

Bruce County Economic Development Annual Report 2021



Be an explorer.



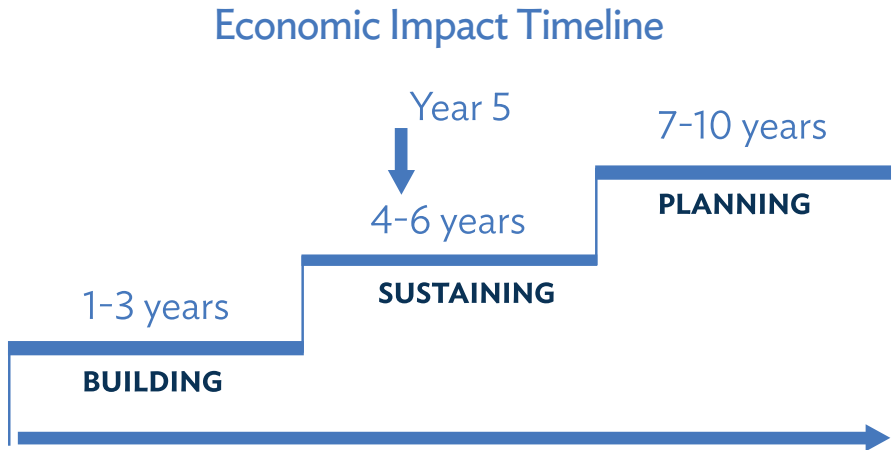
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How is Bruce County Doing?

The Bruce County Economic Development Annual Report provides a yearly update on the performance of programs and the impact they have had on communities throughout the County. The objective is to measure progress towards securing economic growth and prosperity across Bruce County. Bruce County Economic Development aims to influence and support business growth, foster community improvement, and secure a reliable, skilled workforce now and into the future.

As the “Find Yourself in Bruce County” Economic Development Strategic Plan 2017 – 2021 exits its final year, this report demonstrates the progress made on goals set forth in the strategic plan as well as details the accomplishments achieved in 2021. The report shows the overall illustration of the programs and initiatives undertaken collaboratively with municipalities to achieve economic stability, recovery, and eventual growth.



Businesses worked hard to adapt to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, the Support the Bruce: Business Sustainability Fund continued to provide a unique array of supports to help businesses pivot, adapt, enhance, or reimagine their business models. This fund included grants and a loan option, built to help entrepreneurs combat the unique circumstances and economic impacts of the pandemic.

While managing these unprecedented times, the economic development programs have continued with a deep focus on business and community support measures.

- The new five-year, 2022-2026 Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan has been formulated and will guide Bruce County's economic development in the next 5 years.
- Bruce County in partnership with Grey County formulated a Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership Settlement Strategy, a road map to build welcoming and inclusive communities in Grey Bruce and improve the integration of newcomers.
- The Spruce the Bruce program provided financial support to business owners in making modifications due to the pandemic and eliminated the 50 percent matching requirement.
- Bruce County continued to support innovation around tourism through the Ontario Tourism Innovation Lab.
- Bruce County developed advertising campaigns promoting sustainable tourism on the Bruce Peninsula in collaboration with local and regional partners.
- The Business to Bruce program was audited to strengthen the program and continued to collaborate with the municipalities in achieving business development objectives.
- The actions items outlined in the Workforce Development and Attraction Strategy continued to address the critical labour force shortage in the region.

The Bruce County Economic Development team is looking forward to 2022 to implement the new Economic Development Strategic Plan and work on 3 priorities: Business Development, Workforce Development, and Community Development. Bruce County Economic Development will continue to help and support businesses through resources, business guidance, training, and mentorship.

