



# COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

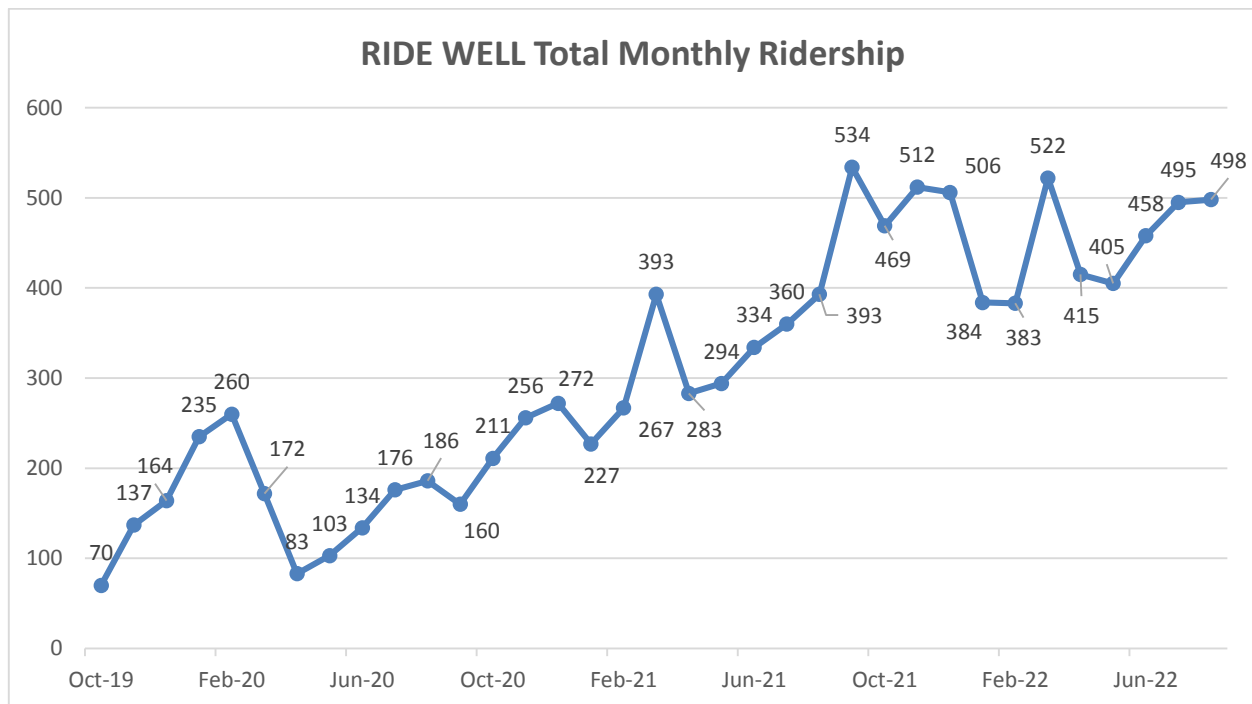
## COMMITTEE REPORT

**To:** Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee  
**From:** Jana Burns, Wellington Place Administrator  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 20, 2022  
**Subject:** Economic Development – September Report

### RIDE WELL Rural Transportation

The County RIDE WELL service grew in ridership over the summer months. The mask mandate discontinued in June, coinciding with the ability to rideshare again, and hence, the ability to service more users.

The service experienced a shortage of one of four drivers over the summer, which resulted in one ride being abandoned after the booking was made. RideCo, the service provider, retained a fourth driver and returned to normal supply at the start of September. Staff are optimistic that a full roster of drivers will continue to yield growth for the service. The following graph shows total ridership since service launch:



Shared rides fluctuate month-over-month depending on location and how often the system can efficiently pair riders together. In August, RIDE WELL saw its highest rate of shared rides occurring at 22% (108 rides) of the 498 total rides being shared.

The service registered 47 new users over the summer months and averaged between 21 and 25 rides per day.

Economic Development staff have met with Dillon Consulting in August to initiate a RIDE WELL service review, as the contract with RideCo expires March 2023. The review considers the suggestions provided by users to date in addition to the quantitative data provided by RideCo. As staff have recently been made aware that RideCo wishes to continue providing the software only, this operational implication will also be considered.

