

Meeting Date: September 1, 2021

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## Business (Restart), Retention and Expansion Program

## Recommendation:

That Council of the Township approve a contract Business Outreach Coordinator position for a 12-month contract to complete a Business “Restart”, Retention and Expansion Program.

**Background:**

In March 2021, CAO Robert Tremblay informed Council that the Township had submitted a funding application through the Ontario Rural Economic Development Program to prepare a Business “Restart”, Retention & Expansion (BR+E) Program. This was the Township’s third attempt at securing funding for this program.

The Township was informed by the Rural Programs Branch of the OMAFRA on May 18, 2021, that we were successful in obtaining funding in the amount of $24,958.50.

OMAFRA has established a proven framework in its Coordinators Manual for the BR+E Programs and it generally involves four (4) stages:

**Preparation**: assessing community readiness, forming the leadership team, hiring a Coordinator, and launching the project.

**Collect and Analyze**: conducting business interviews using the BR+E survey, addressing immediate issues and opportunities identified, and generating a preliminary analysis of the data.

**Develop Goals and Action Plans**: hosting a BR+E planning retreat to identify key findings and develop goals and action plans to address the results. Also includes the preparation of the final report and action plan.

**Implement and Monitor**: implementing the action plans and selecting performance measures to monitor and track progress.

A Business (Restart), Retention & Expansion Program is intended to improve competitiveness, diversify, and grow local and regional economies, and strengthen sector and regional partnerships. The project will focus on businesses including, among others, tourism, agricultural, industrial and services.

**Analysis**:

The funding application included a timeframe of nine (9) month to complete the program extending from October 1, 2021, to June 30, 2021. The anticipated total cost equaled $64,971.00. This included $49,917.00 of eligible funding for the Business Outreach Coordinator and promotion/outreach and $15,000.00 of in-kind contributions (office space/equipment, staff support). Based on this evaluation, the Township secured 50% of the eligible funding representing $24,958.50.

The engaging of a Business Outreach Coordinator will assist in facilitating the completion of the program in a timely manner. To ensure the successful hiring of this position, staff are recommending that the contract be extended by 2-months to provide for a full year contract. The additional two months will allow the start of implementation, provide for a transition period, and assist in the 2023 budget deliberations. The additional cost to the Township is anticipated to be $9,000.

Lastly, the Township's Community Development Services will manage the project. The Business Outreach Coordinator will work directly with the Manager of Community Development (Planner/EDO) in the implementation of the program.

**Strategic Plan/Departmental Workplan**

This report supports the strategies of the 2020-2030 Townships Strategic Plan and 2021 Community Development Workplan with respect to:

* Fostering economic development by encouraging the redevelopment and improvement of business and commercial corridors throughout the township.
* Supporting the retention and expansion of existing businesses and attract new economic development.
* Continue to make Whitewater Region a destination for visitors.

**Engagement/Communication**

Internal review was undertaken by the Manager of Community Development, CAO, and Treasurer/Deputy CAO. Staff have also considered this contract position during the preparation of the Organizational Structure Policy.

**Financial Implications:**

With an anticipated start date of October 25, 2021, the annual salary cost implications are estimated at 2021 - $10,850 and 2022 - $60,500 inclusive of statutory deductions. Benefits and OMERS are not extended to contract positions. The position's status has been evaluated as group 4 on the Township's payroll grid. The Business Outreach Coordinator would be paid mileage for use of their personal vehicle.

**Next Steps:**

The HR/Pay and Benefits Coordinator will prepare a job posting including the job description. The Township will advertise and interview through Sept./early Oct. and return to Council for appointment as early as October 20, 2021.

**Attachments**

Attachment No. 1 - Draft Job Description

Prepared By: Ivan Burton, Planner/Economic Development Officer

Reviewed By: Robert Tremblay, Chief Administrative Officer