



## Staff Report

**Report Title:** July 2023, The Hub Status Report

**Prepared By:** Lauren Eby, Business Development Coordinator

**Department:** Business & Economic Development

**Date:** Jul. 3, 2023

**Report Number:** BED-2023-07-27

**File Number:** C11 BED 23

### Attachments:

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### Recommendation:

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby receives for information Report Number BED-2023-07-27 prepared by Lauren Eby, Business Development Coordinator and Michelle Goetz, Manager of Strategic Initiatives,

AND FURTHER, that Council accepts, with regret, Lauren Eby's resignation;

AND FURTHER approves appointing Will LeGrand as the Business & Development Coordinator effective July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023.

### Background:

The Hub July Status Report provides Council with an update from Lauren Eby, Business Development Coordinator who has submitted her resignation as Business Development Coordinator, her last day of work will be Thursday, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023. She stated "Thank you so much for the opportunity to work here over the past 3 years! I have very much enjoyed working at The Hub, with our department, and Township staff."

The Manager of Strategic Initiatives will provide an update about the path forward for the Hub, in light of Lauren's resignation.

### Discussion:

#### Business Support

The Hub assisted seven businesses in June, one from Northern Bruce Peninsula, two from Kincardine, two from Huron-Kinloss, one from Owen Sound, and one from Michigan. The businesses contacted The Hub for support in the following:

- Connection to local accountants and bookkeepers
- Google Analytics
- Digital Main Street program and grant information
- Website design
- Starting a business
- Marketing
- Private office rental
- Updating online presence

## Business Training Events

The Hub and Digital Service Squad member Will LeGrand hosted a business training webinar on June 8<sup>th</sup> called 'Demystifying ChatGPT: Unlocking the Potential of AI Technology'. Will gave a demonstration on how entrepreneurs can use ChatGPT in their business. There was great interest and feedback from this event which had 38 registrations. On July 6<sup>th</sup>, The Hub is hosting a Content Marketing: Tips and Trends webinar with Emily Baille from Compass Content Marketing, this event is free to attend, and all are welcome. For more information and to register, please visit [www.thehubhuronkinloss.com/events](http://www.thehubhuronkinloss.com/events).

## Digital Main Street

The Digital Main Street program continues to have high engagement and interest from businesses throughout Bruce County. To date, 210 businesses have been supported, and 64 businesses have received a \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant which totals \$160,000 in funding. The grant is available until September 30<sup>th</sup>, or until grant funds are exhausted. The team has done an excellent job facilitating the program and supporting businesses throughout the County!

## Homestead Program

Homestead is a program to support entrepreneurs in testing out their business in a physical location, with space and support provided by The Hub. Jamie Miller from Shop Dire, an eco-friendly product business, moved into the space at the end of April and operated her business until the end of June. At the start of July, Lily Conley from Lily by Design will operate her business in the space until the end of September. Lily By Designs is a homemade candle and personal care product business. Lily participated in The Hub's youth entrepreneurship program, Sprout, last fall.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Council and staff for supporting The Hub and for my opportunity in working on this project! Connecting with and supporting regional entrepreneurs has been a memorable and rewarding experience.

## Path Forward

The Township received funding from the Rural Economic Development (RED) grant program from the Province of Ontario and from the Nuclear Waste Management Organization to fund all aspects of the Hub for 3 years, ending December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Our RED funding expired May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, the NWMO is covering the expenses from June 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. We have leased the space in downtown Ripley until December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

After reviewing options with the team, we decided that we would like to keep the doors of the Hub open and continue with the consultations and other training opportunities for businesses until the end of the year. The space is also used by our Project Coordinator and Workforce Development Coordinator for the Women in Construction program, the Homestead program and to host meetings and office rentals.

To do this effectively, we have transitioned our last Digital Service Squad Member, Will Legrand, from the Digital Main Street program to the Business Development Coordinator position until December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. Will's contract was set to expire at the end of October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with the Digital Main Street program. We received grant funding from Digital Main Street to provide digital transformation support to businesses across Bruce County and have seen great success with the program; however, with the change-over of staff, we will have to close that program out July 7<sup>th</sup> when Will transitions to the Business Development Coordinator position. We will be required to return the additional funds to Digital Main Street and let our Bruce County partners know that the program is ending early, however the Hub will continue to be a regional business support center.

Keeping the Hub open for the remainder of our lease will allow us to close the project out properly this fall, maintain our commitments to the Homestead participants and facilitators that are booked until the end of the year and give us time to determine how any other projects might be impacted by the closure of the Hub (ie. Women in Construction).

**Financial Impacts:**

Included in the current budget.

**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