### **County Community Improvement Programme (CIP)**

Congratulations to Morriston Medical Centre for completing their CIP project in Puslinch. Applicants were approved for \$10,000 to construct a new medical centre in Downtown Morriston. The following illustrates before and after construction:

Before:



After:





Congratulations also to The Old Post Café for completing their CIP project in Minto over the summer. The Old Post Café was approved for \$2,500 to expand their patio and improve their façade in downtown Harriston. The following pictures show the finished project:

In July, staff received an application from Crepe Company in Puslinch. The owners of Crepe Company will be relocating their restaurant business from Oakville to downtown Morriston. The new restaurant will be located at the previously owned Envers restaurant location (42 Queen St,



Morriston). County staff have approved a \$10,000 grant for Crepe Company to complete an interior and exterior façade improvement on the vacant location. Staff will next meet with the applicants to offer assistance with connecting to suppliers, marketing and business resources.

August saw the launch of a new landing page for the County CIP, highlighting completed and providing programme information. The webpage can be found at <https://www.wellington.ca/en/business/ed-completed-cip-projects.aspx>

### County CIP Review

Staff met with RCI Consulting late August as part of a review and update of the County CIP. RCI, who is advantageously conducting this review at the same time as the Township of Centre Wellington, proposed the following key changes to the programme:

Current Programme Name	Current Programme Information	Revised Programme Name	Revised Programme Information	Summary of Changes
<b>1) Invest READY Pre-Development Design/Study Grant</b>	Grant available for up to 100% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$20,000 per project or property.	<b>1) Study Grant</b>	Grants available for up to 100% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$10,000 per study, and a maximum of 2 study grants per project.	Reduction from \$20,000 to \$10,000, but two studies per project to allow County to be more flexible with funding.
<b>2) Invest MORE Grant</b>	Grant available for up to 50% of total eligible costs to a maximum of \$10,000.  Invest MORE Grants cannot be stacked with other Invest WELL incentives (ex. the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant).	<b>2) Minor Activity Grant</b>	Grants available up to 50% of total eligible costs to a maximum of \$20,000.  Minor Activity Grants can be stacked (combined) with TIEG only if: a) It is an Industrial/Manufacturing project, includes attainable housing, or has new or innovative farm related agriculture/agri-business. AND; b) The member-municipality CIP permits stacking and an application has been approved by the local municipality.	Maximum grant increased from \$10,000 to \$20,000 to better incentivize businesses to take on CIP projects.  Stacking is permitted with the County TIEG if the project is a targeted use and the member-municipality CIP allows stacking.



<b>3) Invest READY Tax Increment Equivalent Grant (TIEG)</b>	Annual County grant equal to tax incremental increase for up to 5 years after project completion and MPAC reassessment. Grants may be equal to a maximum of 100%, 80%, 60%, 40%, and 20%, in years 1,2,3,4, and 5 respectively.  Stacking with other grants is not permitted	<b>3) Major Activity Grant</b>	Annual County grant equal to tax incremental increase for up to 5 years after project completion and MPAC reassessment. Grants may be equal to a maximum of 100%, 80%, 60%, 40%, and 20%, in years 1,2,3,4, and 5, respectively.  Stacking with Minor Activity grant may be permitted. Please see above for eligibility.	Stacking to be permitted with Minor Activity Grant if the project is a targeted use and the member-municipality CIP allows stacking.
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### **Tourism Signage**

In total, ten new signs and three new signage locations were installed this summer. Two of the new signage locations are positioned in Puslinch to better service businesses in that community. In total, nine businesses participated in the 2022 signage programme, seven of which were new participants.

### **Tourism Strategy Development**

With funding received via Fed Dev Ontario's Tourism Relief Fund, staff are in the process of working with Deloitte Ltd. to develop a comprehensive three-year tourism strategy to define how the County will approach tourism, build the 'Experience Wellington' programme, and further support the sector within its seven member municipalities. The project will provide suggestions for the County's role within the tourism ecosystem and apply a strategic regional approach to support, elevate, and leverage municipal and industry-led tourism initiatives.

