



Working together with our community

Council-In-Committee Meeting – March 21, 2023

Subject: Norfolk County Economic Recovery Plan 2021-22 (Covid-19)
- Final Update
Report Number: CD-23-017
Division: Community Development
Department: Economic Development
Ward: All Wards
Purpose: For Decision

Recommendation(s):

THAT Report CD-23-017, Final Update on the Economic Recovery Plan 2021-22 (Covid-19), be received as information;

AND FURTHER THAT the Norfolk County Economic Recovery Plan be deemed complete, with any remaining actions wrapping up in 2023 and any surplus funds from the project returned to the Council Strategic Initiatives Reserve.

Executive Summary:

A Norfolk County Economic Recovery Plan (NCERP) was prepared in late 2020 with a Task Force of community representatives in response to the economic challenges and uncertainty resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Council approved the plan with \$250,000 of strategic funding which was leveraged into \$820,000 of total economic recovery funding by the end of 2022 (e.g. staff secured additional grants/funds).

The Economic Recovery Plan included several actions related to these main objectives:

Theme	Actions
 <p data-bbox="380 1562 618 1604">BUY Norfolk</p>	<p data-bbox="824 1541 1398 1642">Actions aimed at promoting “Buy Local” and supporting local small businesses in efforts to increase sales</p>
 <p data-bbox="380 1730 651 1772">BUILD Norfolk</p>	<p data-bbox="824 1696 1386 1797">Actions aimed at creating the conditions for continued growth of the business sector and the community</p>

Theme	Actions
 INNOVATE Norfolk	Actions aimed at developing Innovative solutions to specific COVID-related business challenges
 RECOVER Norfolk	Actions aimed at funding community-based not-for-profit organizations, to support industries that have been most impacted by COVID-19

A number of new innovations and programs were created, partnerships facilitated, funding for local businesses and activities secured and other successes achieved as ongoing pandemic challenges continued/continue throughout the project. The two-year plan is now coming to an end and this report provides a final update to complete the initiative.

Discussion:

Background

A number of businesses, industry and economic sectors were hit hard in 2020 with the pandemic and this continued to evolve in the next several years with changing patterns related to labour, spending, digital vs. in person, etc. Following Report PD-20-32 in June 2020, a Norfolk Economic Recovery Task Force was created and the community stakeholder group worked with staff to prepare an Economic Recovery Plan delivered to Council in December 2020 via Report PD-20-73.

A year one status update was provided to Council via Report CD-21-127 in December 2021 that highlighted a significant number of actions underway by staff to implement the objectives of the plan along with the early successes, including securing of significant additional grants and funds leveraged from the initial strategic investment. In late 2021 and early 2022, via Reports CD-21-112 and CD-22-019, Council approved two intakes of a total of 22 recovery grants from the funding towards: downtown stimulus, arts and culture recovery and resilience and agriculture industry solutions.

Economic Recovery Plan Implementation and Summary

The plan involved creating, testing and deploying a number of new initiatives, programs, grants, technologies and innovations. It was expected that some of the new actions may not be long term, but some may assist with helping build economic resilience. With limited resources, staff undertook a significant amount of efforts to prepare and roll-out the new programs, along with assistance from the Task Force and other community partners such as Venture Norfolk.

An outline and final status update for each of the actions related to BUY, BUILD, INNOVATE and RECOVER Norfolk is contained within Attachment A to this report.

NORFOLK COUNTY ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY

Total leverage of council's strategic funds raised from external grants.



\$100,000 

Amount of digital technology grant funds invested in the community.
Digital Services Squad assistance available until March 2024

700+



Number of businesses directly helped / participating in recovery plan actions.

840



Number of recipients each month who receive the New Economic Development Newsletter

35%



% of immigrants from bus tour since hired by local businesses.

1148 ↑
1147...
1146...

Number of orders received on ShopNorfolk and downloads of the VisitNorfolk App.

\$90,000



Recovery grants to local groups for downtown, arts and culture and agriculture stimulus.

25-40%

Average time reduction for building permit, zoning and zoning amendment reviews



66%

Average time reduction for site plan approvals in 2022

norfolkcounty.ca



Financial Services Comments:

Funding

Council approved a budget of \$250,000 for funding of the Norfolk County Economic Recovery Plan funded from the Council Initiative Reserve per staff recommendation in report PD 20-73. A condition of the budget for the Plan was that staff would continue to research and apply for other government grants to supplement the overall funding of the Plan. The table below outlines all of the funding sources used to date related to NCERP expenses:

Norfolk County Economic Recovery Plan Funding Sources		
Source	Funding Secured	Funding Used
Council Initiative Reserve	250,000.00	181,110.32
Sponsors	2,000.00	10,000.00
Regional Relief & Recovery Fund	244,650.00	244,648.77
Digital Service Squad Grant	266,978.00	* 171,055.94
Rural Economic Development Grant	62,350.00	56,526.40
Tourism Relief Fund	90,000.00	86,203.75
Other	0.00	1,018.71
Subtotal	\$ 915,978.00	\$ 750,563.89
Ontario Shop Local Grant**	70,000.00	70,000.00
Digital Main Street Transformation Grant***	100,000.00	100,000.00
Total	\$ 1,085,978.00	\$ 920,563.89
<i>* Up to \$90,003.38 more available depending on actual expenditures through the end of this intake March 31, 2024.</i>		
<i>** Norfolk County helped the Simcoe Chamber of Commerce secure \$70,000 under the Ontario Shop Local Grant program, to deploy Shop Local campaigns in partnership with the County, however this did not flow through the County's revenues.</i>		
<i>*** Norfolk County helped 40 local small businesses secure a \$2,500 grant each under the Digital Main Street Transformation Grant program, to adopt new digital technologies, however this did not flow through the County's revenues.</i>		

As seen in the table above, the County committed funding of \$250,000 compared to the \$1,085,978 total. This means the NCERP was able to secure \$835,978 in external funding (grants and sponsorships), 3x more than the \$250,000 the County had committed. However, only \$920,563.89 was utilized to administer the NCERP.

Expenditures

In broad categories, the \$920,563.89 that was used was spent in the following ways.

Approximately \$235,000 was returned directly to Norfolk County businesses through the refund of fees to Marketing Partners during 2020, applicants of the Recover Norfolk Economic Recovery Grant Program, the waiver of fees for patio applications and encroachments, and for small businesses to invest in new digital technologies.

Approximately \$285,000 benefitted businesses and the community through new servicing and programming, including renewed gateway signage, shop local campaigns, the COVID-19 rebranding strategy, the Spark Program, the commission of downtown murals, Digital Main Street services, business accelerator programs, and the Visit Norfolk app.

Grants received by the County helped pay for approximately \$240,000 used towards temporary job creation for positions that implemented NCERP initiatives, such as Digital Service Squad members and the Project Lead of BRiNC.

The remaining amount, approximately \$160,000, was spent on advertising for the new services available to local businesses, legal expenses, other consulting, and to offset existing salaries & benefits to administer the overall scope of the NCERP.

Reserve Surplus

Less than the \$250,000 Council originally committed from the Council Initiative Reserve was actually required, and as a result the surplus of \$68,889.68 will remain in the Council Initiative Reserve to be available for Council to commit towards other initiatives. The updated year-end forecast of the Council Initiative Reserve balance has been provided below.

Updated Council Initiative Reserve Forecast	
Council-Approved NCERP Commitment	250,000.00
Funds Used for NCERP Expenditures	- 181,110.32
Surplus NCERP Commitment	\$ 68,889.68
2023 Year-End Forecasted Balance	910,325.48
Revised 2023 Year-End Forecast	\$ 979,325.48

Interdepartmental Implications:

Economic Development worked with several other departments on the actions and implementation of the plan, including:

- Financial Management and Planning assisted with the disbursement of funds for grants
- Purchasing assisted with sourcing the contracts needed to support project implementation
- Legal support with terms of use of technologies
- Several departments reviewing the patio permits and program

Consultation(s):

Staff consulted with several individuals and organizations in relation to projects within the Economic Recovery Plan, including:

- The Norfolk County Economic Recovery Task Force assisted in the creation and implementation of the recovery plan and actions. The group of volunteers and local experts is a guiding sounding board for the various actions and engagement to support our local economy and build resilience for the future.
- The BUY Norfolk Subcommittee of the Economic Recovery Taskforce – guided staff through the development and launch of the Shop Norfolk and Visit Norfolk platforms.
- The RECOVER Norfolk Subcommittee of the Economic Recovery Taskforce – were instrumental in the development of the grants’ framework for each of the recovery grants. This included development of the objectives, the application criteria, and the evaluation process.
- The Tourism and Economic Development Advisory Board (TEDAB) – staff received detailed feedback regarding the BUY Norfolk portion of the plan, and in particular the Shop Norfolk platform, along with other feedback that was incorporated into the project.
- The broader community were consulted regarding the effectiveness of the Shop Norfolk Platform via an online survey.

Strategic Plan Linkage:

This report aligns with the 2019-2022 Council Strategic Priorities "Create an Optimal Place for Business" and "Build and Maintain Reliable and Quality Infrastructure".

Explanation:

The plan includes both projects that have a short-term and long-term impact on the business and not-for-profit communities in Norfolk County, with a focus on enabling the economy’s recovery and ongoing resilience in key industries and areas.

Conclusion:

Whereas the scheduled end of the Economic Recovery Plan was the end of 2022, staff continue to support small businesses to grow and expand. The department’s focus has shifted from that of a short-term immediate emergency response back to that of a longer term Business Retention and Expansion strategy as well as the targeting of new investments. Staff stands ready to reengage another economic recovery strategy should there be a reemergence of Covid-19 which necessitate pandemic protocols. With the conclusion of the Economic Recovery Plan and a new term of Council, the next step is to embark upon a new, updated Economic Development Strategy for Norfolk to help guide the next several years of key actions.

Attachment(s):

- Attachment A: Final Update on NCERP Categories and Actions

Approval:

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