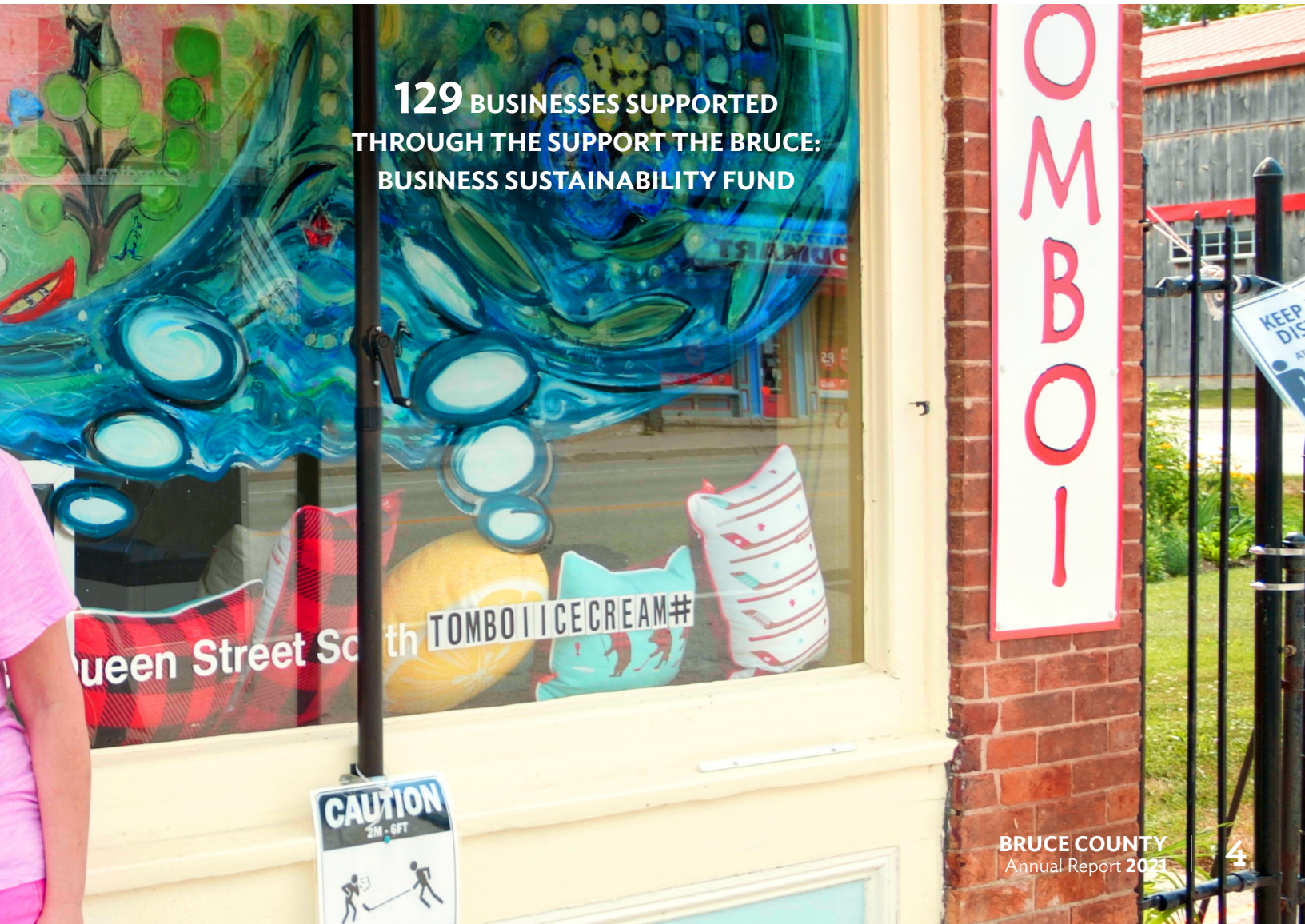
The Macro Approach

Bruce County's Economic Development Strategic Plan acknowledges that Bruce County has latent leadership potential and by leveraging partnership and cooperation with lower-tier municipalities and businesses we can succeed as a region. Bruce County's role is to create awareness at the broader level and facilitate and filter opportunities to action through these partnerships. The overarching plan is to motivate Bruce County's audiences to visit, live, and start or move a business here. The lower-tier municipalities are responsible for making communities ready for new business and residents, where local leaders foster a strong and welcoming community for business and newcomers.





