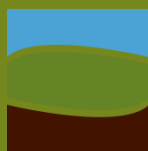




# STORIES OF RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A SERIES OF CASE STUDIES THAT HIGHLIGHT ACTIONS BEING TAKEN TO SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT RURAL ONTARIO.



RURAL ONTARIO  
INSTITUTE

## RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP CASE STUDIES

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# RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMMING

## Overview

## **DISCLAIMER**

This collection of case studies is designed to highlight ideas of programs or services that municipal governments and/or local community organizations might use to help support entrepreneurship development throughout rural Ontario. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list of entrepreneurship programs currently in operation.

## **HOW IS ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEFINED?**

A common discussion often surrounds our collective understanding of what entrepreneurship entails – who is an entrepreneur and what do they do that constitutes entrepreneurship?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines entrepreneurial activity as "enterprising human action in pursuit of the generation of value, through the creation or expansion of economic activity, by identifying and exploiting new products, processes or markets." Industry Canada writes that "entrepreneurship is a process that starts with someone – the entrepreneur – recognizing an opportunity to create something new."

In addition to these ideas of innovation and value creation, entrepreneurship is also seen as a mindset or an attitude. Entrepreneurs are those who see opportunity and are willing to take risks to realize that opportunity. Entrepreneurship thus also involves creativity, risk taking and perseverance.

## **WHAT CAN BE DONE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?**

There are many different ways communities and/or organizations might choose to engage with entrepreneurship development. Entrepreneurs need the right kind of support at the right time – there is no one-size-fits-all solution. The supports and programs an entrepreneur will need to help build a thriving business vary depending on the entrepreneur's stage of development.

Communities and local organizations should take time to identify how they can best fit into the existing entrepreneurial ecosystem. How a community chooses to engage with entrepreneurship depends on their existing capacity (i.e., expertise and experience, human capital and financial capital). Some questions worth asking include:

- What can we (the municipality or community organization) do that others cannot?
- Have we talked to our entrepreneurial community (current and aspiring entrepreneurs) to better understand what they need?
- What is missing from our region and what needs to be improved?
- Should we develop a new program or help connect entrepreneurs to existing service providers?

Leadbury Bat Co.  
<https://leadburybatco.com/>  
Walton, ON

Leadbury Bat Co. is a custom baseball bat manufacturer from Walton, Ontario, using proprietary wood-drying techniques to create a bat that outperforms the leading competition. This company has garnered much attention recently as a promising new business poised for success. Leadbury Bat Co. has received well-meaning offers for support, however in speaking with the founder and CEO, Mitchell Godkin, these types of support are unfortunately not what the business currently needs. Participation in an accelerator centre, for example, would take time away from the R&D work currently underway, and the connections to be made in an accelerator are not the kinds of connections they are looking for.

Because Leadbury Bat Co. is in the business development and product-testing phase, and their target market is professional baseball players, working with elite-level professional or semi-professional baseball players is crucial for product testing and marketing. Connections with elite-level baseball players would be the strongest support for this up-and-coming business, though something not often found in any

## **ECOSYSTEM BUILDING**

The concept of ecosystem building recognizes the importance of a whole community coming together to leverage individual expertise and collectively strengthen the value proposition for entrepreneurship programs. Rural Ontario has a wealth of not-for-profit organizations, volunteer associations and citizen groups with an interest in community development and economic development processes. Entrepreneurship is looked to as an important component of community building as it creates opportunity for both economic and social development. Entrepreneurs build businesses that create employment opportunities and add value to local economies while also providing opportunities for recreation, social connections and an overall improvement in quality of life.

## WHO ARE THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN RURAL ONTARIO?

An entrepreneur cannot start a business in a vacuum – there are important relationships that are cultivated, funding leveraged, markets targeted, consumers informed and sales made.

In the field of rural entrepreneurship development in Ontario, key players may include:

- Small Business Enterprise Centres
- Municipal Economic Development
- Regional Economic Development Organizations
- Community Futures Development Corporations
- Regional Innovation Centre
- Business Improvement Associations`
- Chambers of Commerce
- Schools and Schoolboards
- Youth Centres
- Churches and Service Organizations
- Volunteers

### Ecosystem Building - Community Futures Development Corporations

In many of the Case Studies explored in this series, regional Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) have been an important stakeholder in supporting entrepreneurship programming. Whether this is through direct investment and connecting financing for business retention in Huron County, business planning in Elgin County, or coaching and mentoring in Norfolk County, Community Futures organizations are a consistent thread in the fabric of rural entrepreneurial ecosystems. While the role of a Community Futures office varies from community to community, they are often a leading champion of entrepreneurship and small business development.

Learn more about CFDCs and an office near you: <https://cfontario.ca/>

## The Kauffman Foundation: Exploring Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building

Where many major urban centres have become robust entrepreneurial ecosystems in the past, “such ecosystems can grow anywhere today” says the Kauffman Foundation. “In the modern economy, every community has the opportunity to become a thriving ecosystem.”

The ecosystem building model recognizes that the whole of a community is far greater than the sum of its parts. It means starting with what a community has and connecting the pieces. The potential of “ecosystem building”, is to create sustainable and thriving economies regardless of a community’s size, demographics, socioeconomic context or geography.

The Kauffman Foundation identifies these key elements for a thriving ecosystem:

- Entrepreneurs and those who support entrepreneurs.
- Talent to help companies grow.
- Knowledge and resources to support entrepreneurs.
- Champions of entrepreneurs and the local ecosystem.
- On-ramps – the facilitation of open participation in entrepreneurial activities.
- Intersections that facilitate the interaction of people, ideas and resources.
- Stories people share about themselves and their ecosystem.
- Culture rich in social capital – collaboration, cooperation, trust, reciprocity

The Kauffman Foundation has developed a resource called Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building Playbook 2.0. To read more about the ecosystem approach, visit:

<https://www.kauffman.org/entrepreneurial-ecosystem-building-playbook-draft-2/introduction>



# REPURPOSING PUBLIC SPACE

**United Church Community Innovation Hubs  
Elgin Innovation Centre  
Sophiasburgh Community Kitchen**

## INTRODUCTION

New opportunities for entrepreneurship development present themselves in different forms throughout rural Ontario. One important opportunity lies in re-purposing existing space to support entrepreneurial endeavours. As local economies evolve and demographics change, new opportunities arise as different facilities in communities become vacant or under-used.

The types of spaces that might find new life through entrepreneurship development programming are diverse: arenas, libraries, churches, schools and business parks are all facilities commonly found in rural Ontario – all of which play important roles in the vitality and prosperity of the community. However, in each of these examples, the space alone is not enough – facilitating access to coaching services, connecting entrepreneurs with fellow entrepreneurs, funders or mentors, and creating a supportive and collaborative environment are all found (to varying degrees) in each of the case studies below.

There are three different examples explored below of communities coming together to re-purpose space and create a more favourable environment for entrepreneurship and innovation in rural Ontario businesses.

1. United Church Community Innovation Hubs
2. Elgin Innovation Centre
3. Sophiasburgh Community Kitchen

What is common among all of these case studies? In each case, members of the community have recognized an opportunity to do more with an existing space – to provide an important service and add value to existing entrepreneurship programming in the community. In each case, these initiatives have brought new life to existing community infrastructure.

## THE UNITED CHURCH – COMMUNITY INNOVATION HUBS

### **BACKGROUND**

The United Church has recently been reviewing their assets and activities across the country, looking for ways to continually grow alongside the communities they serve. There is greater emphasis now on exploring alternative strategies to support community growth: spiritually, socially and economically. The United Church is recognizing that meaningful community outreach and engagement is equally as important as the number of folks in attendance at church every Sunday.

Central to re-thinking the role churches play in a community is the examination of their use of space (or often lack thereof). In stepping back and assessing the physical assets of the church, it has been recognized that many facilities are not being used to their full potential. While churches remain important to weekly gatherings around prayer and worship, much of the week they also sit empty.

### **HOW CAN CHURCHES SERVE THEIR COMMUNITIES IN NEW AND INNOVATIVE WAYS?**

The United Church has developed the Community Innovation Hub as a model for re-purposing existing space, an idea that both community and church can come together around. The concept of a Community Innovation Hub is to provide space and programming to local entrepreneurs looking to create businesses that serve social and spiritual goals in the community and beyond. The Community Innovation Hub takes advantage of underutilized or vacant infrastructure and assets, as well as the expertise and community networks surrounding this already-central institution, to provide an environment designed to help entrepreneurs prosper.

### **MUTUAL INTERESTS BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND CHURCH**

It is important to note – a Community Innovation Hub could be either a church or community-driven initiative. The exciting part of this model for entrepreneurship development is that both community and church have mutual interests in collaborating on such a project.

Economic development organizations in rural communities are commonly seeking new and creative ways to offer entrepreneurship programming, often operating within limited budgets. Strengthening relationships with the church and its social networks through a Community Innovation Hub can be a relatively low-cost, high-impact strategy to address entrepreneurship development.

Churches can support communities and economic developers through:

- **Provision of physical space**
- **Programming resources**
- **Funding for entrepreneurs (will vary by church)**
- **Social capital – access to social and professional networks throughout the community**

As a church looking to further its reach in spiritual and social development, engaging the community can help strengthen the offering for programming and networking. As such, the church has much to be gained from strengthening its connections with community.

Communities can support Community Innovation Hubs through:

- **Connections with regional organizations (Community Futures, SBEC, Municipal Economic Development, Business Improvement Associations, volunteer associations)**
- **Municipal supports or partnerships (municipal council or staff)**
- **Support or expertise from local business community**
- **Community residents (volunteers, mentors, teachers)**

## **COMPONENTS OF A COMMUNITY INNOVATION HUB**

There are many different directions that the Community Innovation Hub could take, depending on the needs in the community and the energy among community leaders and volunteers for the different possibilities. The most important part in this model is to engage the community, start a conversation, and allow the process to unfold naturally.

Community Innovation Hubs might include:

- **Makerspace:** provide equipment, supplies and spaces for small businesses, contractors and hobbyists to learn and apply skills.
- **Co-working space:** provide entrepreneurs with the opportunity to work alongside other like-minded business people.
- **Monthly workshops:** recently retired or young professionals living in the community have a wealth of business experience they can share with social enterprises, nonprofits and social innovators.

