



Staff Report

Operations – Sustainability & Solid Waste

Report To: COW - Operations, Planning and Building Services
Meeting Date: March 18, 2025
Report Number: OPS.25.007
Title: Green Economy Hub Quarterly Update
Prepared by: Nicholas Cloet, Sustainability Coordinator

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report OPS.25.007, entitled “Green Economy Hub Quarterly Update”.

B. Overview

In 2024, the Town provided a monetary contribution of \$5,000 to Collingwood Climate Action Team (CCAT) to support delivery of a regional Green Economy Hub pilot project. A regional Green Economy Hub will encourage and support businesses and other organizations that wish to reduce their GHG emissions and/or work towards other sustainability-related objectives in The Blue Mountains and across Southern Georgian Bay. Council has directed staff to provide quarterly updates on the activities of the Green Economy Hub. This staff report is the first of these quarterly reports.

C. Background

The October 8, 2024 Staff Report, [CSOPS.24.069 Green Economy Hub Support](#), outlined the concept of a regional Green Economy Hub and how this aligns with Bold Action 13 in The Blue Mountains Future Story, and requested that Council endorse an allocation of \$3,500 from the Sustainability budget to the Collingwood Climate Action Team (CCAT) to support their delivery of a Green Economy Hub pilot program in Southern Georgian Bay. This report also outlined the anticipated services and benefits of a Green Economy Hub and provided a high-level budget for the initiative to better substantiate the request for financial support. In the discussion, Council determined that an allocation of \$5,000 would be more appropriate, and these funds were provided to CCAT in November 2024. A second allocation of \$5,000 will also be provided to CCAT for the Green Economy Hub pilot project in 2025 from the Town’s Sustainability budget. Council also directed staff to participate on the Green Economy Hub Advisory Committee and to provide quarterly Staff Reports on the pilot project’s progress.

Information on the Green Economy Hub pilot and how to join is available on the Collingwood Climate Action Team website at <https://www.collingwoodclimateaction.com/greeneconomy>.

D. Analysis

The Green Economy Hub pilot program follows a model propagated by Green Economy Canada (GEC) in communities across Canada. GEC provides program services to business and other organizational participants where there is no local Green Economy Hub and is providing these services to organizations that join the local pilot. A Green Economy Hub will provide members with tools and training for the organization's staff to track, estimate and report on GHG emissions, support to plan and implement actions to reduce emissions and other environmental impacts, provide workshops and other events to facilitate learning and networking, and opportunities (such as special events and media) to recognize and celebrate member achievements.

Membership fees are a necessary component of funding the program, but smaller organizations are eligible to receive subsidized membership courtesy of GEC. The Green Economy Hub pilot project will help CCAT assess the feasibility of delivering a dedicated Green Economy Hub program with service delivery led by CCAT that will eventually be funded primarily through local membership fees. CCAT is leading the pilot project locally by providing project management and administrative support, conducting business development to recruit pilot participants, and running information events and promotions to educate and raise interest.

Advisory Committee

The Green Economy Hub Advisory Committee aims to provide CCAT with support through outreach to businesses in their respective communities, promotions of the program, securing funding, and/or additional advice and assistance to CCAT as needed and appropriate.

The Advisory Committee holds monthly meetings and currently includes representatives of the following organizations and community groups:

- Collingwood Climate Action Team (CCAT)
- Institute of Southern Georgian Bay (ISGB)
- South Georgian Bay Innovation Fund
- Town of The Blue Mountains
- Town of Collingwood
- Climate Action Now Network TBM (CANN)
- Wasaga Beach Climate Action Team (WBCAT)
- Clearview Sustainability Network (CSN)
- Meaford Climate Action
- Grey Highlands Climate Action Group
- Beaver Valley Outreach (BVO) as both pilot project participant and Advisory Committee member
- Rockside Campbell Design Inc. as both pilot project participant and Advisory Committee member.

The information for this quarterly update report comes largely from the meeting minutes of the Green Economy Hub Advisory Committee, which has so far held two meetings on November 21, 2024 and January 16, 2025.

At the time of writing this report, a third Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for March 13, 2025.

Town staff will continue to participate in Advisory Committee meetings to support the Green Economy Hub pilot program and build interest among organizations in the Town of The Blue Mountains.

Communications and Recruitment

Communication strategies to reach businesses and other organizations have included: seeking stories of local businesses that have benefitted from including sustainability in their decision-making; developing news release and website content; and coordinating communications across all Advisory Committee and other communications partners across the region.