129 BUSINESSES SUPPORTED
THROUGH THE SUPPORT THE BRUCE:
BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY FUND



Audiences

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 build what is dreamed possible.



SOCIAL HOUSE

BONFIRE

- ON QUEEN

397 BUSINESS
CONSULTATIONS CONDUCTED

Measuring Success

The success of the economic development programs is measured through the impact those programs have on Bruce County's communities and the broader region. This is done through analyzing the Outputs (activities and programs indicated by key performance indicators); Value/ Benefit (the impact of the programs and activities on each community) and the Outcomes (the impact on the long-term economic development goals).



108 JOBS CREATED THROUGH
BUSINESS TO BRUCE SUPPORT



Outputs

The outputs are the activities and programs delivered to the clients. These are short-term and measurable actions. All these actions tie to the long-term goals for economic development. Below are the key performance indicators of 2021 and shows the change from 2017:

INDICATOR	2021	2017	% CHANGE
Number of business consultations	397	175	+126%
Number of business events, seminars, and webinars	98	39	+ 151%
Number of entrepreneurs trained	2877	630	+357%
Number of outreach activities	172	13	+1,223%
Number of outreach connections made	498	138	+261%
Number of start-up businesses supported	36	28	+29%
Number of jobs created	108	36	+200%
Number of Spruce the Bruce grants awarded	104	26	+300%
Number of page views on all economic development web assets*	1,302,111		
Number of followers on all economic development social media assets**	59,857		

* This includes economic development assets on brucecounty.on.ca, explorethebruce.com, businesstobruce.com, jobsinbruce.ca, and beanexplorer.ca.

** This includes Instagram, Twitter and Facebook accounts for Business to Bruce, Explore the Bruce, Bruce County Economic Development and Spruce the Bruce.



Economic Development Action Plan 2017-2021

PROGRAM	OBJECTIVE	ACTION ITEMS	RESULT		
Business to Bruce	Business Foundations	Work with Bruce communities as capacity is developed locally for participation in Business to Bruce.	Completed		
		Development of targeted strategy for each Bruce Community demonstrating capacity through the identification of opportunity gaps and further developing strategies to overcome those gaps at the local level.	Completed		
		Supporting participating communities in the development and implementation of tools to implement the Business to Bruce program.	Completed		
		Understand the gaps and identify the type of skills needed to overcome these gaps.	Completed		
		Understand the immigration rules around attracting a skilled workforce.	Completed		
		Work with recruitment companies and local businesses.	Completed		
		Supporting the communities in the development and implementation of tools to implement the Business to Bruce program.	Completed		
		Promote local career opportunities to young people in high school.	Completed		
		Business Marketing and Promotion		Bring online the Business to Bruce web portal which targets the specific entrepreneurs needed in Bruce County.	Completed
				Work with Warton and Kincardine to bring online their target marketing plans and tools for local entrepreneurial attraction.	Completed
Building community profiles for municipalities and communities in Bruce County. (Townfolio)	Completed				
Creation of databases, and collection of information to be readily available for potential investors.	Completed				
Compile and coordinate content for the economic development section on the corporate website.	Completed				
Create and implement Marketing and Communications Plan.	Completed				
Work with additional Bruce communities under Business to Bruce program as capacity is developed locally.	Completed				