### **Cycling Tourism Development**

Tourism Relief funding also supports the rollout of the [Ontario by Bike Network](#) across Wellington County and Guelph. The implementation includes a regional profile and toolkit featuring bike trails, assets, and resources for bike tourists and businesses alike. Connecting with the Ontario-wide bike network aligns Wellington County with all neighbouring regions and allows cycling routes and experiences to continue pan-regionally. Ontario By Bike is a key resource for cyclists from Ontario and beyond for choosing bike destinations and an excellent way to showcase Wellington County's businesses and key tourism assets. Local tourism businesses can now register at no cost to be listed on the website as a bike-friendly business if they fulfill the necessary criteria, allowing them to take full advantage of free marketing opportunities through the network.

In addition, Ontario By Bike will conduct a Destination Assessment to provide recommendations on next steps and opportunities for further cycle tourism product development and infrastructure improvement locally. One of two in-person business stakeholder workshops held by Ontario By Bike on September 12.



### Tourism Shorts

Eight promotional [tourism short videos](#) were released in August to promote a variety of businesses and experiences in Wellington County. Themes include Trails, Equine, Food, Retro Outings, Unique Accommodations, History, Water Fun, and Farm Adventures. These videos are available on the [experiencewellington.ca](http://experiencewellington.ca) website and the County YouTube Channel. The videos are exclusively promoted via social media with initial statistics showing over 85,000 through plays, with numbers increasing into the fall.

### Taste Real

The popular [Fall Rural Romp](#) returns as a one-day in-person event on September 24 showcasing farm and food businesses throughout Centre and Southern Wellington County. 19 locations are open to the public, including farms, farmers' markets, a brewery, cidery, distillery, coffee roastery, patisserie, and the Bradford Whitcomb Green Legacy Nursery. Each Rural Romp stop offers a different experience and activities to learn about food and agriculture unique to their location. The self-guided tour is free to attend, and rompers are encouraged to purchase from the businesses they visit.





The new [Food Experience Guide](#), a companion guide to the popular local food map showcasing farm and food experiences, has been flying off the shelves. Over 14,000 copies have so far been distributed to libraries, tourism outlets, farmers' markets, and select business locations, including overnight accommodations in Centre Wellington and Guelph. The brochures were also available at local events, including the Rockwood Party in the Park, the Mount Forest Fireworks Festival, the Erin Musical Ride, the Fergus Fall Fair, and the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) in Toronto through a free partnership with an agriculture information booth.

### Farmers' Market Initiatives

The award-winning [Farmers' Market Box](#) series continues to be a popular way to support local markets and farmers this year. While the series ended in September, it featured a curated local food box from a different local market every second week beginning June.

A total of 447 boxes were sold generating \$28,133 in revenue. Of that, \$26,623 went directly to local businesses and markets, an increase of \$1,784 over 2021.

Each of the eight local markets curated its own box featuring 9 to 13 vendors each. This initiative continues to prove to be an excellent way to promote local markets, support the smaller and emerging farm and food businesses and showcase the excellent variety of local foods and products available in Wellington County.

Staff are currently planning a collaborative Holiday Box featuring one unique item from each market with delivery in December.



The Minto Farmers' Market Box was delivered on August 16



The **Farmers' Market Trail** saw increased attention in the 2022 season with markets running out of trail passports by early August, prompting an additional print run. Overall, 3,000 farmers' market passports were distributed through local markets, tourism outlets, and via direct request through the Economic Development Office, a 50% increase over last year. The trail encourages residents and visitors to explore all 8 local markets and their communities with an opportunity to stamp the trail passport for a chance to win a prize.

### Attainable Housing

In person consultations led by County Planning and Economic Development have begun with member municipal CAOs, EDOs, CBOs and Planning staff, where available. The purpose of the consultations is to understand how the County can support local efforts to increase the supply of housing options. The first meeting was held early September, with the next municipality scheduled for this week.

The Public Awareness fall campaign is being drafted, and will feature heavier content in social media and newspaper articles to maintain awareness of the key issues that lack of housing presents to Wellington County.

A County Housing Taskforce meeting will be scheduled for an update of the project, a review of the fall media campaign and to share the information collected through the municipal consultations.





### Three Year Plan

Staff are developing a 2023 to 2026 County Economic Development Plan for Committee review in November. Member municipalities have each supplied responses to a survey by staff, enquiring as to individual municipal and agency priorities, partnership opportunities and support.

