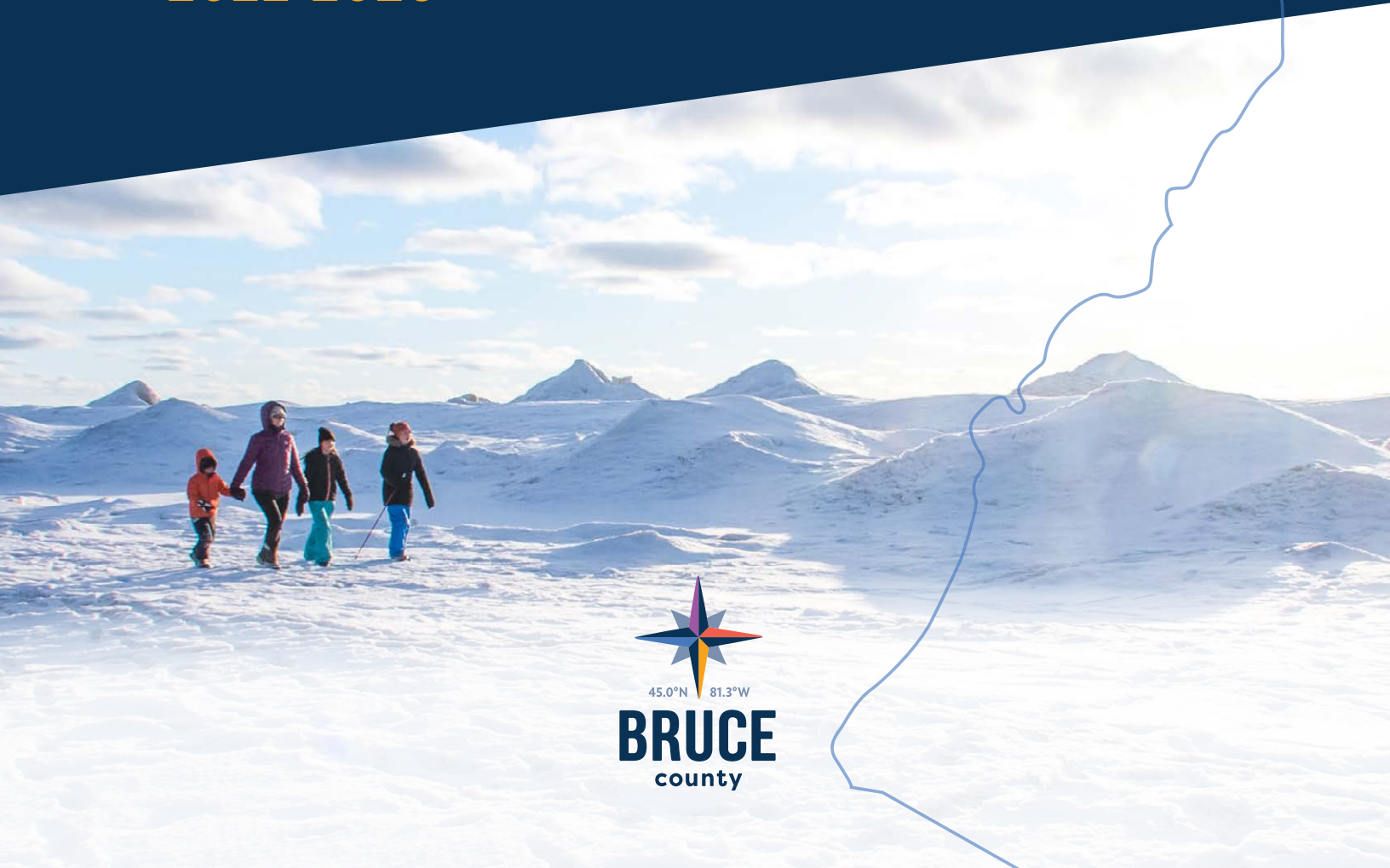


Find Yourself *in* Bruce County

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGIC PLAN
2022-2026





Setting The Stage

The first Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan, “Find Yourself in Bruce County” laid the groundwork for investing in communities, nurturing business growth, and fostering a collaborative approach towards economic prosperity.