Economic Development Action Plan 2017-2021

PROGRAM	OBJECTIVE	ACTION ITEMS	RESULT
	Support/ Outreach/ Education	Create a supportive culture for entrepreneurs to explore business ideas and opportunities.	Completed
		Develop a mentorship network that supports entrepreneurs.	Completed
		Expose youth to entrepreneurship.	Completed
		Administration of the Business Development Programs offered through the Province.	Completed
		Ongoing business skills education and training opportunities.	Completed
		Host events that support an entrepreneurial culture and networking and also address specific business needs.	Completed
Explore the Bruce	Tourism Attraction and Product Development	Style Guide Development – develop an Explore the Bruce style guide to ensure consistency amongst all collateral pieces.	Completed
		Best of Bruce Guide – to develop a Visitors Guide to highlight the ‘Best of’ activities and attractions in Bruce County.	Completed
		Collateral Development – continue to develop online content, maps and brochures that highlight specific activities in Bruce County. This includes: Paddling, Cycling, Hiking (Trails) and Winter Activities Brochures.	Completed
		Tradeshaw – attend the Outdoor Adventure Show and Sportsmenshow.	Completed
		Position the Peninsula as a place to visit in the shoulder seasons.	Completed
		Assessing the Economic Impact of Tourism in Bruce County using a Data Aggregation Strategy.	Completed
		Attract visitors to visit the Lakeshore and Interior Hubs year round.	Completed
		Marketing Plan and Campaign Development – develop and implement seasonal marketing campaigns to highlight key activities and to increase visitation.	
		Media tours/outreach - to continue to host Media Tours and to target Bruce County's Target Audience to highlight Bruce County as a place to visit and a place to stay.	Completed

Economic Development Action Plan 2017-2021

PROGRAM	OBJECTIVE	ACTION ITEMS	RESULT
Spruce the Bruce	Community Development	Develop Community Toolkits for additional communities that are organized.	Completed
		Organize / Build Community Capacity – continue to engage and work with each community to ensure commitment and their engagement.	Completed
		Energize - continue to energize and empower local community partners to embrace their community brand.	Completed
		Strategize - continue to review and update each Community's Action Plan with each of the local partners to ensure that they can continue to complete items on their action plans.	Completed
		Visualize - continue to work with lower tier municipalities to align their product development efforts align with their community brands.	Completed
		Capitalize – make revisions to the Spruce the Bruce Grants to better align with Explore the Bruce and Business to Bruce initiatives.	Completed
		Support physical design projects such as Wayfinding and Directional Signage.	Completed
		Support downtown streetscape improvements.	Completed
		Collaborate with local partners to identify products and activities that need to be further developed.	Completed
Nuclear and Energy Support	Nuclear/ Energy Cluster Development	Research and Analysis: identify any opportunity gap to see where Bruce County can support this unique cluster of educated and skilled workforce.	Completed
		Develop a plan to engage and mobilize this group in business development.	Completed
Agriculture Enhancements	Support Agriculture Opportunities	Research and assessing the Agriculture economy and identify any opportunity gaps.	Completed
		Continue to support Grey Bruce Agriculture and Culinary Association.	Completed

Marketing & Communications

Successful economic development needs strong marketing strategies to promote communities and grow local economies. The overarching Marketing and Communications Plan invites the audiences to “Be An Explorer” through strong delivery of the Bruce County brand and visitor, resident, and business attraction messaging.

Bruce County is where the roads less travelled become a journey: in life, our work, in our communities, and in how we spend our days together. The Live Here campaign invites newcomers, immigrants, and millennials to uncover the lifestyle and opportunities that guide residents and business owners to be explorers and call Bruce County home.

A video series, “Choosing to Call Bruce County Home”, followed people who had relocated to the region and told their unique stories to entice others to follow them. The campaign tagline “You Are Right” reaffirmed to millennials that life can be simpler than the chaos of the city and that a life enriched by nature doesn’t need to wait until retirement. Alternatively, the tagline “Do You Remember?” asked newcomers and immigrants to think back to when they were looking at photos of the great Canadian outdoors, and then landed in the city, and how Bruce communities can offer them the essential lifestyle for New Canadians. The campaigns are all centered around the iconic “Be An Explorer” tagline and brand.

A photograph of three men in an office environment. The man in the center, wearing a dark blue hoodie, is pointing towards a computer monitor on the right. The man on the left, wearing a black hoodie, is looking at the monitor. The man on the right, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, is also looking towards the monitor. The background shows a whiteboard with some writing and a computer monitor displaying a Windows desktop.

