By:

Lauren Eby, Business Development Coordinator

Report Approved By:

Mary Rose Walden, Chief Administrative Officer