Now, the economic landscape in Bruce County has shifted. There are new challenges like the effects of climate change, impacts on the environment, long-term influences from a global pandemic, and an ever-evolving economic landscape. Innovation and collaboration are more important than ever and are the keys to unlocking the best path forward towards a prosperous, sustainable, and responsible future for all.

Our path forward is evolving.

The next five-year 2022-2026 Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan evolves “The Macro Approach” to make working with community and regional partners the principal consideration of every project and initiative. Through extensive data collection, research, and consultations with key stakeholders, the enhanced Macro Approach was built to reflect a commitment to forging a collective path forward in collaboration and meaningful partnership.

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Where We Are

From rugged escarpment to sandy beaches and rolling countryside, Bruce County's natural landscape is as unique and varied as the people who call it home. Bruce County is where the explorers, the dreamers, the get-out-and-doers come to connect with what matters in life, find opportunities to grow, and be part of a community that cares about one another.





The Bruce Story

Bruce County is the place where you find adventure every day, all year round. It's where community is important, and being a good neighbour comes naturally. It's where innovation and pushing boundaries go hand in hand with a long walk on the beach or a day spent paddling the river.

We are the place where progress is celebrated, and where dreaming goes far beyond watching the star-filled night sky or gazing at the sunset on the horizon. Fresh air inspires fresh ideas, and we seek to nurture that creative spirit in every aspect of our community.

Here is where entrepreneurs are surfers, engineers are mountain bikers, farmers are hockey players, and teachers are kayakers.

Here is where everybody is an explorer.

An Explorer's Glance at Our Past

The first step of any good plan starts with looking at where we have been, where we are now, and reviewing what has and has not worked. Using research and data to understand the business climate and uncover where the barriers to invest exist, we can understand the current economic state in the region. Only then can we build a strategy that is able to truly achieve its goals and desired outcomes.

The strategic planning process involved three phases to gather information to guide the new direction of the Bruce County economic development strategy:

Phase 1

Research and data collection

Phase 2

Engagement and consultations

Phase 3

Final report

To understand our past, the County's Economic Development programs were reviewed, the current economic landscape was assessed, and coordinated extensive engagement with key stakeholders took place. The purpose of this important initial work was so that the County could gain a solid understanding of the post-pandemic economic landscape and identify areas for opportunity and gaps in its current service delivery model. This process ensured that the new plan would include the appropriate supports and programs to advance the continuing growth and sustainability of the Bruce economy working alongside Bruce County's local municipalities.

Through the Support the Bruce: Business Sustainability Fund, Bruce County provided \$1.75M to 504 businesses in 2020 and 2021 to help them continue to operate, pivot, and provide vital goods and services to the community.

Synopsis of the Phases and Results

PHASE 1: RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

The research and the analysis provided the following information:

- **Demographic profile** with details of population, related trends, income levels, and education profiles by municipality
- **Labour force and employment profiles** with details of unemployment trends, labour force by industry, labour force concentration, and commuting patterns
- **Assessment of the business environment** and the number and **type of businesses** in Bruce County classified by the number of employees, size of business establishments, and businesses by industry
- Analysis of the **major local supply chain**
- A complete picture of the County's **key sectors** and how local, regional, and global trends are **impacting businesses** in Bruce

PHASE 2: ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATIONS

MDB Insight, in partnership with Bruce County staff, completed research and undertook engagement activities aimed at gaining insight from key stakeholders, businesses, and groups of economic participants as part of the Bruce County Economic Development Strategy.

Overall, the following were completed:

- 27 stakeholder interviews
- 10 focus group workshops
- 138 business surveys



COVID-19 Impact

A good strategy must address all external factors. It's no secret that the COVID-19 Pandemic had forced the business community in Bruce County to pivot. Efforts to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus and keep communities safe meant that businesses needed to adapt and find new ways to bring their products and services to customers.