WON 2 HERMES CREATIVE AWARDS
GOLD FOR NPX: CHOOSING TO CALL BRUCE COUNTY HOME VIDEO
PLATINUM FOR BUSINESS TO BRUCE PAISLEY: EXPRESS YOUR TALENTS VIDEO

Support the Bruce: Business Sustainability Fund

economic
TASK FORCE

The Support the Bruce: Business Sustainability Fund continued to stabilize the Bruce economy during the COVID-19 pandemic. With Bruce County Council's support, this plan was developed in conjunction with Bruce County Economic Task Force to guide Bruce County back to a thriving business economy. The total fund (2020-2021) of \$1,750,000 sparked resiliency and supported businesses as they pivoted, adapted, enhanced, reimagined, and implemented safety protocols through an array of grant options and a loan. In 2021,

- 7 Emergency Business Sustainability loans administered
- 18 Business Pivots / Adaptations grants awarded
- 104 Community Development improvements supported

A photograph of two women in a vineyard, smiling and reaching for clusters of dark grapes on the vines. The woman on the left is wearing a dark jacket and a white headscarf, while the woman on the right is wearing a maroon sweater. The background shows more grapevines and a cloudy sky.

\$462,597
GIVEN OUT TO SUPPORT BUSINESSES

Spruce the Bruce



The Spruce the Bruce is a community development program helping to build vibrant communities people want to call home. The matching funding requirement of fifty percent was removed and the total available funding for the program was increased to \$250,000. These changes were made to support local businesses and communities in making COVID-19 related modifications such as sidewalk, rooftop, back patios, installing take out windows, building additional entrances/exits, and other features to support physical distancing.

	PROJECT SUPPORTED	NUMBER OF GRANTS
For business:	Façade Improvement and Sidewalk Patio	63
	Perpendicular Sign and Awning	20
	Collaborative Marketing	4
For community partners, organizations, and municipalities:	Community Signage	1
	Streetscape Beautification	15
	Destination Infrastructure	1

THE POWER OF Appealing Façades



Business to Bruce



Business to Bruce is a business attraction program that focuses on inspiring, attracting, and supporting entrepreneurs to build the life and business they want. In partnership with the Province of Ontario, through the Summer Company Initiative, four entrepreneurs were awarded a total of \$12,000:

1. Sadie Rhan, The Ordinary Orchid, Paisley
2. Leyah Smith, Black Excellence Art, Formosa
3. Katie Franklin, Franklin's Produce, Kincardine
4. Jonny Pickett, 8 x 8 Beach Apparel, Wiarton

The Starter Company Plus Initiative in partnership with the Province of Ontario granted three start-up businesses a total of \$15,000 along with mentorship and training:

1. Amanda Thede, Cottage Country Designs, Port Elgin
2. Kevin Aleinik, The Smoky Cactus, Southampton
3. Angela Devitt, Farm to Flour, Kincardine

130 ATTENDED INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY EVENT



80 ATTENDED BRIDGES TO
BETTER BUSINESS VIRTUAL EVENT

96 WEBINARS HOSTED



43 BUSINESS EXPANSIONS



Explore the Bruce



Explore the Bruce is the invitation to discover Bruce County. Targeting the visitor market is key to exposing audiences to the possibilities of Bruce County, the wonder and charm of its communities and the stunning natural landscapes to uncover. The secondary goal of Explore the Bruce is to convert visitors to residents and help them dream of what a life in Bruce County could be.

A renewed focus on the Explore the Bruce newsletter and dedicated resources to push messaging on all platforms meant more user awareness and engagement with Explore the Bruce. Overall the Explore the Bruce web and social platforms achieved:

- An increase of 5% of pageviews and a 12% increase in users on ExploretheBruce.com compared to 2020
- An average 42.37% open rate on monthly newsletters, far above the industry average of 23%
- 1216 new followers on @explorethebruce on Instagram

A wide-angle photograph of a snowy landscape under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, two snowmobilers are riding across a vast, flat, snow-covered field, leaving tracks behind them. The background shows a line of trees and a few buildings in the distance.