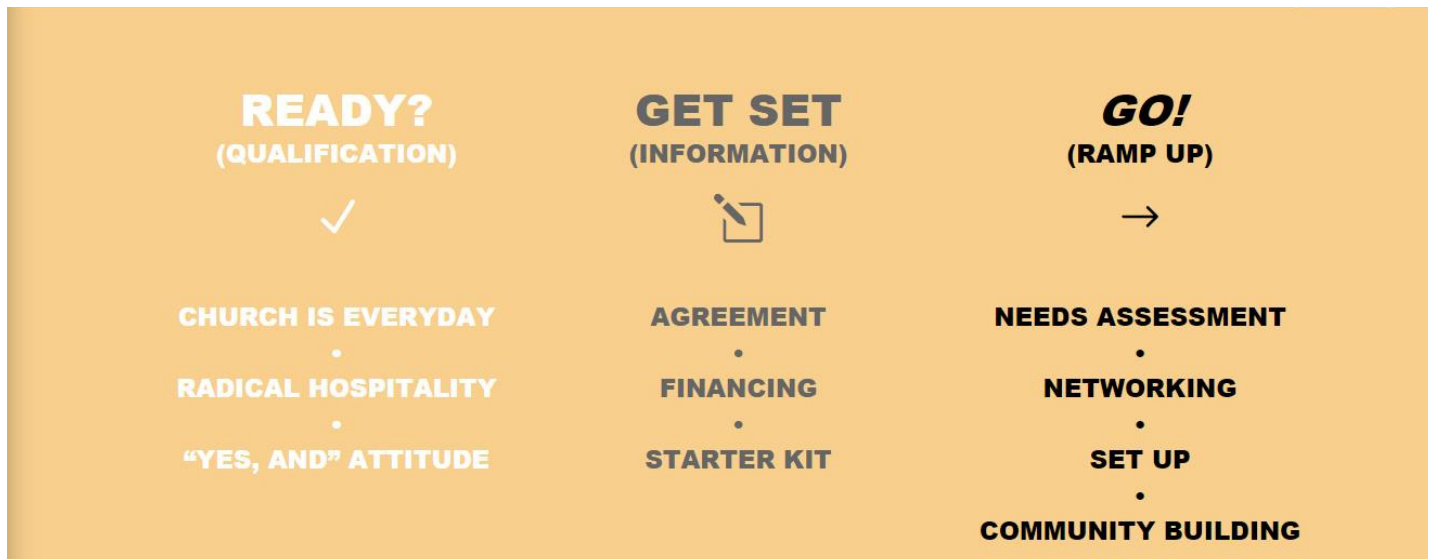
- Peer-to-peer coaching and mentoring: Peers come together, each bringing a problem, and the whole community works to help address those challenges and find resources for each other. This also creates accountability: “positive peer pressure” for all participants to meet their goals for their next gathering.
- Community Innovation Challenge: This is a design jam where people from the community from all sectors are welcomed into the Hub to discuss community problems to see how they might be able to address some/one of them collectively.

A video of a final pitch from a Community Innovation Challenge can be found here. This particular pitch addresses the fact that only 10% of food consumed in Newfoundland is farmed in Newfoundland. This pitch proposes using recycled shipping containers to create growing space in partnership with community partners.

## HOW TO GET STARTED

If either a church or a community is looking to develop a Community Innovation Hub, the United Church has prepared a number of resources to help get the ball rolling.

Each of the steps outlined in the image have additional resources linked to them on the Community Innovation Hub website.



Working through these steps will ensure that:

1. This is the right fit for your church and community.
2. You have the necessary administrative components lined up.
3. You have engaged the right partners and let the group create the vision.

When your community is ready and you're set to put everything into motion, the Starter Kit is an important resource. This Kit outlines the various moving parts as your Community Innovation Hub gets going. While every community is different, the Starter Kit gives an overview of the different stages and things to expect.

### INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

There are a number of additional resources that have been developed by the United Church to help your Community Innovation Hub thrive. These additional resources are available on request, and include:

- Starter Kit
- Community Round Table Toolkit
- Social Innovation Jams
- Turnkey Kits (Agrihoods, Coworking Space, and Makerspaces)

### LESSONS LEARNED

The most important lessons to be derived from the experience of the United Church is to:

- 1) engage your community from the beginning, and
- 2) do not over plan your Community Hub. As your Hub comes together, new energy and new ideas will emerge. The final direction may be quite different than what was originally planned. It may even be better than expected. Build in flexibility to allow your Hub to follow the direction the community needs it to go.

The work of United Church shows us that a physical space is only the beginning – the type of programming and community connections that are created in and around this space can create the opportunities for entrepreneurship development. The same resources (or principles found therein) that the United Church have curated to support their various congregations, can be used in creative ways in facilities throughout rural Ontario: arenas, schools, agricultural societies, theatres, libraries, legions and more.

### ELGIN INNOVATION CENTRE

#### BACKGROUND

The Elgin Innovation Centre (EIC) is a successful business as well as a creative solution to a major plant closure in the small rural community of Aylmer, Ontario – now home to 25 thriving businesses.

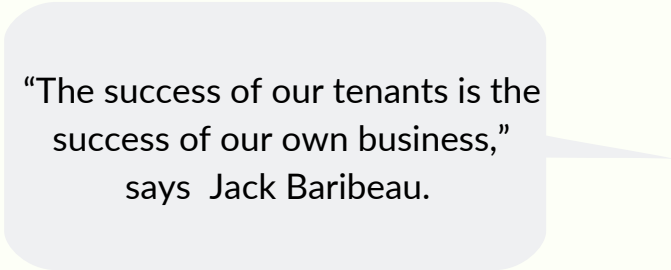
The previous owners of the facility that now houses the Elgin Innovation Centre, Imperial Tobacco, had been an anchor employer in the region for many decades. In ?? when they chose to relocate their operations, 400-500 jobs were lost and the building sat virtually empty. Jack Baribeau, a local entrepreneur and owner of Baribeau Construction saw opportunity in the facility as he drove past it each week taking his kids to hockey. It seemed unlikely that another single user would re-locate to Aylmer and take over the million-square-foot complex. Baribeau understood that if the building wasn't revitalized and re-purposed, there was a high risk of it being demolished – significantly extending the recovery period for the community and the local economy.

The idea of resurrecting the former tobacco plant into something new was a risky business proposition for Baribeau, his family and Baribeau Construction, but an important endeavour both personally and professionally. Baribeau has called this project an act of faith – an unproven idea to create a sustainable business as a landlord, while bringing back jobs and investment to the community.

Baribeau eventually recruited a number of business associates and investors and put forward a proposal to purchase the existing facility from Imperial Tobacco. When they had secured a deal, they began work on retrofitting the facility.

#### EIC IN OPERATION

The basic idea was to break the existing facility into malleable, versatile sections that might attract a higher quantity of smaller businesses.



“The success of our tenants is the success of our own business,”  
says Jack Baribeau.

From day one, the EIC has been designed to nurture the success of prospective entrepreneurs and the businesses who call it home. It has been a conscious and strategic decision to be co-operative landlords - to create a supportive environment for the entrepreneurs and business owners who will in-turn create jobs for the region. Being co-operative landlords means understanding not all business situations are predictable.

When items come up that create an unforeseen challenge for business owners, the EIC team are open and willing to meet with them to come up with a creative solution that works for everyone.

As a co-operative landlord, the EIC assists businesses to succeed in a number of ways:

1. Providing experience in the design, process layout and build outs of many different business operations, creating efficient solutions for new tenants.
2. Construction experience to help connect business owners with various experienced trades and suppliers.
3. Offering the service to upgrade their space and assist in the costs of these upgrades.
4. On-site business coaching and mentorship

### *Flex Space*

In the spirit of being supportive landlords, the EIC strategically created space that was larger than the business owners felt they needed and provided a vision for expansion. Monthly “flex-space” is offered to businesses during busy times, with the ability to scale back during slower times. This moveable flex-space can be measured each month and billed according to each tenant, meaning they can expand and contract operations as needed. The ability to expand permanently has also been valuable for the businesses in the EIC. One business who began with approximately 20,000 square feet doubled their footprint within their first year of operation, and today occupies close to 180,000 square feet.

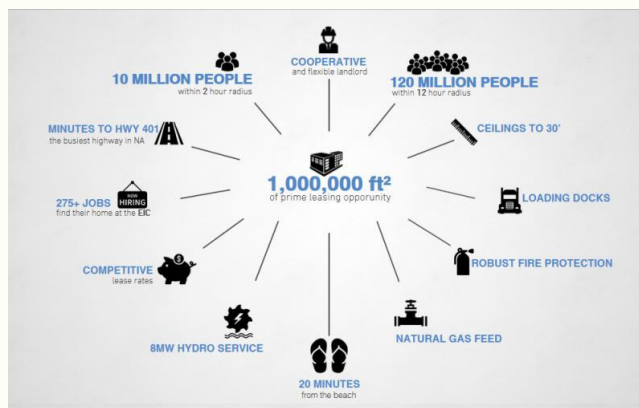
### *Business Coaching*

Many of the businesses that have taken up shop in the EIC have been in need of mentorship and business and planning support. In response, the EIC has developed creative ways of assisting with government regulations, health and safety plans, business plan development, bank financing and government grant applications as part of the package. While this was not a sustainable task for the ownership team to maintain themselves, over time, they were able to provide space for the local CFDC, the Elgin Business Resource Centre to set up shop inside the EIC, where they can now provide business coaching and support to EIC tenants.



### *Additional Amenities*

The Elgin Innovation Centre is an industrial facility with a wealth of amenities that new and emerging businesses may not always have access to. The EIC is located close to major markets in Ontario and the US as well as highway 401. The EIC offers competitive lease rates, 8 MW hydro service, natural gas feed, fire protection, variable ceiling height space up to 30' and loading docks.



### *Businesses in the EIC*

There are currently 25 businesses that employ close to 400 people, and the EIC now sits at only 50% of its capacity. As many of the EIC businesses are growing, there is optimism that many more jobs will be created in the years to come.