Despite the challenges faced due to the pandemic:

- Tourists continued to visit Bruce County's major attractions
- New businesses continued to open in the downtowns
- More businesses developed outdoor patios and offered curbside pick-up making downtowns come to life
- Working from home made way for new entrepreneurs to act upon their ideas and build new ventures
- The number of 'home-based food' businesses started increased, as changes were made to ease industry restrictions through Public Health regulations
- The Bruce County Economic Development team conducted a record 840 consultations with business owners
- Efforts around workforce attraction and filling vacant positions continued



Bruce County's Key Industries

Where Tourists, Farmers, and Innovators are explorers who seek to break new ground and uncover hidden possibilities at every turn. Bruce County is a haven for the dreamers who become doers — the ones who turn ideas into opportunities.



BRUCE COUNTY'S MAJOR SECTORS ARE **AGRICULTURE, TOURISM AND ENERGY**



Agriculture

Agriculture plays an important role in Bruce County's economy and rural identity. Bruce County is home to a prosperous, diverse, and expanding agricultural sector with a high concentration of livestock operations. Our natural assets are finite, non-renewable resources, and our agricultural lands are the foundation for food, fibre, the local economy, agri-food exports, and economic prosperity.



Our role in agriculture:

- Protect farmland and promote farm business opportunities through good land use planning practices
- Successfully plan for Bruce County to be a place where future generations of farmers continue to prosper
- Support local food producers and expand their opportunities beyond our borders to create markets for a thriving, healthy agricultural community
- Support opportunities related to clusters around agri-food processing and value-added production
- Support value-added farming initiatives by identifying the niche opportunities that add to the original commodities



Tourism

Bruce County is an explorer's dream. Home to the world-famous Bruce Trail, gorgeous sunsets on sandy beaches, wilderness paths perfect for adrenaline-pumping activities, and hundreds of kilometres of rivers and Great Lakes coastline to paddle. It's no wonder that tourism is one of the most important and largest industries in Bruce County.



Our role in tourism:

To utilize our Explore the Bruce program to market and promote Bruce County's best and most authentic experiences.

This is achieved by helping our local communities:

- Develop destinations through product development
- Showcase the best of what Bruce County has to offer
- Broaden online reach with free and expansive exposure
- Encourage visitors to stay longer, spend more, and visit during the shoulder seasons
- Disperse visitors more broadly across the County to reduce pressure on sensitive sites
- Collaborate and build valuable tourism experiences through offering grants and incentives



Energy

Home to one of the world's largest nuclear operators, Bruce Power, Bruce County's energy sector has the economy, location, natural resources, and ambition to build clean energy projects with partners as a leader in the future of energy technology, research, and innovation.

A significant opportunity exists for the Bruce region to produce clean hydrogen from clean nuclear and renewable electricity, and in doing so, position it to not only contribute to but also to benefit from, the transition to a low-carbon economy.



Our role in energy:

- Identify potential spin offs and business development opportunities from the Bruce Power Nuclear Plant in relation to both energy and engineering cluster development
- Support Bruce Power's Life-Extension Program's Major Component Replacement project that saw 60 plus suppliers relocate to the Grey-Bruce-Huron area to support the work. (This work secures 22,000 jobs directly and indirectly from operations and an additional 5,000 jobs annually throughout the program providing economic security and ensuring quality local jobs and contracts for local businesses now and into the future)
- Understand cross-sector benefits. The extension program offers a unique opportunity for Bruce County and regional governments to engage in cross-sector development efforts and use nuclear energy growth as a foundation for long-term success
- Explore and find ways to grow the energy sector locally
- Facilitate the commercial deployment of hydrogen technologies by marketing utility-scale hydrogen production and energy storage technologies

Where We Are Going

The Bruce County community is just as invested in business success as any business owner or entrepreneur. That's because we take care of each other, and with more small businesses than big corporations, it's easy to see why.



Taking a passion and starting a business or pursuing a lifelong dream is doable here. With customers who care and a lifestyle that encourages the pursuit of adventure, Bruce County is the place to be a part of something bigger.



