



Staff Report

Operations – Sustainability & Solid Waste

Report To: COW-Operations_Planning_and_Development_Services
Meeting Date: October 8, 2024
Report Number: CSOPS.24.069
Title: Green Economy Hub Support
Prepared by: Nicholas Cloet, Sustainability Coordinator

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report CSOPS.24.069, entitled “Green Economy Hub Support”;

AND THAT Council endorse the allocation of \$3,500 from the Town’s 2024 sustainability budget to the Collingwood Climate Action Team (CCAT) Green Economy Hub pilot project, which will explore a business model and engage businesses and other organizations in The Blue Mountains alongside other Southern Georgian Bay and Grey County communities.

B. Overview

Bold Action 13 in The Blue Mountains Future Story includes Key Steps for Town staff to support development of a regional Green Economy Hub. Town staff have provided support to a regional collaboration of partners, including but not limited to, the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay, Grey County, and Collingwood Climate Action Team, to initialize a Green Economy Hub following a well-known model being propagated in communities across Canada by the not-for-profit organization Green Economy Canada. A financial contribution from the Town will assist the pilot stage of a Green Economy Hub for the Southern Georgian Bay and Grey County region.

C. Background

The Blue Mountains Future Story (TBM Future Story) focuses on several pillars of sustainability, organized into six Goal areas including: the Natural Environment; the Built Environment; Economy; Community and Culture; Social Well-Being; and Governance. TBM Future Story’s goals include thriving local businesses led by innovators committed to natural, economic and social prosperity.

TBM Future Story includes Bold Action 13: Establish/support a green economy task force to identify economic opportunities in the community. This Bold Action includes several Key Steps that ask Town Staff to work with local and regional partners to understand and collaborate on green economy priorities, and includes specific direction to collaborate on a Green Economy

Hub initiative for the Southern Georgian Bay region with the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay and other local/regional partners and green economy stakeholders.

A Green Economy Hub creates an environment where businesses and other organizations can learn how to address their environmental or social impacts, learning from each other and subject matter experts, and receiving support from the Hub organization to set targets and take action. Typical services of a Green Economy Hub include:

- Personalized guidance and resources to help organizations set sustainability targets and goals;
- One-on-one support to keep sustainability champions on track and working towards their organization's goals;
- Support to measure organizational carbon footprint, preparation of a GHG report and training for the organization's team;
- Local events or webinars offering learning and networking opportunities;
- Opportunities to access funding, awards/recognition, be featured in media articles, etc.

Benefits to Green Economy Hub participants can include:

- Improved operational efficiencies and reduced costs, particularly through reduced energy consumption;
- Enhancing brand reputation and public recognition for progress and successes
- Increased market competitiveness by attracting eco-conscious customers and differentiating from non-members;
- Employee engagement and retention with a culture of sustainability, and with training and development opportunities for staff;
- Community impact and presence through participation in local sustainability efforts, and networking opportunities for like-minded local leaders.

The Institute hosted several speakers with knowledge on Green Economy Hubs and green business practices in 2022 and 2023 webinars, building regional interest to learn more about what a Green Economy Hub might look like in the Southern Georgian Bay area. Town staff helped the Institute plan a September 2023 live event to convene local and regional stakeholders and discuss models of collaboration, including the potential need for a new organization, round-table or working group on sustainability (inspired by Bold Action 18: Establish a community sustainability organization/network to champion sustainability efforts in the community), as well as the Green Economy Hub model (Bold Action 13), and other potential ways to support collaboration on sustainability issues. The result of this workshop was an explicit lack of interest to form a new community sustainability organization or task force with a broad mandate, and very specific interest from participants to explore a Green Economy Hub model to build capacity among businesses and other organizations.

With the interest of regional stakeholders confirmed, the first annual The Blue Mountains and Area Sustainability Summit, hosted by the Town on April 25, 2024, provided an opportunity for the Town to further support the Green Economy Hub initiative. A presentation before lunch by Rosalyn Morrison with the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay provided some detail on the pilot

Green Economy Hub concept, and the afternoon featured a presentation by the Executive Director of Green Economy Canada, Priyanka Lloyd, who explained the Green Economy Hub model to attendees in more detail and proposed a pilot hub model that might be suitable to the Southern Georgian Bay and Grey County area. The Town provided a short survey allowing participants to express interest in learning more about a Green Economy Hub.

The Summit presentations were preceded by months of collaboration between Town staff and a group of stakeholders organized by the Institute. This group assisted the Town in organizing the afternoon content and included partners such as:

- Blue Mountain Resort
- Collingwood Climate Action Team
- Climate Action Now Network
- Georgian Bay Forever
- Grey County
- Town of Collingwood
- Wasaga Beach Climate Action Team.

A Green Economy Hub needs a strong not-for-profit organization to act as the host, providing staff resourcing to coordinate the program. Catherine Daw, Board Chair of the Collingwood Climate Action Team (CCAT), proposed to the CCAT Board that their organization could host the Green Economy Hub and explore a pilot program focusing on the Southern Georgian Bay area, and the CCAT Board of Directors unanimously voted to take on this responsibility. Grey County's Manager Climate Change Initiatives, Rebecca Danard, has experience founding and operating a Green Economy Hub in Sudbury and on behalf of the County has also provided advice and assistance in the early stages of hub development with the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay, CCAT, and Green Economy Canada, with the goal to include the remainder of Grey County in the pilot. These partners have prepared budget materials and a business plan, which are summarized in the Analysis section.