ENGAGED WITH **59,793**
FOLLOWERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Book and Look Campaign

The Book & Look campaign was conceived out of a need to promote sustainable tourism on the Bruce Peninsula and reduce overcrowding at national parks, natural areas, and along Highway 6. Through consultation with partners at the Sustainable Tourism Advisory Group and in partnership with Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7), Bruce County devised a digital advertising campaign targeting tourists from the Greater Toronto Area. The campaign encouraged them to make a parking reservation before embarking on their journey to explore Bruce County to help with the overcrowding issue.

Later, it was recognized that an opportunity to promote activities and communities in Bruce County's Lakeshore and Interior regions, and created another campaign to draw visitors down from the Peninsula to the vibrant communities in other regions. This was later expanded to include promoting tourism across the County during the fall and winter months where tourism volume is less.



If you want to **look**,
you got to **book!**

**Don't miss out.
Book now!**

Bruce County Spark Mentorship and Grants Program

The Bruce County Spark Mentorship and Grants Program is a partnership between the Ontario Tourism Innovation Lab, Bruce County, Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, Town of South Bruce Peninsula and Bruce Grey Simcoe Regional Tourism Organization 7. The goal of the program is to inspire Bruce County entrepreneurs to foster and support new sustainable tourism ideas that will enhance current offerings and create high-quality, low impact tourism



experiences, address gaps in tourism products and services, and motivate longer stays, and increase shoulder season visits and tourism spending. The 2021 program encouraged innovative and sustainable tourism ideas for the Bruce Peninsula, awarding three finalists a \$3,000 grant, a tourism mentorship, and access to a network of tourism innovators and leaders to help take their new tourism ideas to the next level of development.

The 2021 Bruce County “Spark” Program winners are:

- Amanda Hutter, Green Feet ecosystem services inc. (Dog Sledding Tours)
- Caley Patrick Doran, Take-A-Hike Trail & Adventure Guide (Guided Hikes, Indigenous & Conservation Experiences)
- Laura Lane (Year-Round Wellness Retreats)



Workforce Development & Attraction Strategy

The County's long-term economic success depends on the strength of businesses in their efforts to attract, retain, and build skills to stay open, expand, and prosper. The actions outlined in "Find Your Career in Bruce County" Workforce Development & Attraction Strategy have been progressing. The strategy explores innovative ways of attracting, retaining, and training employees, which will help employers overcome labour force challenges.

Throughout the year, the County worked with many external partners to lay the groundwork for future workforce development. Whether it was hosting three virtual job fairs in partnership



with Grey County and community partners (273 employers participated and 1356 job seekers attended), delivering work integrated learning and cooperative education webinars by local school boards, community colleges and universities, or supporting in-person and virtual events with the Bluewater District School Board and Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board (Kick Start Your Career, 2 Build a Dream events, Kick Start Your Future, Skills Opportunity Showcase Trailer visits, Skilled Trades Expo, High Level Welding Camp), development of 4 Edge Factor video's on the community hub page, attention was paid to workforce development and attraction in new and innovative ways.

As workforce development and attraction needs continue to evolve, concrete data from JobsinBruce.ca and working relationships with partners that helps support events and opportunities to invest in and grow a workforce that will be ready now and into the future is essential to Bruce County's economic success.



Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership

Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership (GBLIP) is working towards fostering welcoming communities throughout Grey and Bruce Counties that highlight and celebrate the diversity that exists in the region and develop opportunities to support newcomers. Ensuring a welcoming community that understands and responds appropriately to the diverse and unique needs of newcomers is a key priority in supporting the successful integration of newcomers. GBLIP is working on addressing the isolation of newcomers in a large geographic area by increasing the capacity for coordination, connection, and collaboration to foster a welcoming community.