What We Learned

Through the research, engagement, and consultation process, the Final Report ensured that the new Strategic Plan included the appropriate supports and programs to advance the continuing growth and sustainability of the Bruce economy. This work is done alongside Bruce County's partner municipalities.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on businesses throughout Bruce County. Through the resilience and support of the community, businesses were able to adapt and meet customer needs. These adaptations and pivots showcased how truly innovative Bruce County's entrepreneur's are.

The Final Report combined the research from Phase 1 with the feedback from the engagement and consultations in Phase 2.

Four recommendations were highlighted for consideration in the development of the new 2022-2026 Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan:

1. Demonstrate meaningful collaborations
2. Balance community transformation
3. Anticipate supply chain opportunities
4. Stabilize workforce reliability

Mission, Values, and Long-Term Goals

Mission

To provide workforce, community, and business development services to ensure that the County's attraction value remains high, that it is positioned towards growth, and that opportunities exist for visitors, residents, and businesses.

Values



Inspire

To create a culture of innovation and opportunities



Attract

To connect to a broad range of people who are potential prospects



Support

To collaborate and encourage success for all

Long-Term Goals

1. Growth of Tax Base / Tax Assessment

Increase the tax base by promoting Bruce County as a place to live and attract entrepreneurs to the area

2. Growth of Population Base

Increase the population base by attracting visitors and entrepreneurs to the area and providing business opportunities

3. Diversify the Economic Base

Foster, position, and promote entrepreneurial opportunities in Bruce County through cluster development around Bruce County's key sectors: tourism, energy, and agriculture

4. Business Retention and Expansion

Support and foster local opportunities, efforts, and advancement by attracting new entrepreneurs and supporting business expansions