The types of permitted businesses that EIC is zoned for fall under Heavy Industrial (M2) zoning. The current businesses that call EIC home are varied, including machining shops, food processing facilities, steel fabrication, welding, IT, counselling and mediation, and seasonal automotive storage.

One unintended outcome has been the culture of collaboration that has emerged among the businesses in the EIC. In one instance there are two direct competitors – neighbours in the facility – that share equipment when something breaks down. Further, as new businesses arrive, many of the fellow tenants have been able to support these new businesses with creating and installing the technology they need to get up and running.

### *Planet Shrimp*

One business that stands out in the EIC is Planet Shrimp, a shrimp-growing facility that uses a recirculating aquaculture system. This facility grows indoor shrimp using proprietary designed systems to regulate a number of environmental variables, including, but not limited to, temperature, humidity and mineral nutrients in the water. Further, this fully enclosed system uses no chemicals, antibiotics, pesticides or hormones. From an innovative technological perspective, this business is a true leader, garnering the attention of countries around the world. Planet Shrimp has had the opportunity to grow and emerge as a leader in Canadian food production a result of the unique space provided by the EIC and their co-operative landlord philosophy.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Elgin Innovation Centre, yet another example of the renaissance of Ontario's Tobacco belt, demonstrates the creativity and ingenuity that exists in rural Ontario. Where there was once uncertainty there is now opportunity – opportunity for the current tenants and future aspiring entrepreneurs in the Aylmer region and beyond.

While the Elgin Innovation Centre was a large and risky undertaking, it shows the kind of creative problem solving that can overcome hardship. This case study illustrates the opportunity for the private sector to have a hand in strengthening the economic vitality of rural Ontario, and the great synergies for entrepreneurship development that can be created in engaging with community service providers. For the Elgin Innovation Centre, creating new opportunities for entrepreneurship through the re-purposing of existing space is not only beneficial to new entrepreneurs, but to the economic and social well-being of the whole community.

### Sophiasburgh Central School Community Kitchen

#### BACKGROUND

A modest small-town school, reminiscent of most any school throughout rural Ontario, has been saved from a looming shutdown and has created new opportunities for entrepreneurship programming, rooted in the local agriculture and food economy.



It has been called “sheer will, determination and positive community spirit” contributing to the preservation of Sophiasburgh Central School in Prince Edward County. Faced with looming consolidation, residents from the small-town communities of Demorestville, Northport, Big Island, Fish Lake, Bethel Street, Crofton, Green Point and Woodville all came together searching for a creative solution to help keep the school open and running. The basic question the group discussed was how to turn excess space in a Centennial-era school into a more widely utilized and in-demand community gathering space.

An important part of the planning process for this initiative was identifying a defining feature of the local economy that could be leveraged in a shared-use space. In Prince Edward County, agriculture has long been an important economic driver. More recently, food preparation and gastronomy has become a staple of the local tourism offering. In community round table discussions the idea for commercial kitchen space was raised and explored. Local businesses like Pyramid Ferments and Food To Share helped identify the business case for a shared commercial kitchen space.



This model of entrepreneurship programming through a shared community space is replicable across the province, where communities can effectively identify and build on an existing asset or strength in their local economy – which won't always be agriculture and food production. If forestry is an important part of the local economy, a lumber and carpentry hub may be a more natural outgrowth for a shared community space.

### **STATUS OF THE SCHOOL**

The whole project has been two years in the making, beginning with a Parent Action Committee who originally formed to keep the school's doors open. Throughout these two years there has been many factors needed to bring this project to fruition, including: active lobbying, fundraising, architectural designing, business planning, program planning and securing insurance.

In September 2018, after demonstrating financial viability, a five-year lease was signed between the federally incorporated not-for-profit Prince Edward County Food Hub (PECFH) and the Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB). The PECFH pays the school board on an annual basis enough to cover 85-90% of physical operating costs, not including teachers' salaries. This lease has ensured the school will stay active, and that the food hub can co-exist in a 5,800 square foot portion of the west wing of the school, which includes five classrooms and some storage space.

Following years of planning and an intensive nine-month fundraising campaign, with over \$800,000 raised in community donations from across the County, the PECFH has now begun work on renovations to bring the commercial kitchen into fruition.

Sophiasburgh councillor, Bill Roberts, called this a great example of what a vibrant community partnership can do:

**“We are developing a model for rural education and new ways of making use of global school resources for the benefit of the community, community health and educational access for our wonderful students,” Roberts said. “And we are developing a unique made-in-the-County solution with the County Food Hub.”**

## WHAT WILL BE AVAILABLE

The PECFH commercial kitchen is designed to support innovation, entrepreneurship, education and training for the burgeoning local food industry and local students. It includes:

- Shared use commercial kitchen for rental and/or use by businesses and community groups
- Food incubator for agricultural operations
- Business support services for users and food education and cooking classes available to community members.

In the short term, local residents, businesses and not-for-profit organizations will all be able to rent space in the certified commercial kitchen, at a reasonable cost. In the longer-term, incubation space will be leased to qualified local or regional food producers to help them scale up operations and grow their businesses outside of the County. The first tenant of the facility will be Food To Share, a not-for-profit organization devoted to increasing access to healthy, fresh and locally grown food to regional food banks. Food To Share collects food grown by local farmers and gardeners and prepares and processes them in a number of kitchen spaces throughout the region. The PECFH will be the new home for Food To Share.

PECFH is partnering with the local school board and the local Health Unit to design and deliver enhanced, curriculum-approved learning opportunities around food literacy, food preparation and cultivation as well as food entrepreneurship. PECFH is also in conversations with the Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre in Northumberland County, to incorporate their experience in food entrepreneurship, value-added processing and support programming.

Community connected food literacy curriculum is another important outgrowth from the commercial kitchen space. Small-batch food production is a key tenant in Prince Edward County's emerging gastro-economy and as culinary skills and concepts become a stronger part of a Sophiasburgh Central School's curriculum there is a newfound opportunity to provide skills training to students that may open the door to career opportunities close to home. Connecting students with local career opportunities is an ongoing challenge all rural communities face as youth out-migration from rural areas continues to create challenges for workforce development.

## CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS (TO DATE)

### *IDENTIFYING MUTUAL INTERESTS*

From the beginning, the whole community came together around saving the school, so there was already a unifying goal in the minds' of residents. The positivity around that idea and the collective energies that were invested has created something more concrete.

**“It starts ticking off enough boxes that people get excited about the idea”, says Mike Farrell, co-chair of the Prince Edward County Food Hub.**

Food is an idea that most everyone can relate to, particularly in the Prince Edward County region with a longstanding agriculture community and a burgeoning gastronomy economy. A food hub facility that facilitates access to food, food literacy, job training and entrepreneurship development was a compelling idea for a community to rally behind.

### *COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS*

There were a number community champions crucial to the success of this initiative. All of the community champions brought different expertise to the project. These community champions include:

- Parent Action Committee
- Marketing and Communications Consultant
- Local Elected Leadership
- The Prince Edward County Food Hub (PECFH)
- Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB)

In a project like this, a spokesperson with an understanding of how to effectively market and pitch an idea to prospective partners, donors and community leaders was crucially important. The spokesperson helps unite the myriad of different ideas and interests in the community. Mike Farrell, co-chair of the Prince Edward County Food Hub took on this role, using his experience in marketing and public speaking to bring ideas to life.

Working with the school board is also particularly important as their interests are fully intertwined with the interests of the community in a project like this. For many involved in community development work, a school board's systems and structures can be unfamiliar territory. It has been important for this project's success to build new relationships and work alongside trustees, teachers and principals throughout, to ensure the project was moving forward in the best interests of both sides.

### *BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN FUNDRAISING*

Initial funding (close to one third) came from a combination of sources including Prince Edward County, an OMAFRA Rural Economic Development (RED) grant and the local Community Futures Development Corporation. The whole project required close to \$800,000 in cash and in-kind funding to come to fruition – much of that was support in-kind. The remaining two thirds of funding came from community fundraising, whether it was a \$50 cheque from a local resident or a local business offering in-kind construction work. In generating this community support, it was crucial to share the message of mutual benefits, so the organizing committee made it a news story. They hosted town halls to get input from community members and invited local politicians and the local media. In the end, it was clear to all that keeping the school open was good for the economy and the whole community.

### **CONCLUSION**

While the Sophiasburgh Central School Community Kitchen project is still in progress, it shows the tremendous opportunity that exists when a group of community members come together to work towards a singular goal. This project shows the potential for community development projects to serve a breadth of important community needs if enough creative thinkers take time to sit around a table and collaborate. By identifying mutual interests among a variety of stakeholders, this initiative has managed to save one community asset while creating another. Moving forward, this community will have the opportunity to further strengthen the local gastro-economy through the energies of agricultural entrepreneurs, and will be keeping their youth attending school close to home.

# YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMMING

## Overview



### INTRODUCTION

Many rural communities are placing increased emphasis on youth as they look at building a thriving ecosystem for entrepreneurship. Youth entrepreneurs can be important contributors to sustaining current businesses, growing local economies and building community vitality. Some of the reasons youth are being looked to for economic and community development include:

- 1. A changing work environment:** As communications technologies become more advanced, there is an increasing shift towards freelancing professionals – individuals managing their own projects, reporting to a list of clients as opposed to one employer. Given the right technological infrastructure, freelancing shows great potential to allow more people to live and work in rural communities. Entrepreneurial skills will thus be increasingly important for more and more people in the future.
- 2. Succession planning and workforce development:** A large number of business owners are exploring, or will be exploring, retirement in the years to come. These business owners will be relying on a new generation of entrepreneurs to take over. For rural communities who rely on local businesses for jobs and services, and who are seeing youth leaving home in increasing numbers, succession planning will be an important challenge to address. Communities are exploring how youth entrepreneurship and youth engagement might help retain youth while creating connections to prosperous careers.
- 3. Community development and citizen engagement:** An important component of entrepreneurship is the entrepreneurial mindset or attitude – this manner of understanding and interacting with the world. Entrepreneurs are often problem solvers – they find a collective need and build a business around solutions. While this entrepreneurial mindset may often breed successful businesses, it is also valuable to nurture as it breeds community builders - those who focus their attention outside of the economy on important needs in the community.

The following case studies are examples of communities and/or organizations embracing youth entrepreneurship in the work they do.

