



County of Wellington Report

April 2021 – August 2022

The Highlights

Our Move to City Hall

This last year and a half of COVID 19 lockdown/recovery taught us a valuable financial lesson as it has become clear that the traditional model of conducting business had changed. Once thriving, our 3500 sq. foot Centre had seen incredible traffic over the last 22 years. With the arrival of COVID 19, our in-house consultations, training, workshops, programming, and networking events, all essential in support of our mandate, were immediately forced to transition to virtual delivery methods with no signs or guarantees of reversing going forward.

This new reality became an opportune time for the BCGW's strategic move to City Hall, better able to assist, demonstrate and confirm the benefits of collective effort to better service those seeking business advisory services as well as helping to cut down on wasted time and cost factors in associated departments. This decision would also remove some of the BCGW financial constraints and allow the growth and expansion of BCGW capacity to assist with Economic Development strategies within both the City and County; thereby meeting strategic team, service, and program expansion plans ensuring continued support of small business and entrepreneurship in the years to come.

Interestingly, our County Partnership that includes a satellite location in Fergus (Courtesy of an in-kind contribution from Township of Centre Wellington) and consultation representation in both Erin and Mount Forest, was averaging 35% of our forecasted performance metrics prior to COVID.

With the arrival of COVID, BCGW was fortunate that we had already launched a brand-new website with online scheduling capabilities in January 2020; BCGW easily transitioned all our consultation/bookings to new online scheduling platform. Our office closed to the public in March; all advisors continued working from home and offering virtual 1-hour consultations by either zoom or by telephone. The Advisors remained busy with a steady following of clients trying to navigate the precarious times; advising on adapt, pivot and in some cases, closing strategies. We were also able to adapt our workshops and basic training programs to an online platform with great ease; remained consistent and dependable in our service and program delivery.

The results of having all advisors available online and array of assorted dates and times as well as the additional of virtual programming available to anyone, has seen an incredible increase in uptake from clients around then County. Barriers in transportation removed, better Broadband capabilities and an increased acceptance of virtual delivery platforms has contributed to BCGW's increase in both advisory and program engagement.

BCGW has been committed to provide stronger support, better presence, and representation in the County over the last couple of years. The fruits of these intensified efforts are clearly demonstrated; BCGW can confidently report that 40% of BCGW clientele are now represented by residents of Centre Wellington and Wellington County.

To date, we continue to maintain virtual service delivery and are looking at the possibility of a hybrid model that would incorporate both in person and virtual service delivery for Fall 2022/Winter 2023 if the COVID return threat remains low.

Our Continued efforts to support small businesses recovery

- We have spent the last year continuing to work with small businesses of all shapes and sizes trying to navigate through covid recovery challenges.
- We have mentored on adaption, pivot and closing strategies depending on where they were pre covid and how they used strategies to survive it. **Small businesses need us more than ever!!**
- There are still many businesses teetering on the edge of closing due to:
 1. EXHAUSTION,
 2. Adapting to provincial changes/timelines with covid protocol designations putting extra demand on staff and owners,
 3. Small business owners took on significant debt through loans and recovery programs that require payback and so now struggling to make payments.
 4. Limited financial resources to increase digital platforms in the case that there is another shutdown,
 5. Inflation, cost of living and business expenses increasing very quickly,
 6. Attempts at lost revenue recovery due to limited resources including staffing issues
 7. Struggles to find staffing, period.
 8. Affordable housing/rents to keep workers living local

The Programming we have created and/or continue to deliver to support our County wide to support our small business ecosystem

- **(Please see our PowerPoint for details)**

We do all this work with 1 Fulltime staff (ED), 1 reg. part time staff member and five contracted advisors.

We are fortunate that every one of our team members (including our ED) are also small business owners as well. We all have our areas of expertise to share; bringing knowledge, experience, wisdom, and humility to share with our clients. The best part is that we ALL really care and love what we do.

The Metrics

BCGW is proud of these results, and we wanted to share some of the highlights as to how these results were achieved.

This is a copy of the Metrics that BCGW reports on, semi-annually and annually, to our largest funding contributor, The Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Although the Ministry and BCGW operate on a Fiscal year end of March 31st, I prepared the data to create a snapshot of where BCGW landed last fiscal year, as well as where we are at, year to date.

Despite the continued work with COVID shutdowns (2021) and COVID recovery, BCGW is meeting and exceeding forecasted Performance metrics, anticipating a strong finish in March 2023.

Performance Metrics	Actual	County of Wellington
# Inquiries- Asked/answered (email/phone/social media)	27035	10,814
# New Client Consultations (Starting a Business)	260	104
# New Client Consultations (Existing Business)	204	81
# Repeat Client Consultations	699	279
# French Language Consultations	49	5
# Referrals to Public Sector (Chamber/CFDC/Municipal office)	104	*
# Referrals to Private Sector Professionals (Acct/Lawyers/Insurance/HR/Finance)	300	*
# Workshops/Seminars (Virtual)	241	241
# Businesses Started	412	*
# Businesses Purchased	32	*
# Businesses sustained (New category 2022)	154	*
# Businesses Expanded	174	*
# Jobs Created	577	*

* These numbers are collected but not segmented by City of County with current system but will be with new CRM system coming to BCGW in 2022

What is next for 2022/2023

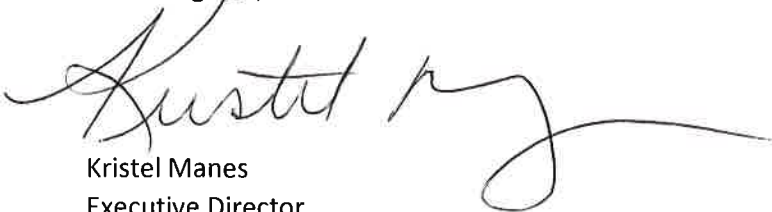
AS we look forward, BCGW is interested in continuing to build on our partnership and is excited about new possibilities including:

1. BCGW will also look to potentially expand our satellite office in Fergus to be better able to service Advisory and future programming needs and would ask for help from both Centre Wellington and County of Wellington partners to help determine space and opportunity to suit increasing trends of need.
2. BCGW has experienced steady growth and stability in last 2 years and is now able to welcome the opportunity to participate in more economic development related project work including BR and E studies; growth strategies, small business surveys and analysis opportunities. As front-line workers in the business community, BCGW has the expertise, resources, and network to deliver stellar quality results.
3. BCGW will continue to provide a suite of essential Business Development seminars and workshops to guide/support entrepreneurs from the idea stage into implementation with the goals of becoming a viable and sustainable business, contributing to the economic development of Wellington County.
4. As a Business Enterprise Centre, we are always seeking additional ways to deliver service to residents of Wellington County. To meet our objective, we are asking to continue to partner with the Economic Development office of County of Wellington, to provide community specific advice, coaching and training to the members of the community who wish to start and/or grow their own business.

In closing, we value the investment that County of Wellington has made in BCGW to date and look forward to enhancing our partnership by finding new ways to build and strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem in the region.

Any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristel Manes', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Kristel Manes
Executive Director