Economic Development Strategic Framework

Macro Approach

Marketing and Communications

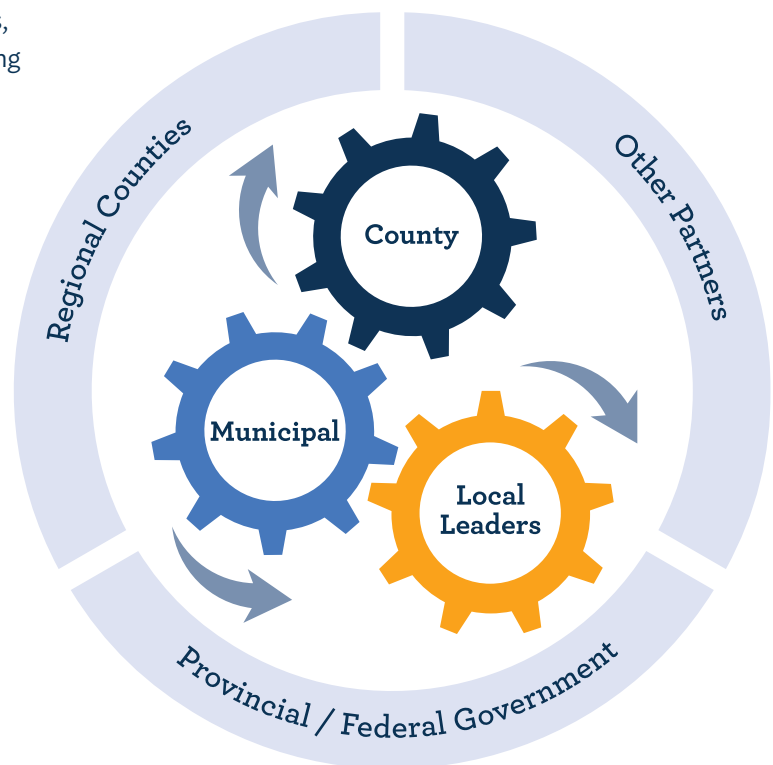


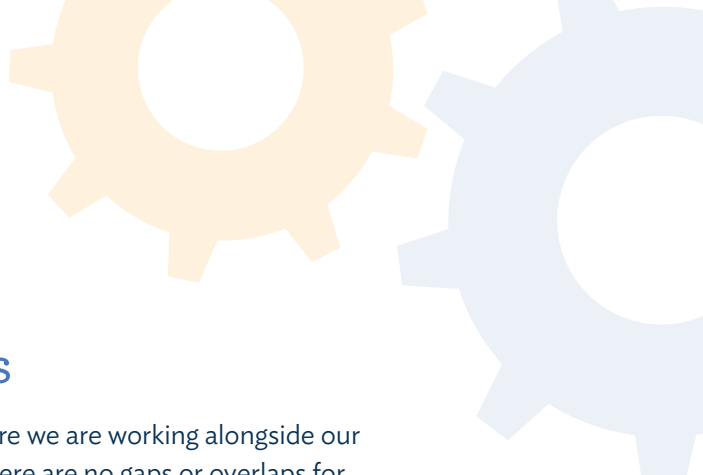
The Macro Approach

A key guiding principle of the 2017-2021 “Find Yourself in Bruce County” Economic Development Strategic Plan was a focus on collaboration and communication among local, regional, and senior levels of government. This was developed into the community economic development model, ‘The Macro Approach,’ which involves the County, municipalities, business groups, and local entrepreneurs working together to ensure successful changes on the ground.

The 2022-2026 Economic Development Strategic Plan’s Strategic Framework starts with the Macro Approach. As economic development efforts in Bruce County have evolved over the past five years, so has the need to evolve the Macro Approach. The new Macro Approach recognizes the collaborative relationship among federal, provincial, and local governments as well as other groups such as: Nuclear Innovation Institute, Indigenous Communities, Four County Labour Market Planning Board, YMCA Grey Bruce, Regional Tourism Organization 7, and more.

This evolution emphasizes the need to encourage collaboration and communication with regional and community partners to ensure a coordinated approach towards economic growth is realized to support prosperity for the long term.





Working Together for Success

The Macro Approach sits at the top of everything we do to ensure we are working alongside our Municipal and community partners in a coordinated effort so there are no gaps or overlaps for service delivery.

-  **BRUCE COUNTY**
Our role is to cast a wide net, positioning the region, creating awareness at the broader level, facilitating outreach, and filtering opportunities. Additionally, the County acts in a leadership capacity by administering the overall Strategy.
-  **MUNICIPAL**
The Municipalities are to work at ensuring their communities are ready for business, selling their communities’ business brands, managing recruitment tools, and supporting local leaders.
-  **LOCAL LEADERS**
Local leaders need to work to foster a business culture with ambassadors on the ground, nurturing and guiding new and current business opportunities.

Working with External Partners

- REGIONAL COUNTIES**
Bruce County’s neighbouring Counties work together to address regional issues and promote Southwestern Ontario as a place to innovate, support, and grow.
- PROVINCIAL / FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**
Senior levels of government advocate on behalf of the entire region and foster a growth-focused mindset while providing financial aid to boost infrastructure and economic development.
- OTHER PARTNERS**
Each inhabiting its own unique role, other partners provide support to the business and local community to ensure healthy and sustainable growth, including financial, mentorship, and resource support.

... Because we’re stronger as a team.

Macro Approach Objectives

Two fundamental objectives of an evolved Macro Approach include:

1. Develop a Joint Regional Economic Development Working Group to collaborate and work on regional issues:

- Work alongside municipal Economic Development Officers (EDOs) on a continuous basis
- Foster a collaborative approach to regional issues and solve problems together for the benefit of all communities
- Develop regional initiatives that allow municipalities to share resources and ideas
- Work alongside municipalities and seek collaboration along industry lines (agriculture, tourism, energy, retail, home builders, etc.) and on topical issues (affordable housing, workforce, transportation, broadband, youth, etc.)

2. Community Relations with External Partners

- Cooperate and collaborate between the various levels of government, supporting organizations and regional organizations in and around Bruce County
- Expand opportunities to collaborate and share resources among organizations



Marketing and Communications

“In Bruce County, the search for work-life balance ends — it just comes naturally. So easy that you might just find, like we do, that smiles are bigger and a little more frequent around here. Bruce is about an alternative lifestyle: less complex, affordable, and about community. It is active, energetic, social, and rugged.”