### STUDENT START UP (SSUP) NORFOLK

#### **BACKGROUND**

Student Start Up (SSUP) Norfolk is an award-winning youth entrepreneurship program, with accolades from both the Economic Development Council of Ontario and the Economic Development Association of Canada. Norfolk County has been running the Student Start-Up Program (SSUP) for the past three years, a program designed to encourage local high school students to consider entrepreneurship as an alternative to traditional employment streams.

#### **PROJECT ORIGINS**

SSUP Norfolk was first introduced in 2016, adapted from a model of youth entrepreneurship development in British Columbia. The initial goal of the program was to shift students' thinking around the possibilities of starting a business, to provide enough support and guidance to help students step outside their comfort zone and pursue entrepreneurship as a viable job opportunity. The program was built on the notion that introducing youth to entrepreneurship from a young age would help to normalize the idea and demonstrate that it need not be a scary, intimidating endeavour. At its core, the SSUP program combines start-up funding with business mentoring and access to market to help students move forward with their entrepreneurial goals.

#### **THE EVOLUTION OF SSUP NORFOLK**

The focus in the first year of program development was to garner widespread participation from as many youth as possible. The first intake saw a total of 86 student applications, of which 40 students received funding to start their businesses.

In the first year 12 Norfolk County businesses sponsored this program to build a budget of \$8,850 for grant funding. In years two and three, interest in the program grew, along with support from sponsors. To date, in three years of operation, the program has received 371 applications, and administered close to \$25,000 to help fund 173 student-led start-ups.

While this program is now firmly rooted in the community, given feedback from sponsors, participants and municipal staff, some changes are being proposed. The focus of the program will shift from quantity of students to quality of applicants selected. Funding per business will be increased, though funds will be contingent on participation in mentorship sessions, marketplace participation and quality of final report.

The mentorship component will be strengthened through increased partnerships in the community. When students come in with questions, they will have access to a wide variety of professionals in the community who can provide guidance.

If students have legal questions there will be a lawyer. If students have financial questions, there will be an accountant. The relationships with local professionals who have agreed to offer in-kind mentorship to youth will enable this program to teach the nuts and bolts of entrepreneurship in a more serious way.

### **SSUP NORFOLK STAFF-TIME COMMITMENTS AND PROJECT COMPONENTS**

#### Program Design

This process takes part-time staff commitment over the course of four months, November to March.

This stage involves tailoring the concept of a youth summer entrepreneurship program to the needs of the community. For example, some communities may have specific thematic focuses (food, arts & crafts, automotive).

If a community decides they want to implement this program, they need to develop the terms of reference and policies to govern the program – how do you ensure it's a level playing field, how do you ensure equity, what's the policy around use of images, indemnification of the county, permission from guardians (under age youth) to participate?

The program lead also needs to prepare a report to council to secure municipal permission. This report should highlight all the important areas of concern for the county, beginning with the questions identified above. Further, councillors will be concerned with questions like:

- > What percent of the program budget is tax levy vs. opposed private sector sponsorship?
- > What portion of the budget will be administration vs. program spending?
- > What are the program's anticipated impacts and why does the community need this?
- > How do you measure success?
- > What is the target number of participants?

#### Pre-Program Promotion & Planning

This stage of the process takes part-time staff commitment over the course of four months, March to June.

The program promotion is a work-intensive process for communities just getting started with such a program. It involves soliciting sponsorships from local businesses, meeting with teachers, school boards, Chambers of Commerce, BIA's, boards of trade, business associations, etc., to build community support.

Program promotion involves advertising through social media, radio, newsletters and finally, recruiting student participation.

>Promotion through local schools takes place early March (four months prior to end of school)

Note: As this program has been running in Norfolk County now for three years, students and teachers know about the program already and promotion is more of a reminder. In the early days of the SSUP Norfolk program, the early weeks of promotion took a large amount of time as they would cover all 13 high schools in-person. Today they are able to send communications to schools to enable them to promote on their own, saving a significant amount of time. As such, the time requirements for promotion have declined over the years (now 10-20 hours).

> Student applications are open for three weeks leading up to the end of the schoolyear  
> Applications are evaluated by staff and final selections are made

### Early Summer - Program Launch

Staff Commitment (20-25 hours): Early summer involves mostly program administration. Successful applicants are announced and staff need to ensure students get their seed money. Once this is out of the way, much of the program sustains itself. Some attention to student businesses and connections with mentors is required on an ongoing basis, but is not a significant amount of time.

- Waiver forms are required (guardian waiver and model photo release).
- Successful applicants are notified by the end of June.
- Successful student businesses receive funding through pre-paid debit cards, in the following installments:
  - o \$100 initial seed money to buy supplies and get business started
  - o For every festival, marketplace, farmers market attended, students earn \$50 building to a maximum of \$300.
    - § Remuneration based on effort encourages increased participation in learning opportunities and entrepreneurship specific experiences
- County curates a series of festivals, events and marketplaces.

- There are seven established “marketplace” events, at no cost to the student. Students may participate in any or all of these events:
  - Norfolk Ram Rodeo
  - Lynn Valley Lions Ice Cream Festival
  - Venture Norfolk Marketplace
  - Port Dover Silver Lake Market
  - Port Rowan Farmers Market
  - Waterford Farmers Market
  - Simcoe Farmers Market
- Additionally, students participate in two mentorship sessions: One in early July, one in mid-August.

### Mid-Summer - Student Marketplace

The mid-summer student marketplace is a community event in August for the students to display their wares. The event is coordinated throughout the summer, requiring coordination with media, Venture Norfolk, students, parents and community members. Everything is coordinated for the students, including the tent space they need and their lunch for the day - students arrive with their products and have a table ready to go. It's a bit of a celebration each year, and the whole community knows it's coming. The local radio station and newspapers all come out to interview and congratulate students about their businesses. This event takes roughly 20 hours of staff time.



### End of Summer - Wrap Up

- A bonus of up to \$100 can be received if the student submits a comprehensive final report by the end of August.
- End-of-summer staff commitment is 10-20 hours for collecting and reviewing final reports.

## **LOCAL PARTNERS**

From promotion to mentorship to sponsorship, this program is a community effort.

### **Some of the local community partners include:**

- **Venture Norfolk - Community Futures Development Corporation**
- **Local Schoolboards**
- **Local Business Sponsors**
- **Local Professional Mentors**
- **Brantford Brant Resource Centre - SBEC**
- **Workforce Planning Board**

## **LESSONS LEARNED & CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS**

An important realization for the Norfolk County team was how much the local business community endorsed the program. While the primary focus is entrepreneurship, this program acts as a bridge between the students and local businesses. Local businesses have seen value in the program, many of whom have actively called staff over the years to see how they might get involved and support SSUP program.

The whole community celebrates the efforts of the students throughout their summer season, and local businesses want to be a part of that. At the end of the day, a fundamental component of this program's success has been the public celebration of the student's efforts – when you celebrate it, everyone wants to be a part of it – teachers, students, businesses, community organizations and local residents.

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## LAUNCHPAD YOUTH ACTIVITY AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE (LAUNCHPAD YATC)

Launchpad YATC's I'm the Boss! program provides similar youth entrepreneurship experiences as SSUP Norfolk, though LaunchPad is also able to build on existing youth programming offered year-round through their youth centre located in Hanover, Ontario.



LaunchPad YATC is a drop-in youth centre with a specific focus on skill-building and job-training opportunities. Each of the activities offered in LaunchPad's curriculum are intentionally connected with local businesses which allows them to train youth in locally relevant job skills, while also providing opportunities for enriched learning through hands-on connections with other local entrepreneurs.

Some of the amenities and program opportunities available to youth at LaunchPad YATC include:

- Welding Shop – Welding courses for various abilities (101, 102, 201, 301)
- Commercial Kitchen – culinary and catering courses
- Fully Equipped Wood Shop – wood-working basics and working with shop equipment
- Technology Lab – photography, music recording, robotics, 3D printing, computer programming courses
- Recreation Space – music, art classes, etc.

### *I'M THE BOSS*

LaunchPad's I'm the Boss program is designed to support and inspire local youth to test their potential as entrepreneurs for a summer. Through this program, any young person with a good idea can take the summer to explore how they can build their own business. LaunchPad facilitates access to market for the youth by providing a collectively run market space at the local farmer's market. This provides a safe environment for budding young entrepreneurs to take risks, be creative and make mistakes. LaunchPad staff are also on hand to provide guidance with building a business plan, customer service and marketing. At the end of the day, they help kids have fun, build positive experiences and learn from their mistakes. While this program is in its early stages, it is an excellent complement to the existing LaunchPad programming, moving local youth from the skills they've learned at LaunchPad into building their own business.





## *BACKGROUND*

The Kidpreneur program was developed to introduce entrepreneurship to local youth, kids in grades 6 through 8, to empower them to think in an entrepreneurial way. The program focuses on providing youth with the skills and inspiration to pursue their dreams in the future. It enables these individuals to be able to make choices in the future as to whether they should work for someone else, or create their own employment through entrepreneurship.

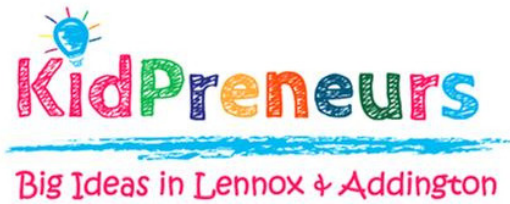
Tracey Snow is the Economic Development Officer with the County of Lennox and Addington, and works as a business coach to prospective and current entrepreneurs. For Tracey, entrepreneurship is not a start-up piece. “To me it’s a mindset”, says Tracey. “It’s an attitude, its perseverance, its creativity, its risk taking, its reward, its struggle.” For Tracey, entrepreneurship support needs to focus attention on introducing and fostering this entrepreneurial mindset. While Tracey remembers a time where entrepreneurship was not discussed as a viable career path, she is encouraged by recent shifts towards opening this conversation and creating new opportunities for today’s youth.

## *HOW DOES IT WORK*

The Kidpreneur program is designed to demonstrate the opportunities students have to start businesses, to showcase the potential they have in themselves to be entrepreneurs and to inspire other students to explore new business ideas.