Bruce County in partnership with Grey County worked with a consultant to formulate a Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership Settlement Strategy. The Settlement Strategy is acting as the guiding document for the work of the GBLIP – providing a road map for how to build more welcoming and inclusive communities in Grey Bruce and improve the integration outcomes of newcomers. It includes four strategic priorities: Build Capacity, Strengthen Community, Cultivate Prosperity and Foster Inclusion.



Value / Benefit

The value or benefit that Bruce County is providing to the communities was measured through the “Assessment Tool” until last year. In 2021, the Municipal Action Plan template was developed as a tool to work alongside each member municipality to move their projects forward. This new tool – replacing the previous assessment tool – will provide a better understanding of each municipality’s planned projects for the next year, and how the Spruce the Bruce program and grants can support and move the initiatives forward. Bruce County staff will meet with the Economic Development Officers from each municipality to gather their Action Plans/ Business Plans for 2022. This year as part of the research collected for new strategic plan, municipalities were consulted and feedback was taken into consideration for planning the next steps and actions for the next year. The Action Plans will be reviewed on an annual basis. This will inform an important part of new Economic Development Strategic Plan 2022-2026.



Outcomes

Outcomes reflect the advancement of Bruce County's long-term goals, as set out in Bruce County's Economic Development Strategic Plan, through the Outputs and Values delivered.

Long Term Goals

1. **Growth of Tax Base/ Tax Assessment**

To increase the tax base by promoting Bruce County as a place to live and attracting entrepreneurs to the area.

2. **Growth of Population Base**

To increase the population base by attracting visitors and entrepreneurs to the area and providing business opportunities.

3. **Diversify the Economic Base**

To foster, position and promote entrepreneurial opportunities in Bruce County through cluster development around Bruce County's key sectors; tourism, nuclear and agriculture.

4. **Business Retention and Expansion**

To support and foster local opportunities, efforts and advancement by attracting new entrepreneurs and supporting business expansions.

Looking Forward to 2022

The Bruce County Economic Development team will continue to support businesses, communities, and partners through the following actions:

- Develop tactics to focus support for business development along the supply chain
- Continue to support businesses in all sectors through Small Business Enterprise Centre Program in partnership with the Province of Ontario
- Continue to promote Live in Bruce marketing campaign focused towards Newcomers, Immigrants, and Millennials
- Enhance Jobs in Bruce website to include a new landing page and available resources
- Continuation of the Digital and Culinary Indigenous program with M'Wikwedong and Elephant Thoughts
- Continued support of the Grey Bruce Community Partners Committee and Launch Pad
- Assist with onboarding new communities to the Spruce the Bruce program, and/or refreshing existing communities' branding toolkits as needed
- Continue to support and encourage downtown revitalization, destination and product development, and enhancing public community spaces
- Promote and support sustainable businesses through resource sharing, access to applicable grant opportunities, and building consumer awareness through marketing campaigns
- Ensure consistent sustainability messaging to tourists through involvement in the Sustainable Tourism Advisory Group (STAG) in Northern Bruce Peninsula
- Enhance the "Be An Explorer" brand, and coordinate a marketing strategy to target audiences that show Bruce County as the ideal place to visit, live, or build a business
- Launch an Economic Development website, an attraction tool for new investment, businesses, and residents
- Work with entrepreneurs through the Business to Bruce program, as a crucial service for small business owners
- Support the implementation of the Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership Settlement Strategy

Conclusion

Economic success requires continuous planning, effort, dedication, and a coordinated approach from several partners. The “Find Yourself in Bruce County” 2017-2021 Strategic Plan embraced the entire Bruce community by implementing the “Macro Approach” and encouraging cooperation with partners. The County has been successful in reaching the goals set forth in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan and has made a positive impact on Bruce communities and businesses. As the County embarks on the journey towards a new Economic Development Strategic Plan 2022-2026, Bruce County Economic Development team look forward to building upon the progress made and achieve economic growth and prosperity now and to the future.





BRUCE
county