The Green Economy Hub pilot aims to include two cohorts of participants of between 8 and 12 participants each, with up to 20 total organizations to be engaged. Attachment 1 includes an overview of the rationale and work plan for the Green Economy Hub pilot project, prepared by Collingwood Climate Action Team, the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay, and Grey County staff. More information on how to register for the first cohort of the Green Economy Hub pilot program is available at: <https://www.collingwoodclimateaction.com/gechubpilot>

D. Analysis

The following tables summarize the current and anticipated revenues and expenses to be incurred for a successful initial pilot launch in March 2025. Funding this initiative is a dynamic situation as philanthropic contributions and external funding are being sought and anticipated expenses may be further refined by project partners. The following proposed budget focuses specifically on the first of two anticipated cohorts of local and regional participants.

Sources of Revenue 2024	Amount	Notes
Institute for Southern Georgian Bay	\$ 15,000	Confirmed
Local philanthropic organization	\$ 5,000	Tentative
Town of The Blue Mountains	\$ 3,500	Tentative – pending Town Council decision
Town of Collingwood	\$ 5,000	Tentative
Grey County	\$ 5,000	Tentative – pending County decision
TOTAL	\$ 33,500	

Expenses 2024 – March 2025	Amount	Notes
Business engagement (staff time)	\$ 9,000	~120 contract hours, September - December 2024
Business development events	\$ 5,000	4 events, one in The Blue Mountains, others in Collingwood, Wasaga Beach and Owen Sound
CCAT admin support (website, comms, admin)	\$ 6,000	\$600/month June 2024 - March 2025
Strategic support from Green Economy Canada	\$ 12,500	One third of the total fee for service to support development of a Green Economy Hub organization for full period ending in December 2025
TOTAL	\$ 32,500	

CCAT is asking municipalities to contribute \$5,000 to support this pilot initiative. Bold Action 13 in TBM Future Story directs that staff offer support to a regional Green Economy Hub, and so it is recommended that the Town provide monetary support to CCAT for the Green Economy Hub pilot program. The Sustainability budget can be tapped to provide \$3,500 in direct support in the 2024 fiscal year. Council may wish to consider if additional funding can be provided from another source to increase the Town’s contribution in 2024 to the \$5,000 desired by CCAT. Staff also propose that \$5,000 be included to support the Green Economy Hub pilot initiative as part of the 2025 budget process, provided recruitment for the second pilot phase of the program moves forward after March 2025.

The budget is in a draft stage and may change as additional information on revenue and expenditures develops. Additional funding from the Town may be requested at a later date to support future cohorts and other project activities. Information on the second pilot cohort budget will be reviewed by staff prior to allocating any funding reserved for this initiative as part of the 2025 Sustainability budget.

Membership fees are an important part of medium- and long-term sustainability for a Green Economy Hub. Hub organizations must establish membership fees at levels that allow them to maintain or build the organization and deliver a desired level of service for their membership’s unique needs; however, for the pilot phase with CCAT, Green Economy Canada is providing

program services to members and will retain membership fees. These membership fees will be partially subsidized by Green Economy Canada for smaller organizations, not-for-profits and charities with a 50% discount up to \$1,000. Annual membership fees for Green Economy Canada's program normally range between \$1,000 and \$6,000 depending on the organization's size and chosen membership track – the 'Insight' track provides a gentler introduction with training and GHG reduction support and is more affordable, whereas the 'Lead' track provides more comprehensive guidance for organizations to explore more significant changes and seek recognition for leadership in organizational sustainability. The Insight and Lead tracks are both available to participants in the pilot program.

After the pilot program completes, CCAT and its partners will determine if they can roll out a dedicated regional program with service delivery provided by CCAT and supported by Green Economy Canada. This newly formed Green Economy Hub would continue to provide resources and advice to member businesses and other organization types.

Additional sources of revenue that could assist in both the pilot program and in future program development include event sponsorships, government or other third-party grants, philanthropic contributions, and partnerships with Chambers of Commerce or similar organizations that engage with local business communities.

A multi-sector advisory group will help guide development of the Green Economy Hub pilot program. Town staff will have the opportunity to participate on this advisory group to provide the following types of assistance:

- Seek funding opportunities or other resources to support the pilot program;
- Background support to CCAT during the project to build awareness and champion the cohort opportunity with potential membership;
- Help with identifying potential businesses and other contacts within The Blue Mountains, such as BIA/associations, Chamber of Commerce, and specific business and organizational relationships;
- Advise on regional/local context of needs, businesses, organizations and other potential local supporters.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

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

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

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.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

Green Economy Hubs provide guidance and support to help businesses and other organizations reduce their environmental impacts, typically working with those looking to save money and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the energy and fuel consumption associated with their buildings or operations. A key activity for most Green Economy Hubs is to help member organizations identify priorities, set appropriate targets and take actions to achieve their sustainability goals. Green Economy Hubs can also support organizations in setting and achieving water efficiency or waste reduction targets, developing sustainable procurement policies/practices, and more as determined by local needs and within the capabilities of the Green Economy Hub organization. Green Economy Hubs also build a culture of sustainability, where opportunities to network, collaborate and gain recognition for progress on shared sustainability challenges helps to encourage continued participation and growth in the Hub network, further deepening the synergistic benefits between business activities and the Town's broader sustainability goals.

G. Financial Impacts

With Council's approval, the Collingwood Climate Action Team will receive \$3,500 from the Sustainability budget. At Council's direction, additional funds to meet the requested \$5,000 amount may be provided from a different source proposed by Council. Support for the Green Economy Hub pilot project will continue into 2025 with additional needed funds to be proposed in the 2025 budget process.

H. In Consultation With

Name, Title

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

1. Green Economy Hub Pilot Rationale and Workplan

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

Document Title:	CSOPS.24.069 Green Economy Hub Support.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment 1 - Green Economy Hub Pilot Rationale and Workplan.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Sep 12, 2024

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

Jeff Fletcher - Sep 10, 2024 - 5:24 PM

Alan Pacheco - Sep 12, 2024 - 12:32 PM