Recruitment strategies have included: targeting specific types of businesses most likely to benefit from the Green Economy Hub model; reaching out to any warm contacts of Advisory Committee members; and approaching non-profit and community organizations where business owners and operators tend to be active (such as the Rotary Clubs). CCAT continues to build a contact list of media, Chambers of Commerce, BIA, Town Economic Development staff and press/newsletter deadlines.

Cohort 1 of the Green Economy Hub pilot project has delayed its launch and currently has two confirmed participants – Beaver Valley Outreach, and Rockside Campbell Design Inc. with at least one more business almost ready to confirm. Cohort 2 is also currently recruiting members from businesses and other organizations across the Southern Georgian Bay area. Cohort 2 aims to launch in May 2025, providing more time for some businesses to consider the opportunity. Interested organizations from Grey County may also apply, but CCAT is focusing outreach efforts on communities in Southern Georgian Bay.

Funding

To support the pilot project, CCAT has so far secured approximately 50% of the required funding to launch two cohorts of the Green Economy Hub pilot in 2025. Each of these cohorts has capacity for up to 10 participating organizations from across Southern Georgian Bay. The sources of secured funds include The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay, the Southern Georgian Bay Innovation Fund, Town of The Blue Mountains, Town of Collingwood, and a private donor. Seeking additional sources of funding to secure the remaining 50% will be a key area of focus this year,

Events, Deputations, and Memberships

Events:

- Information Session at New Wasaga Beach Arena, October 3, 2024;
- Information Session at The Blue Mountains Public Library, November 26, 2024.

Upcoming events:

- Workshop planned for The Blue Mountains in late February, at time of writing the specific date and location are still to be determined;
- Workshop planned for Wasaga Beach, targeting March 18, 2025;
- Workshop planned for Collingwood, targeting April 3, 2025.

Deputations have been made to all Southern Georgian Bay communities to request supporting funds:

- Town of Collingwood, October 7, 2024: provided \$3,500 in 2024, anticipating \$5,000 in 2025;
- Town of The Blue Mountains, October 8, 2024: provided \$5,000 in 2024, with \$5000 added to the budget in 2025;
- Wasaga Beach, October 24, 2024: to be considered in 2025 ;
- Clearview, November 4, 2024: to be considered in 2025 ;
- Meaford, December 9, 2024: to be considered in 2025;
- Grey Highlands, December 18, 2024: to be considered in 2025.

CCAT has joined all Chambers of Commerce in Southern Georgian Bay, and presented to the Collingwood BIA on January 16, 2025. At time of writing, a co-sponsored event with the Thornbury BIA and The Blue Mountains Chamber of Commerce is in the works for March 2025.

Town Supports

The Town has taken steps to help CCAT raise awareness of the pilot and recruit local organizations, including:

- Staff attended the November 26, 2024 Green Economy Hub Pilot Project Information Session at The Blue Mountains Public Library;
- Promoted the November 26 event on the Town's social media and Economic Development mailing list;
- A portion of The Blue Mountains and Area 2nd Annual Sustainability Summit has been offered to provide a platform for the Green Economy Hub pilot project;
- Direct outreach with several local business representatives.

Members of Council and The Blue Mountains community are encouraged to share information about the Green Economy Hub pilot project with local business contacts. Those interested in learning more can visit <https://www.collingwoodclimateaction.com/greeneconomy>.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

F. Environmental Impacts

Green Economy Hubs help businesses and other organizations lessen their environmental impacts and pursue sustainability goals and targets. They can help organizations identify ambitious yet appropriate GHG emission reduction, water or waste reduction targets and best practices, support networking and peer learning to build a culture of sustainability and knowledge sharing, and provide a venue for recognition and celebration of participants working towards and eventually reaching their sustainability targets and milestones.

G. Financial Impacts

The Town provided \$5,000 in support to Collingwood Climate Action Team's Green Economy Hub pilot project in 2024 out of the sustainability budget, and will provide an additional \$5,000 to CCAT in 2025, also from the sustainability budget.

H. In Consultation With

N/A

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of 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 Nicholas Cloet, Sustainability Coordinator sustainability@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

No attachments.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeffery Fletcher,
Manager of Sustainability & Solid Waste

Alan Pacheco
Director of Operations

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

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| Document Title: | OPS.25.007 Green Economy Hub Quarterly Update.docx |
| Attachments: | |
| Final Approval Date: | Feb 28, 2025 |

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Jeff Fletcher - Feb 14, 2025 - 2:49 PM

Alan Pacheco - Feb 28, 2025 - 10:26 AM