Kidpreneur is an entrepreneurship fair, like a science fair, put on in partnership with the County Economic Development team and the local school boards.

The Kidpreneur program gives elementary school students (grades 6-8) from Lennox and Addington County a framework for brainstorming and developing their own small business plans.



Leading up to the competition, each elementary school is visited by a member of the Lennox and Addington Economic Development team, as well as a local entrepreneur. The students participate in a 45-minute fun, informative and dynamic presentation about entrepreneurship to help get things started. Each school is provided with a Teacher Information Package to assist with planning, as well as access to a team member from the County Economic Development office for any questions.

Students interested in participating in the Kidpreneur fair develop a business plan and draw up a storyboard to help pitch their business idea. Each student needs to demonstrate all aspects of their business. They are required to do market research, determine startup costs, expenses and revenue and develop a marketing plan. The County Economic Development team recruits judges to evaluate the students' submissions from each school. The top business plans move on to a County-level competition, where local invited politicians, media outlets and high school teachers, are invited to come see the students' business ideas.

Teachers in the schools are excited by the applicability of this program with their own curriculum goals and are strong supporters of the initiative in their classrooms. The Kidpreneur program has resulted in a positive classroom learning experience and helped to ignite the entrepreneurial flame for many of the students that have participated.

# WIN THIS SPACE

## Program Overview



## INTRODUCTION

Historically, entrepreneurship has been fundamental to the emergence of rural Ontario communities and their downtown cores. For many rural communities today, maintaining the strength and vitality of the downtown business core is an ongoing economic development challenge as local demographics shift, economies globalize and advances in digital technology fundamentally change consumer expectations of rural downtowns. In the midst of all this change, a host of stakeholders: municipalities, not for profits, CFDC's, BIA's and Chambers of Commerce, are coming together in pursuit of solutions to reinvent the rural downtown business environment.

Win This Space was developed and implemented to address two challenges common to rural communities: filling storefront vacancies in the downtown core and fostering local entrepreneurship.

## WHAT IS WIN THIS SPACE

Win This Space (WTS) is a business recruitment initiative that encourages and inspires local residents to explore their dreams of entrepreneurship, and equips participants with the tools and skills needed to open a business in a downtown storefront.

WTS incorporates a business pitch competition alongside mentoring, business training and networking opportunities. The grand prize each participant is working towards is a rent-free storefront location for one year, along with additional business services.

The first Win This Space entrepreneurship competition was developed in the Town of Uxbridge by the local Business Improvement Association (BIA). Uxbridge's program won an award at the Ontario BIA Achievement Awards (OBIAA) Conference in 2014 in the category of Business Retention and Expansion.

Since then, with an overwhelming universal appeal, Win This Space has expanded throughout Ontario to many different communities.

Second to explore this program was the Municipality of Huron East, and the communities of Brussels, Seaforth and Vanastra. The adoption and re-invention of this program illustrates its strength and scalability for communities across the province.



“Win This Space is not just about filling empty retail spaces, it’s about people inspiring other people. It’s about helping to fulfill someone’s dream to become [an] entrepreneur,” says Sari Pandopulos, Uxbridge BIA board member, who ran this program for the first time in Uxbridge, Ontario.

## TIMELINE

While every community has a slightly different structure, Win This Space has roughly six different stages:

1. Project Planning
2. Community WTS Launch Period
3. Applicant Review
4. Business Workshops
5. Business Plan Review
6. Grand Finale

### 1. PROJECT PLANNING (4-6 MONTHS)

Win This Space has grown and evolved organically over the years, following from the examples of other communities. Many of the communities looking to run a WTS competition have reached out to communities with prior experience to review the structure of the program and any variations employed. Communities are typically open to sharing, and this is a valuable way to learn how it all unfolds.

Using this planning stage to actively engage the community is also very important. When local residents and/or business owners feel engaged in the project, they are more apt to lend support through avenues like sponsorship, judging or active promotion (social media, word-of-mouth, etc.).

There is an opportunity with Win This Space to bring together a community. WTS can create new connections and new relationships built around a common goal – something that adds value beyond the duration of the project.

**Typical steps in the PROJECT PLANNING phase:**

- > Conduct background research: connect with other WTS communities
- > Contact OBIAA for more information
  - Build process documents and the “rules of the game”
- > For your own reference, as well as for participants, laying out a clear understanding of how this will all unfold is important
  - Create scoring/ranking criteria for participant evaluations
  - Seek council resolution/approval (if necessary)
  - Identify strategic partners and recruit advisory committee
- > Once business is operating, training workshops and business mentoring are both critical to the success of the program, which is reliant on the strategic partners
  - Finalize your panel of judges
  - Solicit sponsors/funding
  - Develop marketing plans
  - Identify storefront vacancies and connect with local landlords
  - Identify locations and plan for contest events (site visits, workshops, grand finale)
  - Organize administration components
- > Contracts with contestants ensuring active participation in the project
- > Contracts with landlords for available space
  - If eligible, charitable receipts for sponsorship donations
  - Memorandums of Understanding with project partners to outline working relationship
- > Terms of Reference for project advisory committee to clarify expectations for deliverables and time commitment
- > Confidentiality Agreements signed by Administration/Judges (protects financial and personal information submitted by participants)

"Downtown Seaforth and Brussels, both in the Municipality of Huron East, just finished the Win This Space program modelled after the one initiated by the Uxbridge BIA in 2013. It was a HUGE success," writes Jan Hawley, Economic Development Officer with the Municipality of Huron East. "None of this would have happened had I not heard of this great project at the OBIAA conference in Hamilton."

## 2. COMMUNITY WTS LAUNCH PERIOD (1-1.5 MONTHS)

The launch of the competition and the associated marketing strategies are crucial in building community support, soliciting sponsors and recruiting quality applications. Taking time to ensure relationships are built in the community, and that awareness of the opportunity is widespread, will breed more success throughout the duration of the competition.

Some ideas for the launch period worth considering include:

- > Begin project advertising prior to registration opening in order to raise community awareness
  - Think about using a combination of social media, radio, newspaper ads, alongside emails to local organizations like the Chamber of Commerce
  - Identify vacant storefronts with logo decals/window signage – gets people talking
- > Hold a public launch event or announcement
  - Consider an in-person event, hosted at a downtown location
    - Invite media, community leaders, business community and residents
- > Open registration/applications for the competition following promotion:
  - Registration typically lasts (suggested no less than) three weeks
  - Create a clear expectation of what applicants need to include in their application
- > Community information sessions
  - Consider hosting information sessions in the community to help promote the opportunity and clarify any questions prospective applicants might have.
  - Review Contest Details: Rules and regulations, goals of the contest, grand prize, potential benefits to participants: educational components, access to mentors, public speaking experience, business supports, contest timeline
  - Existing resources to support an application
- > Set a firm application deadline

### WIN THIS SPACE

#### Project Metrics

- **Total duration of project (planning & implementation): 5-9 months**
- **Staff time: 10–15 hours per week for duration of project**
- **Note: 1st year is often the most difficult as there is no existing template to work from. Subsequent years are less time consuming.**
- **Organizational investment: \$2,000 – \$15,000 plus wages**
- **Leveraged Cash/in-kind donations: \$20,000 – \$45,000**
- **Number of applicants per year: 15-30**

### 3. APPLICANT REVIEW (1 WEEK)

This preliminary review of applications will ensure all the proposed ideas will actually work within the space available, and provides an opportunity to filter out the businesses that may not fit with what the community has agreed upon for eligibility. Additionally, if an overwhelming number of applications were received, this is an opportunity to narrow down the list further.

- > Evaluate applications to determine if they meet any mandatory pre-determined criteria
  - "Permitted uses" in the downtown zoning bylaws
  - Type of business (i.e., retail vs. industrial)
  - Eligible ideas are invited to move onto the next stage of the competition.

### 4. BUSINESS WORKSHOPS (2-4 WEEKS)

The business workshops are designed to help participants write high-quality business plans for the Win This Space competition. As these workshops are ongoing, participants are expected to be drafting their business plans using the information they are receiving in the workshops.

It is recommended that these workshops be mandatory for all participants. Mandatory workshops increase the reach of entrepreneurship training in the community, something that could help more entrepreneurs to succeed beyond the duration of the competition.

Where your community may not have the expertise to run workshops in these areas, look to your local service providers like your SBEC or Community Futures as a strategic partner. Workshops typically touch on:

- **Starting A Small Business**
- **Writing A Business Plan**
- **Market Research**
- **Marketing Strategies & Social Media**
- **How to Deliver a Strong Pitch**
- **Financials – “Show Me the Money”**
- **Free one-on-one counseling provided at any time during business plan writing**



## 5. BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW (1 WEEK)

This is an opportunity for judges to further narrow down the list of participants for the final pitch competition. Judges review and rank all business plans and typically select the top three to five, depending on the structure the community has chosen for the finale. If there is a small number of total participants by this stage (sometimes participants will drop out for a variety of reasons), some communities have skipped this step and allowed all participants to participate in the finale.

## 6. GRAND FINALE & FINALIST JUDGING (1 WEEK)

For participants, the grand finale is the final test – it is the culmination of all their hard work, from the submission of their application, to the workshops, to the business plan writing and pitch rehearsing.

For the public, the grand finale is an exciting time to learn about the kinds of businesses that could possibly open up shop in the downtown. For both sides, this is a big occasion, and the grand finale provides the opportunity to celebrate everyone involved in the process, including the community. An event with a sense of occasion and celebration helps breed contagious excitement among everyone in attendance.

### THE FINALE

- > **Hosted at a community venue or storefront to support existing businesses**
- > **Invite residents, family members of participants, local media, all levels of elected government**
- > **Some communities have had the whole event filmed by local TV stations**
- > **Document the event, either through the production of a video, a story/press release written by a skilled journalist, and/or a collection of good quality photographs. This ensures ownership of good quality marketing material by the event organizers for future use.**

## THE PITCH COMPETITION

- > **Finalists submit final business plans (including marketing and financial plans)**
- > **Finalists participate in a “Dragons’ Den style” Grand Finale:**
  - **10-minute presentation, followed by 5-minute question period from judges**
  - **Judges select a single winner**

**(It is recommended that the rankings of all finalists be kept on file in the event the winner cannot fulfill his or her obligation. In the event this does occur, a runner-up could be awarded the prize through a fair and equitable process.)**

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

### *WORKSHOPS*

Mandatory participant workshops have stood out to many as an integral component to the participant's success, as well as the broader community.