The Economic Development team members are the guides in partnership with our Land Use Planning colleagues to an “even-better Bruce County.” Everything we do is through the lens of marketing. With that in mind, the phrase above is our mantra. It is the guiding principle in all our messaging to all potential and future “Explorers.”

Our grounding framework is to motivate people to visit, live, invest, or grow a business here. The Strategic Priorities of business development, workforce development, and community development create the framework for how we work with communities, support competitive strengths, and move the economy forward in a sustainable way with regional issues in mind. Tactics foster collaboration and communication as described in the Macro Approach.

The objectives of the Plan are achieved by executing marketing efforts around the narrative of Bruce County as a place to “Be an Explorer.”



Target Audience

The County supports motivating people to visit, live, or start or move a business here.

Audiences include:

VISITORS

Bruce County inspires curiosity, nurtures exploration, and celebrates discovery. Visitors have an emotional bond with Bruce County that has the potential to last a lifetime.

RESIDENTS

Bruce County residents are the dreamers who take the roads less travelled and encourage their children to look under rocks, curious about what the path ahead looks like. Bruce County's Economic Development Strategy welcomes new residents who want to explore farm life in the morning, beach life in the afternoon, and bright, starry skies all night long; who want to turn alternatives into sustainable choices; and who collaborate with their neighbours to create welcoming, thriving communities.

ENTREPRENEURS

Bruce County entrepreneurs see tried and true as an invitation to try something new. Their tinkering leads to invention, their art becomes industry, and their sweat becomes equity. In Bruce County, energy, nature, and innovation all combine to create fertile ground to make what is dreamed possible.

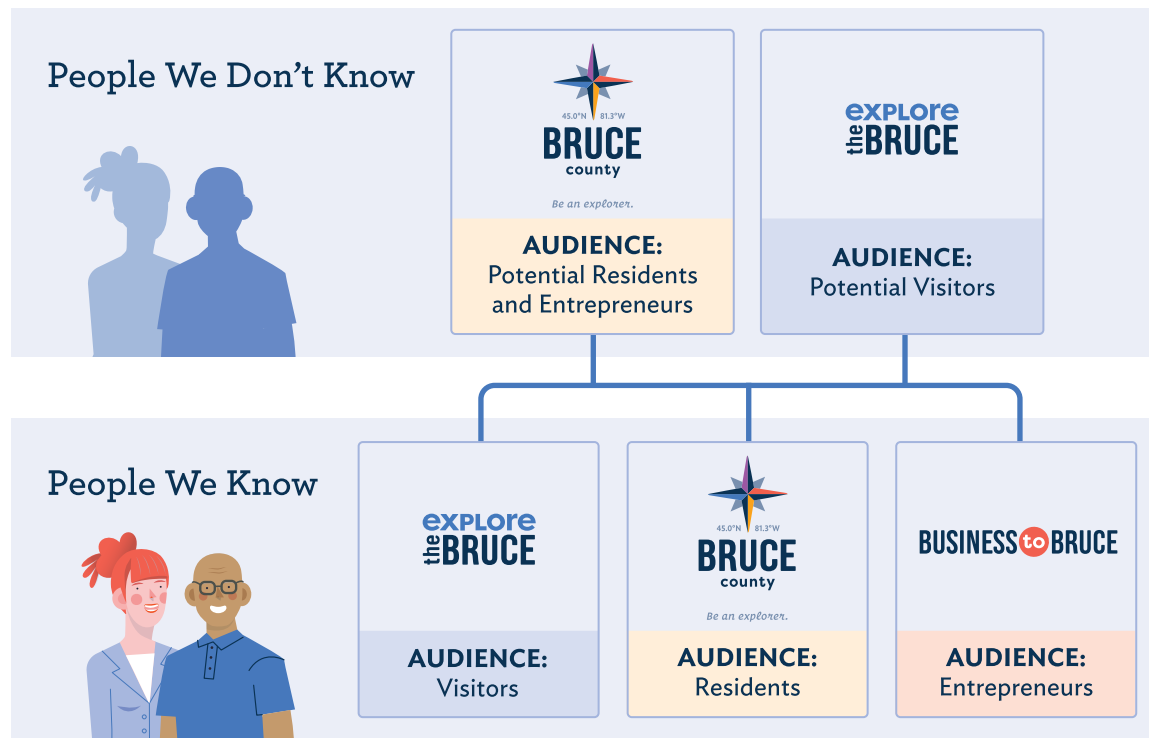
Here is where entrepreneurs are surfers, engineers are mountain bikers, farmers are hockey players, and teachers are kayakers.