Consultations are now being booked with the member municipalities to ensure the proposed activities and direction meet the objectives we collectively aim to achieve over the next three years in Wellington County. The County has been collaborating and in certain cases financially supporting specific projects delivered by our business resource agencies. The same consultations will be held with the agencies to align efforts.

### Other Activities

- Staff coordinated a business resources meeting to support the proposed Agrihood development in Mapleton
- TR newsletters sent on June 23, July 22, and September 9
- Festival and Events newsletters sent on June 30, July 29, and September 9
- Taste Real promoted [Food Day Canada Activities](#) across the County
- Christina was interviewed by the Grand 101, and Magic / CJOY Radio to talk about the Food Experience Guide and local festivals and events.
- Business visit with Cox Creek Winery on July 22
- Economic Development participated in the Rockwood Party in the Park event on July 28 along with other County Departments
- Supported the Erin Agricultural Society's Musical Ride Event through advertising and providing content for swag bags
- Explore Wellington Tourism Ad in the Erin Life Magazine
- Toque Magazine Business Feature Corwhin Herbs and Produce, Puslinch, and seasonal Top 10 Tour and Taste Adventures in Wellington County
- Provided materials for Town of Minto Newcomer Welcome bags
- [Top 5 Things To Do In Wellington County This Week](#) posts continue over the summer into fall recording 1,800 page views so far.

### Recommendation:

That the Economic Development Committee approve the Economic Development September Report.

Respectfully submitted,



Jana Burns  
Wellington Place Administrator





## **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 PowperPoint 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 31<sup>st</sup>, 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

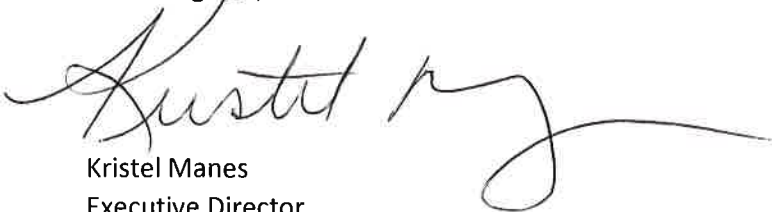
AS we look forward, BCGW is interested in continuing to build on our partnership and is excited about new possibilities including:

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 dark ink, appearing to read 'Kristel Manes', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Kristel Manes  
Executive Director





# COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

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## COMMITTEE REPORT

**To:** Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee  
**From:** Justine Dainard, Smart Cities Project Manager  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 20, 2022  
**Subject:** **Smart Cities Office – September 2022 update**

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### Background:

Update on programmes within the Our Food Future project. This project has four overarching goals as it builds the circular economy in our region, with many partners co-creating actions to reach these goals.

### GOAL: INCREASED ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOODS

#### Spark Grants – funding announcements

This spring, Our Food Future opened applications for Spark Grants. A fund of \$50k was available to support projects which increased food access in our region. We received thirty-two applications, half of which were shortlisted. Eleven projects were chosen to receive funding, including four projects located in the County:

- Growing Healthy Rural Communities, Wellington North. Bringing people together to share and grow culturally relevant foods.
- Grassroots Collaboration from Seeds to Plate, Erin. A community group maintaining a seed library and creating opportunities to share information, classes, and community fridge.
- Growing Potential, Centre Wellington. A Big Brothers Big Sisters programme working with kids to grow, harvest and cook.
- Sageing Garden, Mapleton. Working with seniors to grow food in accessible ways.

Financial support for County-based project totals \$11,500. We also intend to maintain connections with these projects to connect them with future opportunities.

#### Community Agriculture Grants – open now

On Food Day Canada, the Community Agriculture Grants opened. A total of \$20k is available to fund up to 10 projects whose aim is to increase the number of places where food is grown. Applications are welcome until October 17; more information is available at [harvestimpact.ca/communityagchallenge](https://harvestimpact.ca/communityagchallenge).

#### Seed Library Programming

In partnership with Wellington County Library, Our Food Future is supporting programming to help residents learn more about saving and using seeds for food growing. Four different programmes are being offered at eight branches across the County during September. For more information, please see [www.wellington.ca/seedlibrary](https://www.wellington.ca/seedlibrary).