The most noticeable outcome of the Win This Space competitions is the empty storefronts that are being filled and the downtown business districts that are becoming more vibrant.

Surprisingly, many contestants, not only the contest winners, have opened businesses with great success. As part of the program design in some communities, the associated mentoring, training and coaching for the prospective entrepreneurs have been mandatory to all participants' eligibility in the contest. Participants who did not “win” the contest have nonetheless started successful businesses, built on the foundation of the training and inspiration they received through the WTS process.

Further, as new business owners have emerged as a direct result of this program, they have not started out alone. Another key component to the impact on rural entrepreneurship has been the support network generated for participants, past and present. While WTS was a competition from day one, the workshops and pitch competitions provided an opportunity for prospective entrepreneurs to come together and build relationships – relationships that have lasted through the years. These groups have stayed in touch and act as an informal support network for like-minded entrepreneurs and their downtown business communities.

“Without a doubt, I feel the business training is the most important aspect of the program’s overall impact, not only from an entrepreneurship development perspective, but that of local economic development and downtown revitalization,” says Jan Hawley, project coordinator for the Huron East competitions.

### *STRATEGIC PARTNERS*

Win This Space competitions depend on strategic partners. Not every host organization is going to have the capacity needed to organize a complex project while also providing the technical expertise necessary to ensure success for all participants.

Identifying mutual interests is a good place to start. For example, many Small Business Enterprise Centres already have a mandate for providing entrepreneurship/ business skills training and this competition gives them a captive and engaged audience.

For the most part, all of the potential strategic partners listed on the chart on the following page have a vested interest in the success of local entrepreneurs; however, there will likely be additional partners looking to give back to their community who will come to the table.

The chart gives a sense of what some of these partners could possibly offer to a project - keep in mind this is not an exhaustive list, and many could take on multiple roles. The important part is to identify the missing expertise and find a partner who can fill that gap.

### *ORGANIZING COMMITTEE*

Roles may change depending on the project and the organizations/ institutions who are active in the community. Bringing together a diverse advisory committee is a good way to build broader community support.

Something every community cited as important was the connections made with other community members, whether it was through sponsorship, in-kind services, retail space, marketing or word-of-mouth. Building a diverse advisory or action committee will help ensure the success of the project.

ORGANIZATION	ROLES/ACCOUNTABILITIES
Business Improvement Association or Municipal Economic Development Department	Project Lead/ Project Facilitator
General Manager, Chamber of Commerce	Work with BIA on project as a whole
Office Administrator, Chamber of Commerce	Provide administrative support to project as a whole
Municipal Community Development Coordinator	Working committee member; Advertise as appropriate; Judge for Finale; Attend main events
OMAFRA Agriculture and Rural Economic Development Advisor	Working committee member; Advertise as appropriate; Attend main events
Business Analyst, Community Futures Development Corporation	Working committee member; Advertise as appropriate; Attend main events; Judge for Finale
Economic Development/ Communications Assistant, Small Business Enterprise Centre	Working committee member; Lead in Workshops; Judge for Finale
Branch Manager, Local Credit Union	Lead in workshop and support to businesses; Working committee member; Judge for Finale
Economic Development & Tourism Coordinator, County-level municipal government	Working committee member; Advertise as appropriate; Attend main events

### *APPLICANT ATTRACTION AND SCREENING*

Marketing and community outreach ensure a large quantity and high quality of applicants for the program. Some communities received overwhelming support and had a lot of work to narrow down the list for a core group of finalists. Other communities had fewer total applicants, and even more still who dropped out mid-way through, realizing that the life of an entrepreneur and/or their business concept was not going to work for them. In many ways, screening out applicants, or helping them recognize they have more work to do, was also an important outcome of this initiative as this helps people adjust and move forward.

Having a detailed inventory of commercial vacancies, plus a clear understanding of the community's business mix will be of great benefit when vetting the applications.

Any community that has undertaken a BR+E analysis in their downtown business district will find it a helpful tool to glean information from when determining what businesses are needed or wanted in their core.

### *PRIZE PACKAGE*

The prize package has evolved to become more than just rent. In building widespread community support, there is the opportunity to secure in-kind support from local businesses and professionals that will help to get the WTS winner off the ground. Some communities have created robust prize packages approaching \$50,000 in products and services that help new businesses succeed. In-kind donations can often create minimal additional costs for the donor, but save a young business owner a lot of money that could be better used elsewhere in the development of their business.

### *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*

Win This Space was designed to fill one storefront with a new business, but the results of the training and mentoring that accompanied this competition has meant that many more storefronts have been rented by contest participants.

In the case of Huron East, there were 24 new business start-ups as a direct or indirect result of its three WTS competitions. Downtown vacancies have been significantly decreased and a better mix of service and retail related business has been realized. This has equated to more people visiting and shopping in the community, especially in its downtown business district.

The first winner of WTS Seaforth, The Cotton Harvest Quilt Shop, even attracted an international quilting show to the community in Year Two. This event attracted 2,000 people from across Canada and the US, who travelled to downtown Seaforth over a three-day period. This event, the first of its kind in Canada, has now become an annual occurrence. Going forward, this same business is to be featured in an internationally acclaimed publication "Quilt Sampler – Better Homes & Gardens" in spring of 2019 with a focus on the business and its community. This has definitely become a "Win-Win" for Seaforth and all its businesses.

## ENTREPRENEUR PROFILE

### JACKIE DEWIT - NO NONSENSE NATURAL PRODUCTS

Jackie is a multi-talented, passionate entrepreneur who, following the Win This Space competition, now owns real estate and operates three different businesses in downtown Brussels. These businesses include:

1. JD & Company - manufacturer and retailer of organic cleaning and personal hygiene products
2. Locally Unique - consignment shop for local artists and artisans
3. The DeWit Luxury Suites - downtown short-term rental accommodations

Jackie, winner of the Brussels, Ontario, Win This Space competition, has not always been an entrepreneur. As a matter of fact, she did not even win WTS her first time around; however, Jackie is resilient, driven, and a true community builder. Although without Win This Space, she may not have taken the plunge into entrepreneurship and as a result, downtown Brussels would be a different place today.

Jackie is a mother of two young children with autism. When faced with attending to the health of her children, she left her job as a ticketed welder, and began examining the environmental influences in her home, searching for a solution and eventually ended up throwing out all of the chemically based cleaning and personal hygiene products. Sourcing pure, all-natural ingredients, she started making her own products and saw dramatic improvements in her children.

No Nonsense cleaning supplies, cosmetic necessities and personal care items include glass and floor cleaner, dishwashing and laundry soap, bug spray, sun screen, toothpaste, body wash, shampoo and deodorant. As she began sharing her story, community interest picked up and she started selling some of her products out of her home to neighbours.

Jackie was driven to sustain this business, even buying, restoring and then reselling furniture on the side to make extra income to help grow her inventory.

When Jackie heard about the Vanastra Win This Space competition, it was a natural fit. While she was still somewhat hesitant about taking the leap into entrepreneurship, she was encouraged to join and at the very least, participate in the workshops.

Although Jackie didn't win the first competition, she was invigorated by the experience, and with renewed energy, was determined to win the following year. From all appearances, it seems that when Jackie makes up her mind, she accomplishes what she sets out to do.

Jackie's story doesn't end with her successful pitch to the Win This Space judges – she has gone on to open two new businesses in the downtown: the consignment store and short-term rental accommodations. Jackie's success in her businesses inspired her to purchase the building where she was once a tenant and refurbish the dilapidated downtown building that was once an eye-sore to the entire community. Beyond her own building, Jackie recognizes that the strength of the downtown depends on all the businesses working together.

Jackie has been a passionate community builder in spearheading community makeovers, buying paint and volunteering her time, alongside others in the downtown, to refurbish more of the old storefronts.

Jackie's short-term accommodation business is a good example of the revitalization that occurs when you get energetic and driven entrepreneurs into a downtown space. The short-term accommodations that she has refurbished are an important new part of her business, but also an enormous contributor to the downtown business community.

In 2016, a 150-year-old bank barn was unassembled and relocated in downtown Brussels as a wedding venue. The Four Winds Barn has been a great success story on its own, booked solid throughout the summer months; however, there were very few accommodations available locally for wedding-goers. Jackie recognized an opportunity and has leveraged the success of the Four Winds Barn to support her rental properties. At the end of the day, through the success of one business, the whole downtown wins – a dilapidated old building has been revived, and more wedding-goers are staying downtown, spending money in the downtown businesses and strengthening the offering of the whole Brussels business community.

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

Special thanks to Jan Hawley, Economic Development Officer with the Municipality of Huron East, for sharing her experiences with hosting the Win This Space competition and with coaching other communities to host their own. There are now 20 communities throughout the province using the WTS model. Jan has been a strong advocate for the value of Win This Space and has been instrumental in assisting communities through one-on-one mentoring and public community presentations.

Special thanks as well to all the organizations and municipalities who shared their experiences for the benefit of this case study: Huron East; St. Catharines Downtown Association; Town of Minto; Peterborough DBIA; North Perth; and Downtown Sudbury BIA. This type of open collaboration and sharing helps everyone do better work and build stronger communities.

# ENTERPRISE FACILITATION IN RURAL ONTARIO

## Overview



## ORIGINS IN ONTARIO

In 2008, an innovative adaptation to a traditional business coaching model was introduced in Eastern Ontario to support rural entrepreneurship development and community economic development. Mark Hanley, a serial entrepreneur from the age of 23, was divesting his businesses and eager to stay connected with the world of entrepreneurship. Mark was looking at supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs when he landed a job as manager of the small business office at Kingston Economic Development. Mark knew he wanted to bring in something different.

**“No one builds a successful business by studying regulations and creating business plans in solitude,” says Mark Hanley.**

Mark was introduced to the Sirrolli method of social enterprise after reading the foundational book “Ripples from the Zambezi” by Ernesto Sirrolli. The book resonated with Mark’s professional experiences and aspirations for economic development in Eastern Ontario.