Here is where everybody is an explorer.

COMMUNICATION IS DIVIDED INTO TWO SEGMENTS:

1. People we don't know — those who we would like to attract to visit here, live here, and work or start a business here

2. People we know — those who visit here, live here (our residents), or own a business here (our entrepreneurs)






Over the years, Bruce County has successfully reached the people we know. The creative strategy shifts to include a coordinated focus on attracting the people we don't know. Reaching this new segment will be done through the development of creative messaging to motivate audiences to visit, live, work, or build a business here.



Objectives

Bruce County will use its strong brands to reach the specific audiences and achieve the following objectives.

<p>To attract visitors during the shoulder seasons, to increase the length of their stay, and to visit all regions in Bruce County (Interior, Lakeshore, and Peninsula)</p>	<p>AUDIENCE: Visitors</p>	
<p>To provide messaging to visitors of Bruce County which can help convert them into full-time residents</p>	<p>AUDIENCE: Visitors</p>	
<p>To attract residents and explorers to consider relocating to Bruce County</p>	<p>AUDIENCE: Residents</p>	



To attract entrepreneurs and investors to start a business in Bruce County

AUDIENCE:
Entrepreneurs



To support existing entrepreneurs in Bruce County

AUDIENCE:
Existing
Entrepreneurs



To support community development and product development

AUDIENCE:
Municipalities,
Community Partners,
Businesses



Taking a passion and starting a business or pursuing a lifelong dream is what happens here.

Strategic Priorities

With the Macro Approach leading every Economic Development initiative — setting the foundation — and the marketing, key messaging, and brands used to communicate with and attract visitors, residents, and entrepreneurs, the following Strategic Initiatives and accompanying objectives will be strongly supported and provide direction toward economic success in Bruce County.

Business Development

Through Business to Bruce, Bruce County will support entrepreneurs and existing businesses, by providing grants, training, and support programs to foster growth. To attract new business and investment Bruce County will leverage marketing efforts of the “Be an Explorer” narrative. This means creating a solid base to help businesses nurture and grow.

Objectives

Business Foundations

Provide support for business development opportunities across the supply chain and lay the groundwork for sustainable and successful businesses. Focus on research and data to support and retain existing businesses while attracting investors and entrepreneurs to Bruce County.

Focus areas:

- Support business growth and development
- Retain and expand businesses
- Anticipate supply chain opportunities



Supports, Outreach, and Education

Support business growth and development by connecting businesses to resources, access to educational opportunities, and one-on-one consultations that are geared to the needs of the local business community.

Focus areas:

- Support entrepreneurial growth and development
- Reward diversification of businesses

Sector Development and Enhancements

Foster advancement of key sectors — tourism, agriculture, and energy — while leveraging their strengths to grow and develop new opportunities. With the unique opportunities and challenges in each sector, businesses can expand by diversifying their products and services.

Focus areas:

- Support tourism business development
- Support the clean energy industry and partners
- Support the enhancement of the agriculture sector



Workforce Development

A strong and committed workforce will support the growth of our communities and build a foundation for continued prosperity. Long-term economic success relies on the strength of businesses to attract, retain, and build a skilled workforce. The Workforce Development Strategy aims to connect businesses with educational and government resources to collectively understand the required skills needed now and into the future.


Objectives

Continuous Data Collection

Use the 'Jobs in Bruce' web platform and external data sources to continuously collect and interpret data to build the required knowledge of local education and skills gaps to assess industry needs, labour needs, hiring trends, and grow workforce talent in the region.