## GOAL: INCREASED VALUE FROM WASTE

### ICI Pilot update

The Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) green bin pilot is transitioning into the next phase. Following nine months of free waste collection and data gathering, participants will start to pay a subsidized pick-up fee, and a route plan with a self-sustaining business case will be formed. Additional large generators are being sought in order to offer more frequent collections.

### ZWETL Civic Innovation Challenge – open now

The Zero Waste Economic Transformation Lab (ZWETL) has launched a Civic Innovation Challenge, seeking a new business model to support waste materials separation during construction, renovation and demolition projects. A winner will be awarded \$15k to pilot a new system which results in less waste going to landfill. Challenge closes October 5, details are available at [coil.eco/zwetl](https://coil.eco/zwetl).

## GOAL: MORE CIRCULAR BUSINESSES

### COIL (Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad) activities

With a territory which currently extends across Southern Ontario, COIL's many programmes are serving companies of all sizes, at different levels of readiness. An update on the direction and growth of COIL is attached.

- **Co-Lab Challenge – deadline extended** The Circulate Co-lab funds teams of companies proposing new collaborations which lead to circular innovation. Successful teams receive \$20k to prototype their idea, and have a chance to win support for a year-long \$100k demonstration pilot. The deadline for applying has been extended to September 23. Information is available at [coil.eco/colab](https://coil.eco/colab).
- **COIL Activate – open now** Companies with a food and environment focus can apply with a project idea for funding between \$5,000-\$20,000. Support also includes mentorship and training in circular economy principles. Intake is open until Oct 18, and the six-month program will begin Nov 1, 2022.
- **Circular Leadership Programme, with Ivey Business School – opens soon** Welcoming companies from any sector who are beginning to learn how to transition towards a Circular Economy model. This programme will run January-June, 2023 and include a chance to win COIL funding of \$20k. Please see [coil.eco](https://coil.eco) for more details.

## GOAL: SYSTEM SHIFT

The first three goals of the Circular Food Economy should be secured through a shift in best practices and the ability to scale and reproduce our actions elsewhere. To achieve this, we invite opportunities to work with partners, speak at public events, and co-create templates.

### Experimental Acres Pilot

The Experimental Acres regenerative agriculture pilot has enjoyed its first summer season. Designed to provide an on-ramp to climate friendly farming practices, fifteen participants in both Wellington and Dufferin Counties are being supported while they try new rotational grazing, cover crop variations, or silvopasture techniques. A new promotional video and overview materials are available at [www.wellington.ca/ExperimentalAcres](https://www.wellington.ca/ExperimentalAcres).

A report on the pilot's first year will be brought to the Economic Development Committee in November. Recruiting for Year 2 participants will begin in late fall, and our next growing season will include the municipality of Grey County.

### **Soil Health Events**

- Our Food Future was a sponsor of the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association's Soil Day event on July 21. Held at Grand River Raceway, this was an informative day where participants learned about assessing healthy soils.
- On November 10, Jordan Grigg will be at the Royal Winter Fair's Education Symposium, speaking on the Future of Food panel.
- In partnership with the Greenbelt Foundation and Erin group Common Ground, we will be hosting a Soil and Economics event on November 23 at the Erin Legion.

Details and information about future events can be found at [www.wellington.ca/ExperimentalAcres](http://www.wellington.ca/ExperimentalAcres).

### **Climate and Circularity Solutions Hub**

To directly link our region's circular economy strategies with climate action, COIL is launching a new Climate and Circularity Solutions Hub. The Hub is being co-created in collaboration with the University of Guelph, Ivey Business School and CSA Group (formerly Canadian Standards Association), thanks to founding support of \$250k from Desjardins Ontario Credit Union. In addition, Smart Cities has been awarded \$100k from Scotiabank's Net Zero Research Fund to support a signature Hub project in agriculture, centered in Wellington County.

For more details, please see the attached COIL Update document.

### **Recommendation:**

That the Economic Development Committee receive the Smart Cities Office report for information

Respectfully submitted,



Justine Dainard  
Smart Cities Project Manager



## Executive Summary

### Purpose of Report

To update County of Wellington Council on the progress of the City of Guelph's Smart Cities COIL (Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad) initiative. Since launching programs in October 2021, COIL streams have worked with over 60 companies in the food, environment and construction, renovation, and demolition (CRD) sectors.

