



Staff Report

Administration

Report To: Special Meeting of Council
Meeting Date: August 26, 2019
Report Number: FAF.19.167
Subject: Rural Economic Development Grant Application
Prepared by: Tim Hendry, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.19.167, entitled "Rural Economic Development Grant Application" for information;

AND THAT Council authorizes staff to apply for the Rural Economic Development Grant through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

B. Overview

This report seeks Council endorsement for the Town's 2019 Rural Economic Development ("RED") grant application, as outlined in this staff report.

C. Background

The Rural Economic Development (RED) Grant provides cost-share funding to support activities that create strong rural communities in Ontario, and opens doors to rural economic development through:

- funding assistance to address barriers to economic development, better position rural communities to attract and retain jobs and investment, and enhance economic growth
- funding to build community capacity and support for economic development in Ontario's rural communities
- investments in rural communities to help diversify and grow local economies – making economic growth more inclusive so Rural Ontario continues to share in the province's economic prosperity

The RED Grant consists of two streams with various programs under each stream. The streams include:

- **Economic Diversification and Competitiveness Stream:** up to 50% of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$150,000.
- **Strategic Economic Infrastructure Stream:** up to 30% of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$250,000.

The 2019 RED Grant application intake period opened on July 29th, 2019. Applications are due by September 9th, 2019.

D. Analysis

The intent to apply for the RED Grant was discussed at the Town's Economic Development Advisory Committee meeting on August 12, 2019. At the meeting, committee members were encouraged to contact staff with ideas within the scope of the project streams. Many of the ideas were related to downtown beautification, façade improvements, tourism marketing and minor capital items such as garbage cans, wayfinding signage and benches.

On August 13, 2019, staff participated in a webinar hosted by OMAFRA regarding changes and updates to the program. A key change that was emphasized is that strategic planning, research and studies would not be eligible for funding. The theme for 2019 is related to implementation and tangible results that positively impact economic development.

Through discussion with the Town's OMAFRA Advisor, it is suggested that the Town should consider submitting an application within the following streams:

1) Collaborative Marketing and Outreach

- This application will focus on a promotional tourism campaign with the purpose of attracting tourists to visit the Town of The Blue Mountains.

2) Streetscaping and Landscaping

- This application will focus on the purchase of minor capital items such as wayfinding signage, street furniture, benches, garbage cans, tourism kiosks/information boards, etc.

To further develop the project included within the application, staff will work collaboratively with key contacts from the Thornbury BIA and Clarksburg Village Association.

A detailed update with the content of the application(s) will be presented to Council as an information report in September.

E. The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan

- Goal #1: Create Opportunities for Sustainability
- Objective #1 Retain Existing Business
- Objective #2 Attract New Business
- Objective #5 Improved Visibility and Local Identity

F. Environmental Impacts

N/A

G. Financial Impact

There will be a financial impact to the Town based upon the approval of the grant application by OMAFRA. If an application is approved, the grant will cover 50% (Economic Diversification and Competitiveness Stream) or 30% (Strategic Economic Infrastructure Stream) of the eligible project costs.

To leverage the awarded grant amounts, the Town portion of the project costs will be included in the 2020 Economic Development budget for consideration by Council through the budget process.

H. In consultation with

Shawn Everitt, Chief Administrative Officer

Ruth Prince, Director of Finance and IT Services / Treasurer

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been subject to a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Tim Hendry, communications@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

N/A

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Hendry
Communications and Economic Development Coordinator

Shawn Everitt
Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact:
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