## THE SIRROLLI METHOD

The Sirrolli method was first developed by an Italian community development specialist named Ernesto Sirrolli to address the challenges he encountered while working on international development. This method has since been implemented and adapted in communities throughout the world.

The fundamental approach of the Sirrolli method shifts the understanding of the role outsiders play in economic or community development. Outsiders are not to be regarded as “experts” but more appropriately, “facilitators” of individuals’ entrepreneurial ambitions. Facilitators find people who have a passion and help them develop this passion into a business. They don’t train them or advise them or follow up or initiate dialogue. Facilitators are there to support someone when they’ve been asked for help – to knock down the barriers to starting a business.

## HOW IT WORKS

There are two main components to the Enterprise Facilitation® model: the Enterprise Facilitator® and a Community Resource Board.

Ideally, the Sirrolli method is first introduced by a group of community leaders and volunteers in recognition of a local need. This group is known as the “community board” and looks after the administration of the project, access to funding and the hiring of the Enterprise Facilitator®. The community board takes the management of the project away from the Enterprise Facilitator®, allowing this individual to focus on their job. For some communities, the Enterprise Facilitator® is municipally funded, and in these cases, the community board is more a reflection of the municipal governance system than a volunteer board.

**The Enterprise Facilitator®** is the primary contact for prospective entrepreneurs and business owners. The Enterprise Facilitator® does not engage in training or coaching - they listen first to the needs of the entrepreneur: Where do they want to take their business? How fast are they looking to grow? What are the shortcomings they think they need help with? Once the Enterprise Facilitator® has an understanding of the questions, they are able to guide the entrepreneur in the right direction and connect them with appropriate resources. To get a better understanding of the Enterprise Facilitator's® responsibilities, see the job description at the end of this Case Study.

**The Community Resource Board** is made up of 40-50 local stakeholders who create a wealth of connections between the Enterprise Facilitator® and community leaders (business owners, politicians, investors, economic developers, financial advisors, consultants, banks, educators, etc.). The Community Resource Board can become actively involved in the work of the Enterprise Facilitator®, often weighing in and providing advice and guidance to entrepreneurs when deemed necessary.

Both the Enterprise Facilitator® and Community Board members receive training from the Sirrolli Institute in the principles of Enterprise Facilitation® and the Trinity of Management®.

## TRINITY OF MANAGEMENT®

The Trinity of Management® is Ernesto Sirrolli's belief that a successful business requires three basic competencies: the production of a product or service; marketing the product or service; and financial management of the operations. Further, no individual entrepreneur can (or should) possess all three of these competencies. The Trinity of Management® emphasizes the importance of a team approach to entrepreneurship. There is an individual that specializes in each of the three core competencies. And while there is sure to be disagreement between the members of the team, it is through this dialectical problem solving that creative solutions emerge.

## ASSOCIATED COSTS

Depending on the size and complexity of the community, the Enterprise Facilitator® and the associated working expenses could range from \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year. There are two predominant types of expenses: 1) Enterprise Facilitator® Salary and 2) On-the-job Expenses.

### 1. Salary

The number one highest cost is the salary. This could be a range similar to an Economic Development Officer, but would vary based on experience.

### 2. On-the-job expenses

On-the-job expenses may include: travel costs; telecommunications and IT; meals and coffees; community support meetings (facility rental/catering); marketing (website, brochures etc.).

> **Note:** As this method relies on an individual to deliver the programming and the development of a vast support network, this methodology is very dependent on finding the right person. Finding someone with the right experience, skills and temperament is fundamental to running a successful program.

## ADAPTING TO YOUR COMMUNITY

Every locality is different and will always take on a flavour of the funders, the local community and its management board. In Lennox and Addington, Tracey Snow, also trained in the Sirrolli method, has adapted the model to better fit the needs of her community. Tracey has seen the benefit of actively seeking opportunities to better support her clients – she is constantly out looking for new opportunities that might help the businesses with which she is working, which brings her out in the community networking with grant organizations, banks and funding organizations. When she sees opportunities, she forwards them to any of her clients that might benefit. While it is important to maintain some continuity with the underlying principles of the Sirrolli method, it is inevitable to see some changes as you move from community to community.

## CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

- Face-to-face interactions are always best. While the territories in rural Ontario can get to be quite large - creating challenges with travel costs and access to clients - it is important to be out in the communities as much as possible.
- The community board needs to take on the administrative components and leave the Enterprise Facilitator® out of the lengthy reports so they can do what they do best.
- It is imperative to find the right facilitator for your community. They need a wealth of business experience, but more so, to be outgoing, approachable, a great listener, and a credible authority.
- Openness and informality are important. The environment of meetings is imperative. Put two people in a board room and see how they interact. Put the same two people in a coffee shop and it's a totally different experience.
- In the rural context, anonymity is an important benefit. Rural communities have the challenges associated with a small town - not everyone wants to be seen going into an office seeking business advice. When you travel to see them in their environment - at the kitchen table - they are often more open.
- Always give credit where credit is due. Never take ownership of another person's idea.

## SUGGESTED READING

“Ripples from the Zambezi” by Ernesto Sirrolli.

“Local Enterprise Facilitation”, PhD Thesis, Ernesto Sirrolli, Murdoch University.

## ENTERPRISE FACILITATOR - JOB DESCRIPTION

### ***Responsibilities***

- > Support clients looking to expand/establish new businesses in prioritized areas in accordance with the principles of Enterprise Facilitation.
- > Support the development of every kind of business that seeks to generate the greatest economic and social value for the community in general.
- > Develop an understanding of the business needs of clients.
- > As needed, support clients with identifying human and physical resources consistent with the aims and objectives of their proposed business activity.
- > Throughout the project, identify and support interventions that remove barriers, helping to sustain and create sustainable enterprises.
- > Support the development of the Enterprise Facilitation Management Boards and Resource Team.
- > Continuously engage with partners and the deliverers of business support locally, regionally or nationally.
- > Maintain coordination and communication with Management Boards and Resource Team for effective implementation of day-to-day operations.
- > Establish, develop and maintain contacts with the business community and business agencies to facilitate the exchange of business support.
- > From the start of the project, develop a network of communication at all levels of government, with business support agencies and throughout the communities where the initiative will be operational.

### ***Essential Character Traits:***

- > The ideal Enterprise Facilitator is a local/external who has a perfect knowledge of local languages, customs, culture, etc.
- > Good listener, respectful, accessible, visible, good teacher.
- > Ability to work alone and must be trusted to be well organized and self-motivated.
- > An excellent communicator able to reach a wide cross-section of the community (from successful business people to unemployed young people).
- > They never call their clients; rather the clients call them back. They do not create dependency they empower their clients.

## ENTERPRISE FACILITATOR - JOB DESCRIPTION CONTINUED

### **Minimum Requirements:**

- > Practical experience working in or running small businesses and facilitating business development and sustainability.
- > Practical experience of providing and brokering guidance to small businesses, supporting development and sustainability.
- > Proven understanding of the local economy and local economic development approaches.
- > Sensitive to economic, social and political reality.

### **Preferred Requirements:**

- > Willingness and capacity to attend the provided training offered by the Sirolli Institute-International Enterprise Facilitation®.

### **Most Critical Proficiencies:**

- > A strong facilitator, able to strive to achieve results in the face of adversity, being positive and proactive at all times.
- > Ability to listen – listen with all their senses!
- > Proven enabler, able to build capacity and empower entrepreneurship and creativity in others.
- > A dynamic broker, able to think, communicate and liaise clearly with a wide range of potential clients, businesses and support agencies.
- > Able to deal with representatives from all sectors, build professional relationships and effectively use networks.
- > Ability to provide constructive criticism and supportive challenge while having empathy with clients and their circumstances.
- > Ability to work flexibly, practically and proactively.
- > Enterprise Facilitators have personal and practical business experience.

### **Essential Job Functions and Physical Demands:**

- > Ability to work with sensitive information and maintain confidentiality.
- > Demonstrate a high degree of honesty and integrity.
- > Willingness to travel as per position demand.
- > Ability to work independently
- > Ability to work with a flexible schedule.

## **CONCLUSION**

This model of entrepreneurship development is a relatively low cost solution to compared to some models, saving on administratively heavy bricks and mortar initiatives and financial incentives. Additionally, the community involvement that underpins this model does more than just help support businesses - it helps bring the community together as a whole. It is fundamentally a people based approach – people working with people to help entrepreneurs and the community thrive together, a philosophy not dissimilar to how rural communities have grown throughout history.

This model certainly isn't without challenges - finding the right facilitator that knows the community, understands the principles of entrepreneurship and is capable of building a network around them is no small task. However, building grassroots community investment and a sense of ownership over economic development initiatives and investment in the success of local entrepreneurs is a goal many think is worth striving for.

# COOL COW ICE CREAM SHOP

## Program Overview





## PROJECT ORIGINS

Cool Cow Ice Cream Shop was the brainchild of Brock Youth Centre (BYC) staff Emily Morrison and Barb Smith. Emily's primary focus at BYC was the delivery of entrepreneurship programming at local high schools through business pitch competitions. Barb was the BYC's Outreach Coordinator responsible for building new connections in the community. As an entrepreneur and a former founder and owner of an ice cream shop in Lucknow, Ontario, Emily was keen to connect her previous experience with her current focus on youth entrepreneurship programming. The idea was to connect the business and entrepreneurial mentorship from the pitch competition with a hands-on application: an experiential learning opportunity for youth running an ice cream shop in Downtown Beaverton, Ontario. When Emily and Barb put their heads together, Cool Cow Ice Cream Shop was born.

## HOW IT WORKS

At the Cool Cow Ice Cream Shop, youth learn entrepreneurship and job-readiness skills through hands-on experience. They are engaged in all aspects of running the shop - from marketing to customer service training to hiring employees to purchasing supplies - while getting paid a competitive wage as employees of the business. Throughout the summer months, the sale of ice cream at the downtown storefront is enough for Cool Cow to be a self-sufficient business.

Important to note: this model does not require a focus on ice cream or even food sales. Other business models can be used, though the essential component is the focus on hands-on learning opportunities and on-the-job training.

