



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Committee Report

To: Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee
From: Justine Dainard, Smart Cities Project Manager
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2023
Subject: **Smart Cities Office – November 2023 update**

Background

Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad (COIL)

Innovation Guelph have re-branded as Boundless Accelerator and held an investor event in partnership with COIL on October 24. Participants heard about the case studies of some businesses who have found success in the circular economy programme offerings and also heard the investor side of the story. The event served as a launch day for the COIL Investment Lookbook, which features profiles of over 25 investment-ready Small or Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The Lookbook is available to view online at coil.eco.

Experimental Acres

As harvest season comes to a close, the Experimental Acres hosts are working with the County's Sustainability Programme Coordinator to assess their projects. The participant farms have offered good feedback about the experience.

Applications for the 2024 Experimental Acres programme will open November 15, and will remain open until early January; the Wellington Advertiser will carry ads on November 16 as well as on January 4, 2024. Municipal partners – Grey and Dufferin Counties – are hoping to run the Experimental Acres as their own programmes in 2024 and will align their application dates accordingly.

Improved metrics

The Smart Cities Office is currently working with nine students from the Ivey Business School Sustainable Finance lab. They will be contributing to future seasons of the Experimental Acres by evaluating methods of tracking return-on-investment and other co-benefits which could be helpful metrics of success for this programme. On October 27, the students enjoyed a visit to one of the host farms in Wellington County, where they were able to spend a few hours interviewing the host farmer and learning how to do things like soil sampling and assessment.

Recognition of expertise

Our Food Future and the Experimental Acres has allowed the County to gain expertise in a complex area of multi-solving where food, climate and economy intersect. This expertise is acknowledged as staff receive invitations to participate in conferences, research, and consultation. Two such examples this month are:

- The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada offers international grants from their New Frontiers in Research Fund. Under the title of **2023 International Joint Initiative for Research in Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation**, and in partnership with

seven other countries, Canada is funding interdisciplinary research into complex global challenges. The Smart City Office has been asked to be an external reviewer of some of this fund's project proposals, acknowledging that the expertise we have gained locally has relevance internationally.

- The Environmental Management Branch of Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) has requested a presentation on our Experimental Acres programme so staff can become more familiar with our initiative. OMAFRA has asked to learn more about our structure for supporting innovation on local farms.

Final report from Our Food Future

The Guelph and Wellington Smart City Offices will be releasing the final annual report on the Our Food Future project at the end of this month. The **Seeding Circularity in Communities** report (attached) is an overview of the whole project and includes not only updated data and performance indicators but also many first-hand accounts by our partners. The report will be available online at www.foodfuture.ca.

Internet speed test promotion

Residents and businesses across the County are being encouraged to test their internet connectivity speed. With broadband installation underway, this is the right time to understand where there are gains and gaps. A coordinated ad campaign encouraging these tests will run for the entire month, with ads on radio and social media as well as a postcard insert appearing in the November 16 edition of the Wellington Advertiser. The speed test can be accessed by visiting www.wellington.ca/internet.

Recommendation:

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

Respectfully submitted,



Justine Dainard
Smart Cities Project Manager

Attachments: Seeding Circularity in Communities report