

# Staff Report



Development Services Department

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**REPORT TO:** Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee

**DATE OF MEETING:** February 26, 2024

**SUBMITTED BY:** Cory Bluhm, Executive Director, Economic Development  
519-741-2200 ext. 7065

**PREPARED BY:** Naudia Banton, Manager Small Business, 519-741-2605

**WARD(S) INVOLVED:** ALL

**DATE OF REPORT:** February 16, 2024

**REPORT NO.:** DSD-2024-062

**SUBJECT:** Provincial Funding Extension for Waterloo Region SBC

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## RECOMMENDATION:

That the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to sign a one-year extension to the funding agreement with the Province of Ontario for the Waterloo Region Small Business Centre to deliver the core business information services, Summer Company and Starter Company Plus programs. Said agreement to be to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor; and

That the General Manager, Development Services be authorized to execute on behalf of the City of Kitchener any amendments to the funding agreement provided such amendments are to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor; and further,

That the Manager, Waterloo Region Small Business Centre, and the Executive Director, Economic Development, be delegated authority to execute recipient grant agreements to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor for the Starter Company Plus and Summer Company programs.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to authorize an agreement with the City of Kitchener's Waterloo Region Small Business Centre and the Province of Ontario to extend the current funding agreement to 2025.
- The financial implications are the Waterloo Region Small Business Centre delivers a series of programs funded by the Province of Ontario.
- This report supports the delivery of a Vibrant Economy.

## BACKGROUND:

The Waterloo Region Small Business Centre (WRSBC) provides thousands of entrepreneurs with the training and support necessary to start and grow successful businesses. From concept, through start-up and early growth stages of business, the

\*\*\* This information is available in accessible formats upon request. \*\*\*  
Please call 519-741-2345 or TTY 1-866-969-9994 for assistance.

Centre is a one-stop source for information, guidance and professional advice on starting and running a successful business. Servicing individuals of all ages, educational and cultural backgrounds and businesses from all industry sectors at all stages of business WRSBC is one of 54 centres in Ontario supported by the province.

## **REPORT:**

The City of Kitchener (Waterloo Region Small Business Centre) has received funding from the Province of Ontario since 1998. The current two-year agreement 2022 – 2024 included an option to extend the agreement until March of 2025. The funding agreement will provide the Waterloo Region Small Business Centre with \$456,552 annually. The funds support:

### Core Business Services:

- one-on-one business consultations,
- workshops and events,
- assistance with market research, business and marketing plans,
- information to navigating government departments, agencies and regulations
- assistance with registering a provincial master business license
- community outreach activities

The funding supports two full-time jobs, program delivery and grants expenses.

### Summer Company Program:

- entrepreneurial training, mentoring and grants for students age 15-29 starting and running a business over the summer, eligible students must be returning to school. The funding supports one part-time job, program expenses and a grant of up to \$3,000 for successful candidates.

### Starter Company Program

- entrepreneurial training, mentoring and grants for start-ups and growth companies. The funding supports one part-time job, expenses and a grant of up to \$5,000 for successful candidates.

Throughout the term of the agreement, WRSBC submits interim performance reports and requests incremental disbursements bi-annually. Without the Provincial funding, the Small Business Centre would be limited in the supports it could provide our community.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

This report supports A Vibrant Economy.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

None. The provincial funding supports the Waterloo Region Small Business Centre core business services, Summer Company and Starter Company Plus programs. The proposed agreement would provide funding to support programming in the following ways:

| <b>Small Business Centre Program</b> | <b>Provincial Funding (Annually)</b> |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| SBC Core Services                    | \$177,552                            |
| Starter Company Plus                 | \$175,000                            |
| Summer Company                       | \$104,000                            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                         | <b>\$456,552</b>                     |

Of the annual funding noted above, approximately \$191,000 would be used to provide grants to small businesses.

**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 small business commercialisation within the Waterloo Region ecosystem.

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

COLLABORATE – WRSBC communicates, consults and collaborates with a broad range of community groups, organizations, agencies, secondary and post-secondary institutes, municipal, regional and provincial governments to ensure the entrepreneurial services and programs address the needs of small businesses in the community. The Small Business Advisory Committee volunteers represent twelve industry sectors across the region.

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

**APPROVED BY:** Dan Chapman, Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENTS:**  
None