## THE EVOLUTION OF COOL COW

When the idea of Cool Cow was first presented, and the Brock Youth Centre decided to move forward with the programming, they were in need of a location and began reaching out to downtown building owners. Cool Cow's first season began in a vacant storefront in downtown Beaverton. The storefront, located on "the shady side of the street" had been empty for seven years and was in need of upgrading.

Together with the help of youth and neighbouring business owners, the new Cool Cow team began cleaning, patching the walls, painting and installing the equipment they would need for the business. They also made improvements to the streetscape, taking over a side alley to build seating for their clients.

Their enthusiasm was contagious. All the activity along the main street of Beaverton boosted morale in the community and fostered support from other local businesses who began contributing to the building makeover through donations that ranged from paint to ice cream coolers to skilled labour.

By the time the business opened its doors, the community had already rallied behind the story of a youth-run business in the heart of their community. There was a wealth of support from full-time residents as well as seasonal cottagers on nearby Lake Simcoe.



Interestingly, since the inception of Cool Cow, there has been renewed interest in the downtown. The Cool Cow building was recently bought by a local couple who have turned the space into a gallery for local artisans. The new owners are very supportive of the Cool Cow program and have made space for the ice cream shop in the back of the building, in what is to become a market for a variety of local artists and artisans.

While this is a great progression for downtown Beaverton, it also poses new challenges for the Cool Cow team. They're now looking to re-invent their marketing, to ensure longstanding customers know they're still in operation, and to bring customers back from the street.

Fortunately, in keeping with the spirit of this experiential learning enterprise, the students have the opportunity to get creative and come up with solutions to their new challenges. At the end of the day, no entrepreneur has an easy journey and nothing works out exactly the way it was envisioned. Every challenge that comes up for Cool Cow is a valuable learning opportunity for its young staff.

## IS THE COOL COW MODEL A FIT FOR MY COMMUNITY?

Does your community have:

- An existing focus on youth entrepreneurship?
- Sufficient downtown traffic to support a business?
- An existing focus on downtown revitalization?
- Supportive local stakeholders?
- An energetic, engaged local champion?
- Vacancies in downtown storefronts?
- A missing niche in downtown retail/food/services?

### COOL COW TEAM

- **BYC Staff** – Program administration and oversight
- **Student Staff** – local high school students interested in entrepreneurship and business ownership.
- **Head Manager** – responsible for managing all the young employees through the day-to-day aspects of running a business
- **Assistant Head Manager** – hired to support the head manager and take the management lead during the head manager's days off.



### COOL COW – SEASONAL TIMELINE

As a seasonal venture operating only during the summer months, each year the Cool Cow program needs to get ramped back up following the winter break.

#### *Pre-Season – Preparation for the Season*

In its first year, the Cool Cow program took much more planning than it does today. Currently, the time required is minimal thanks to the Employee Handbook, a resource document developed and updated over the years, full of all the necessary administrative components like job descriptions, employee orientation, etc.

### *Peak Season – A Typical Summer Week*

While the summer season lasts for months, exploring a typical week of operation is the best way to understand the ins and outs of the business.

#### **Hours of Operation**

The Cool Cow Ice Cream Shop is open 7 days a week, 12-8 PM. There are usually about two ice cream orders that take place each week, depending on sales, managed by the head manager.

#### **Employees**

During the hours of operation, employees are responsible for scooping ice-cream, cleaning and organizing the workspace, attending to washrooms and assisting customers with any other needs they may have. Where possible, employees receive additional training and mentoring from the on-site managers or BYC staff.

#### **On-site Managers**

While managers have younger employees scooping, they are able to take time each week to write up reports for the board, evaluate items that need improving, schedule employee shifts, and the ordering, purchasing and pick-up of ice cream.

The manager is also responsible for cash management – counting cash and balancing the register is a daily task, and all employees get the chance to count money and get comfortable with the process. The Cool Cow team have developed a template for all employees to follow, and any shortages or overages are discussed at staff meetings.

#### **Staff Meetings**

There is a staff meeting each week where the whole staff team and managers review the operation of the business. During these weekly staff meetings, BYC staff will come in to scoop ice cream so all employees can be in attendance. Meetings are also scheduled around the shifts of those employees who live furthest away to avoid an additional commute in to the shop and to ensure participation of all employees. At these meetings, day-to-day operations are discussed to ensure the highest quality of customer service is continuing to be delivered and that any weaknesses are being addressed.

Another important component of these meetings, and of the overall educational component of the Cool Cow program, is the entrepreneurship training that takes place. During each meeting, the managers and BYC staff try to coordinate a guest speaker to touch on a new topic of entrepreneurship. The types of topics and speakers include:

- **Ice breaker meeting** – kids talk about themselves and get to know their managers
- **Customer service** – this is an ongoing topic that is emphasized among the young employees
- **Business liability insurance with a local insurance broker** – what is insurance, what is business liability, and why do businesses need it?
- **Health regulations with the local health inspector**
- **Fire safety inspections with municipal fire officials** - check to make sure the business is in compliance, why this is important, and what employees need to do in the event of a fire
- **Brainstorming and breakdown of marketing strategies for the business** – all ideas are explored in the context of Cool Cow to test for effectiveness

### ***BYC Staff***

BYC staff will periodically check in throughout the week to assess cleanliness, and flag important details for the young employees to pay attention to. For example, ensuring the sidewalks are weeded and swept provides a positive first impression for customers entering the building. This is something that the young employees don't know inherently, and sometimes need to see first-hand.

In addition to training for Cool Cow, BYC staff devote a couple of hours each week to come out and meet with the employees one to one. This is an opportunity to have another level of mentorship, and to provide the opportunity for any issues to be raised. It's also an attempt to better engage with the young employees and connect them with future opportunities and programming available at the BYC. These meetings exist to help build young champions of the BYC and the programming that is available for their peers.

TABLE 1.0 – DESCRIPTION FOR A TYPICAL SUMMER WEEK AT COOL COW ICE CREAM SHOP

**PRE-SEASON PREPARATION**

February	Job Postings – student employees, head manager, and assistant head manager	The job postings are ready to be posted from the Employee Handbook.
Early mid-March	Review resumes and schedule interviews	This is the greatest draw on BYC staff time for this project. Aside from this early preparation, additional staff oversight is minimal.
March Break	Interviews and hiring of Cool Cow student staff	
University/ College Reading weeks	Hiring of Head Manager and Assistant Head Manager	
May	Skilled Training Sessions	
Early May	First Ice Cream Order	In preparation for season opening
Week prior to May long weekend	Soft Opening – Student Staff Training	This training session helps customers to feel a part of the kids’ training because they can physically see how nervous they are and how hard they’re trying to do a good job. Customers are asked to give constructive feedback on their experience.
May long weekend	Grand Opening	The Grand Opening is a time to bring out the whole community and celebrate the start of a new season. Creating a sense of occasion during this event is important for building community support.
Spring Season	1:1 Staff Mentoring	In the spring season, the Ice Cream Shop is open on weekends and after school Thursday and Friday. Staff work with the manager in a 1:1 setting. As it is typically quieter during the end of May and month of June, this provides an opportunity for staff to get to know the manager and get a feel for the day-to-day requirements of the job and to voice any concerns they may have.

## PEAK SEASON

July 1 – Labour Day	Open 7 days/week, 12 – 8 PM	Student employees work 4-hour shifts Head manager works 8-hour shifts, 35-40 hours/wk Assistant head manager provides relief for manager Staff training – see “Typical Summer Week”
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## POST SEASON

The manager does a final report following each season – what worked well for them and what might be changed or done better. This has allowed the BYC to develop a handbook to help implement this program year to year.

During the off season, BYC staff looks to leverage Cool Cow employees to strengthen the impact/reach of other BYC programs in the high schools, supporting the young employees to be leaders and champions of the BYC.

## LESSONS LEARNED & CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

### COMMUNITY CHAMPION

It is very important for the community to have a champion. From the outset of Cool Cow, this was BYC staff. The community champion is there to research the feasibility of this program, market the concept, share the story, bring together partners and help get the storefront secured.

For the Brock Youth Centre, the community champion was a staff role, but in any community this could be an EDO, BIA staff, volunteer – someone who understands the principles of entrepreneurship, experience working with youth and an understanding of who the local stakeholders are who can support this program.

### LEAD SUPERVISOR

The lead supervisor is hired for the ice cream season to help in hiring youth, scheduling shifts and the day-to-day oversight of the business. They are the point of contact between the lead organization (Brock Youth Centre) and the youth employees.

While the youth employees are there to learn many of the skills it takes to run a business, having one consistent manager on site has been important to ensuring consistency in the business. Further, it is a requirement that for employees under 18 that someone over 18 is present.

The lead supervisor could be anyone in the community, however, in keeping with the educational component of the business, BYC has decided to hire young adults (roughly 18-25) in this role, as this in itself is a valuable learning opportunity for older prospective business owners. **Important to Note:** having another employee as relief for the lead supervisor is important so they are able to take some time off.

### *ONGOING BUSINESS TRAINING AND HANDS-ON LEARNING*

The business training is a crucial component to the educational component of the Cool Cow model. Through the focussed workshops, the young employees have the opportunity to learn more valuable skills from experts in their respective fields. The list of topics is endless, though some important skills that BYC tries to impart each year include:

- Customer service
- Food handling
- Marketing
- Scheduling
- Payroll
- Purchasing and inventory management

To create a positive learning environment, it is important to strike a balance in the work that is entrusted to be carried out by the young employees. They need enough autonomy to learn and make mistakes, with enough guidance to stay on track and learn from those mistakes in a positive way.

### *SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY*

As is the case with many community development projects, it has been important for Cool Cow to involve the whole community, and this is the primary role of the community champion. Local BIA's and business owners can help assess the feasibility of a proposed business. Local high schools and youth serving organizations have existing connections with local youth who can eventually sustain the business. Local business owners can provide business mentorship, training and promotion. Community leadership and municipal staff can help navigate the necessary zoning bylaws and may be able to provide some initial funding.

### *ADMINISTRATIVE COMPONENTS*

The administrative components of the Cool Cow Ice Cream Shop initially took time to develop, but as the seasons have gone by all of this material has been collected and refined to be used again the following season. The Cool Cow handbook has generously been made available for any community interested in trying a similar project in their community.





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