

**REPORT TO:** Community and Infrastructure Services Committee

**DATE OF MEETING:** May 15, 2023

**SUBMITTED BY:** Chris Farrell, Manager Small Business Centre, 519-741-2200 ext. 7294

**PREPARED BY:** Chris Farrell, Manager Small Business Centre, 519-741-2200 ext. 7294

**WARD(S) INVOLVED:** All

**DATE OF REPORT:** April 6, 2023

**REPORT NO.:** DSD-2023-186

**SUBJECT:** Waterloo Region Ontario Works Self Employment Program Agreement

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the General Manager, Development Services Department be authorized to execute funding agreements between the City of Kitchener and the Regional Municipality of Waterloo to collaborate on the delivery of the Self Employment Ontario Works program; said agreement to be to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor; and,

That General Manager, Development Services Department be authorized to execute on behalf of the City of Kitchener any agreements or documentation pertaining to services and programs provided by the Waterloo Region Small Business Centre provided said agreements or documentation is to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor; and further,

That the Executive Director, Economic Development, be delegated authority to execute participant agreements for the Self Employment Ontario Works program to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The Waterloo Region Small Business Centre (WRSBC) provides information, training, mentoring, guidance, and consultation on a variety of issues to entrepreneurs from all industry sectors, all educational backgrounds, and at all stages of business from start-up to expansion.

The Small Business Centre has delivered the Self Employment Ontario Works Placement program on behalf of the Municipality of the Region of Waterloo since 2019. Individuals receiving Ontario Works benefits have the opportunity to transition from the Ontario Works Benefit Support to establishing a profitable business. The Self Employment Ontario Works program can help individuals to develop the knowledge and skills needed to start and run their businesses. The Waterloo Region Small Business Centre is well-positioned to continue to deliver this program.

The proposed agreement will end in December 2023.

**REPORT:**

The Regional Municipality of Waterloo and Waterloo Region Small Business team work together with individuals who express an interest in starting a business to be considered for the program.

A Region of Waterloo Ontario Works Coordinator:

- approves/declines candidates for entrepreneurial training,
- approves/declines the written business plan,
- establishes business milestones to be met meet quarterly and
- monitors the progress of each participant for up to 60 weeks.

The Small Business Centre will provide Self Employment Ontario Works participants with:

- information sessions
- entrepreneurial training,
- one-on-one assistance to develop a business plan,
- mentoring and
- monthly goal-setting meetings and guidance.

The agreement with the Region of Waterloo, Community Services, projects up to 50 individuals to participate in the Self Employment Ontario Works program. The Waterloo Region Small Business Centre receives a fee for services of up to \$1,700.00 per participant based on achieved milestones.

The activities and services are expected to result in the development of new skills and the establishment of new businesses and job creation for individuals facing barriers to employment.

Should the program be extended or renewed beyond December 2023, the recommendations of this report would authorize the General Manager of Development Services to approve any such agreements.

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

This report supports A Vibrant Economy.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Capital Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget, fees for service cover staff time and resources.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:**

Entrepreneurship and innovation contribute to economic growth in the community. The Centre provides programs and services that support and complement other community entrepreneurial initiatives essential to the commercialization of small businesses within the Waterloo Region ecosystem.

CONSULT: The Waterloo Region Small Business Centre facilitated four Community Engagement sessions, “Small Business Matters”, in Cambridge, Kitchener/Waterloo, St Jacobs/Elmira, and Baden/New Hamburg, in 2015. Over 160 small businesses from all industry sectors engaged in discussion around five questions. Over 2,000 ideas and opinions were collected and analyzed resulting in WRSBC identifying seven key areas of support for small businesses: Marketing, Mentoring, Education, Advocacy, Small Business Hub, Collaboration, and Funding. These themes inform the ongoing work, programs, and collaborative partnerships of the Small Business Centre.

WRSBC conducts over 20 surveys annually with small businesses to get feedback and suggestions for service and program improvements.

COLLABORATE – Waterloo Region Small Business Centre communicates, consults, and collaborates with a broad range of community groups, organizations, agencies, secondary and post-secondary institutes, and municipal, regional, and provincial governments to ensure the entrepreneurial services and programs address the needs of small business in the community. The volunteers for the Waterloo Region Small Business Centre Advisory Committee are representative of these community groups.

**APPROVED BY:** Justin Readman, General Manager DSD