Focus areas:

- Identify current employer labour needs
- Identify local education and skills gaps



We are the place where progress is celebrated, and where dreaming goes far beyond watching the star-filled night sky or gazing at the sunset on the horizon.

Attraction

Research has determined that immigrants and newcomers are a primary target audience for Bruce County, along with millennials looking for an explorer lifestyle. Coordination across all sectors of government, community, and business will be essential to succeed in attraction efforts, including taking a broad regional approach with continual support from local municipalities.

Focus areas:

- Identify attraction audiences
 - Use appropriate messaging and methods to reach audiences
-

Retention

Develop inclusive communities that provide opportunities and assets that people look for in a place to call home. Provide ongoing support to grow welcoming and diverse communities where people want to live, build a business, or work.

Focus areas:

- Support welcoming communities
 - Support positive employer culture
-

Skills Building

Implement ongoing measures to combat the skills gap between industry and traditional education, including local skills development, the bridging of education gaps, and raising awareness with local employers about pathways to employment and how to foster development. To bridge these gaps requires involvement from everyone within our communities.

Focus areas:

- Bridge skills and education gaps
- Support succession planning
- Address sector-specific skills gaps



Community Development

Through the Spruce the Bruce community development program, Bruce County will help to build vibrant and welcoming communities. The County will be highlighted as a place to live, work, or build a business by helping support product development and infrastructure improvements, which will attract residents and entrepreneurs. People are looking for a good quality of life and an attractive place to build a business — the Community Development Strategy is how Bruce County will help make it happen.

Objectives

Product Development and Destination Development

Work with municipalities to develop communities into destinations while revitalizing commercial cores.

Focus areas:

- Support municipal annual action plans
- Provide incentives and grants
- Support downtown development



Bruce County is where community is important, and being a good neighbour comes naturally.

Environmental Innovation and Adaptation

Partner with municipalities on innovative projects with an environmental lens and climate change awareness, while fostering partnerships between local businesses and other organizations to support one another.

Focus areas:

- Support agriculture and sustainable tourism initiatives
- Enhance active transportation opportunities
- Disperse tourists across the County and during all seasons

Address Regional Initiatives

Support innovative initiatives around regional challenges identified such as affordable and attainable housing options while helping to develop community amenities and infrastructure improvements to encourage long-term resident growth and attraction.

Focus areas:

- Support innovative ways to attract residential development
- Support the enhancement of community amenities
- Support infrastructure investments and servicing needs
- Partner with the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services

Measure and Report

The Economic Development team's business plans will be updated yearly to reflect the progress made and the remaining work to be accomplished with each priority and its objectives. By updating and executing these actions annually, we can measure long-term success. Through the entire strategic planning process, we have learned that it is important to stay on our toes, and that starts with ensuring we are ready for every twist and turn on our path to economic growth and prosperity.

Progress on achieving the objectives set out in the Strategic Priorities will be monitored annually using performance metrics that offer an evidence-based assessment of the outcomes and impact. Programs will be adapted yearly as needed to address the current economic landscape.

Reporting the progress and work accomplished relating to each objective will be done through communication to County Council on a quarterly and annual basis. Additionally, updated Key Performance Indicators (KPI) will be shared on Bruce County's website and to the local municipal partners through e-newsletters.

Performance Metrics provide a consistent framework to evaluate the following:

- Did we achieve what we set out to do?
- Did our efforts have the desired impact?
- Are we closer to achieving our strategic goals because of these efforts?

Key Performance Metrics

Performance metrics allow for an evaluation of tactics and strategies that support efficient and effective planning and resource allocation. They are a diagnostic tool that focuses on energy, attention, and effort. They may also help to support a municipality's commitment to accountability and transparency.

- Long-Term Goals
 - Growth of tax base / tax assessment
 - Growth of population base
 - Diversify the economic base
 - Business retention and expansion
- Annual Land Use Planning and Economic Development Business Plans
- Annual Key Performance Indicators







READY? JOIN OUR ADVENTURE AND
Be an explorer.



Be an explorer.