Smart Cities Guelph is now launching the COIL Climate and Circularity Solutions Hub with \$250,000 in anticipated new funding from Desjardins Ontario Credit Union. In addition, Smart Cities has been awarded \$100,000 from Scotiabank's Net Zero Research Fund (subject to contribution agreement completion) to advance a signature Hub project on Regenerative Agriculture in Wellington County. Following direction from their City Council in January 2022, Smart Cities Guelph is also exploring potential future partnerships and funding pathways to continue their regional leadership in the circular economy, including the potential launch of a national COIL network.

This report is to detail these new opportunities and next steps.

### Key Findings

- COIL's first year has found tremendous success in helping businesses develop and scale new circular economy innovations in the food, environment and CRD sectors, including millions in projected new business revenues from products and services created through COIL programs.
- COIL is launching a new Climate and Circularity Solutions Hub which will work with academic and industry partners to connect circular economy innovation with action to combat climate change.
- COIL has been approached by several municipalities across Canada seeking to establish instances of COIL. We are now exploring potential strategies and funding streams to transform COIL into a national network of circular economy innovation clusters, with Guelph-Wellington as the Canadian epicenter for the circular economy.

### Financial Implications

All Smart Cities' programs are funded through external grants. The new programs detailed below will continue with this approach with no new operating expenses to the City or County beyond current routine administration (e.g. financial, legal services).

The new Climate and Circularity Solutions Hub is bringing in an additional \$250,000 in funding from Desjardins Ontario Credit Union to establish the hub. In addition, Scotiabank has awarded Smart Cities \$100,000 in new funding from their Net Zero Research Fund to support a Hub project focused on Regenerative Agriculture in Wellington County. We anticipate that additional public, corporate and foundational donors will contribute to this important climate solutions work.

A new COIL national network will require funding from multiple federal regional economic development agencies, and a plan is being developed to finalize anticipated costs. Guelph-Wellington would serve as the epicentre of this network

and will leverage the intellectual property developed through our COIL and Our Food Future initiatives as part of our contribution to a national circular economy network.

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## **Report**

### **COIL progress and success to date**

In 2019, Wellington County and Guelph won \$10M from Infrastructure Canada's Smart Cities Challenge to launch the Our Food Future initiative, a project aimed at building a regional circular food economy and with goals that include increasing access to nutritious food, supporting new circular businesses and redefining waste as a resource. After demonstrating strong interest from our regional social innovation sector and business community, Smart Cities was awarded an additional \$5M from FedDev Ontario to launch COIL (Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad), an initiative aimed at spurring circular innovations and helping circular businesses grow and scale their impacts.

Since launching programs in October 2021, COIL has worked with over 60 businesses across the food and environment sectors. The first two cohorts have resulted in numerous success stories, including:

- Dozens of companies developing new upcycled products from materials that would have otherwise gone to waste including muffins and ramen noodles from tofu byproducts; spent brewery grain into a plant-based protein; sheep wool waste into a low-phosphate fertilizer; ready-to-eat meals made primarily from juice and brewery pulps.
- COIL programs have fostered the development of multiple new patentable technologies and business models with the potential to scale across Canada and beyond.
- COIL brought the Upcycled Certified standard to Canada – a consumer-facing certification program that indicates when a product is produced using upcycled ingredients. Upcycled Certified will launch this fall with a cluster of newly certified products from our ecosystem.

All COIL programs have been developed and delivered in close partnership with core collaborators from the City of Guelph, Wellington County, 10C and Innovation Guelph, and with support from community champions including Anthesis-Provision, the Guelph Chamber of Commerce, Guelph-Wellington Business Centre, Launchit Minto, and the John F. Wood Centre at the University of Guelph. Per our FedDev funding requirements, COIL recently formed a strategic relationship with the London Economic Development Corporation which will help more businesses across southwestern Ontario access our programs, tools and resources.

This aligns with the County of Wellington's Economic Development Strategic Plan, which seeks to foster an environment conducive to entrepreneurial activity, and to develop lasting partnerships that advance the economic sustainability of the County.

### **Launch of COIL Climate and Circularity Solutions Hub**

A shift to a circular economy is urgently needed if we are going to address climate change. Ellen MacArthur Foundation states that roughly 55% of emissions can be

tackled by the transition to renewable energy – while the remaining 45% of emissions must be addressed in how we make and use products and food, and manage land. Transitioning to a circular economy not only generates greater economic value from resources, but it is also an essential strategy to address climate change. Over eighty countries have included action on the circular economy as part of their commitments for the Paris Climate Agreement.

To directly link Guelph-Wellington's circular economy strategies with climate action, COIL is launching a new Climate and Circularity Solutions Hub. The Hub will leverage Guelph-Wellington's on-the-ground circular economy programs and expertise to better understand and communicate best practices for building a climate-smart circular economy. The Hub is launching with a range of collaborators including the University of Guelph, Ivey Business School and CSA Group (formerly Canadian Standards Association).

At launch, the Hub will focus on three core areas:

**Net-Zero Systems:** As an urban-rural testbed, Wellington and Guelph have learned much about what regions need to do to facilitate the growth of circular economy collaborations and networks. The Hub will continue this by launching demonstration projects that prototype, and pilot policies, tools, technology and infrastructure that facilitate, net-zero circular economy systems.

**Impact Evidence:** Not all circular economy actions result in emission reductions, therefore we need to focus innovation efforts on the approaches that do. The hub will work with experts, academic partners and communities to uncover new knowledge to help measure, verify and share climate-smart circular economy best practices.

**Learning Platform:** Not enough businesses and consumers are aware of the circular economy and the resilient growth opportunities it will bring. The Hub will lead education, training and engagement programs that build climate-smart circular knowledge and skills – and mobilize leaders to act.

The Hub is being launched with \$250,000 in funding from Desjardins Ontario Credit Union. Desjardins has a long history of supporting circular economy innovation and research in Quebec and other parts of Canada. We anticipate making a formal announcement with Desjardins in the Fall.

In addition, Smart Cities has been awarded \$100,000 from Scotiabank's Net Zero Research Fund (subject to contribution agreement completion) to support a signature Hub project advancing regenerative agriculture assessment systems in Wellington County. This regenerative agriculture project has also been supported by Maple Leaf Foods which provided initial funding of \$10,000 to launch this project. The interest of multiple corporate donors in Guelph-Wellington's COIL initiative speaks to the nation-wide recognition our region has gained through our circular-economy-building efforts. The Hub is being designed to facilitate future opportunities for other leaders in corporate Canada, foundational donors and research organizations to further support and participate in this important work.

## **COIL Future Funding and Potential National COIL Network**

Current federal funding for both Our Food Future and COIL will end by December 2023. In January 2022, City Council directed the Guelph Smart Cities Office to seek



additional private and public sector funding to support the City's circular economy work beyond this date. This discussion has not yet been brought before County Council.

COIL has been approached by several municipalities across Canada interested in establishing their own instances of the COIL. Smart Cities believes there could be significant value in establishing a network of COIL clusters across the country building on and extending the work we have pioneered in Guelph and Wellington County.

In our initial visioning, the network would include a series of regional clusters across the country with a national centre-of-expertise in Guelph-Wellington. Each regional cluster would launch their own suite of regionally-focused programs, building on the strategies developed in GW. In addition, there would be a layer of national programs, innovation challenges and awareness campaigns coordinated out of GW. The Smart Cities Office, along with community partners (10C & Innovation Guelph) would also seek continued and expanded funding as the circular economy innovation epicentre for southern Ontario. A sustainable business model is being developed – one that leverages the IP created in the development of the COIL programs and brand.

To date, two regional organizations have signaled their interest in helping co-create this model and discussions are underway with several others. Interested collaborators include:

- Vancouver Economic Commission (serving Vancouver region and BC)
- Halifax Economic Partnership (serving the Maritimes)

Discussions are underway with collaborators around potential funding and operating strategies. From initial discussions with potential federal funders, Smart Cities Guelph is optimistic that there would be interest in helping Guelph-Wellington spread our circular economy expertise to other regions across the country.

As with our current programming, any continuation or expansion of COIL work would leverage external resources and not impact the City or County's core operating budget.

## **Report Authors**

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