

# Leeds Grenville Economic Development Strategic Areas of Focus 2020-2025



The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville has been doing economic development activities since 2003. Various organizational changes have occurred and today, the current department has four full-time staff (Economic Development Manager, Economic Development Officer, Business Development Officer, Administrative and Communications Assistant).

In 2015 a departmental review and report was completed that identified the Counties was performing a valuable service and its strategic priorities. Over the past four years, annual work plans were undertaken to advance these priorities.

A formal Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) process was started in 2018, that saw 300 business interviews completed. On October 24, 2019 Counties Council was presented with the BR+E Report that included primary qualitative and quantitative data to assist in the development of our future strategic areas of focus.

In review of the Counties and municipal BR+E reports, with consideration of our local, provincial and national economies and their future opportunities, the following Leeds Grenville Economic Development strategic areas of focus for the next five years were approved by Counties Council of December 19, 2019.

## **Leadership and Capacity Building**

- a) Continue the annual Economic Development summit. This forum has strong attendance and brings value to participants and municipalities. It provides an opportunity to share best practices, success stories, bring top-notch speakers to share their knowledge on municipal and business development plus provide an environment for community leaders to network.
- b) Evolve the BR+E Leadership team into the regional Leeds Grenville Economic Development Leadership team. Primary economic development municipal staff from the member and partner municipalities along with representatives from Community Futures Development Corporations and small business enterprise centres would focus on collaborative efforts and sharing of best practices to build economic community capacity.
- c) Continue to build and maintain economic development focused relationships and partnerships with a multitude of Ministries, neighbouring Counties and municipalities, Agencies – ie. Launch Lab, Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium, Commercial Real Estate firms, Ontario East Economic Development Commission along with MP and MPP.
- d) Explore leadership capacity building amongst leaders from business organizations that support business networking and professional development. (ie. Chambers of Commerce, business network groups, etc.)

## **Investment Readiness / Investment Attraction - Business and Industry**

- a) Support municipalities with investment readiness. This could include, but not limited to, identification of key municipal priority properties, planning and development best practices, inventory of service options per municipality, inter-municipal cooperation for joint servicing initiatives for unserviced land including natural gas.
- b) Research, adopt and maintain digital platforms for listings of public and private properties, contact relationship management system for current businesses and lead generation, plus investment data sets – ie. demographics, industry labour force, etc.
- c) Support the development of an Intelligent Community strategy that explores public / private partnerships and recognizes the opportunities of investment attraction, stimulates business advancement, entrepreneurship and youth retention.
- d) Review and update regional and individual municipal investment profiles currently available in multiple languages.
- e) Maintain a focus on municipalities with industrial / business parks and / or municipal services for various investment attraction programs - ie. Provincial Site Certification, Job Site Challenge. No municipality would be precluded, however based on previous large scale investment serviced land is a top request.
- f) Continue working with investors, site selectors and Ministries on investment cultivation, regional and cluster information requests, familiarization tours, site selection and support final negotiations between parties. Provide investment aftercare to ensure business connections with various municipal, ministries and community services.
- g) Initiate and support new foreign and domestic investment attraction activities that could include trade shows and trade missions. Build upon existing partnerships / relationships and consider current and new programs at regional, provincial and national levels to access potential investments for Leeds Grenville.

## **Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E)**

- a) Continue business visitations to support business retention, opportunities for growth and expansion while identifying challenges and addressing, where possible, through the region's business network agency supports.
  - i. Follow-up with businesses who participated in the 2019 Leeds Grenville BR+E report on specific business issues, requested supports and opportunities.
  - ii. Maintain a regular business visitation program (2-3 businesses per month).
- b) Continue to partner and build a strong network of business support agencies that could assist in the delivery of programs and information sessions for multiple businesses based on visitation findings. Programs and sessions could include, but not limited to, information on funding, available agency services, technology adoption, succession planning, website development, social media, government tenders, etc.
- c) Develop in collaboration with partner municipalities, industry sector teams or consortiums to address industry specific opportunities and needs. This could include, but not limited to joint training initiatives, export development, joint purchasing and joint marketing including trade shows in larger centres.

- d) Continue to profile local businesses regionally with further expansion into provincial, national and global market opportunities.
- e) Continue to participate in any regional opportunities evolving out of the Eastern Ontario Economic Development strategy.

### **Talent Attraction and Workforce Development**

- a) Undertake a collaborative approach to addressing workforce development by narrowing the gap between employers and educators in the region.
  - i. Conduct meetings with business and industry to confirm specific workforce skills and challenges.
  - ii. Bring four school boards servicing the region and St. Lawrence College together to gain an understanding of curriculum, specialized programs and inventory of trades training.
  - iii. Develop strategic tactics to address short-term needs and long-term positioning and opportunities for the region.

A collaborative effort would be made with member and partner municipalities along with local, regional and provincial organizations and agencies.

- b) Research and consider partnerships for talent attraction opportunities and digital platforms that assist employers in obtaining highly skilled workers coming to the region.
- c) Continue to facilitate and partner with members of education, employment agencies and ministries in funding programs that supports in-demands skills and upskilling in various sectors that builds a strong local workforce.
- d) Develop strategies for the attraction and retention of young professionals and immigrant students.
- e) Increase awareness of existing employment and training programs.

### **Diversified Economy**

- a) Continue developing strategies and opportunities that support top industry sectors in our diverse economy.
  - i. Transportation, Logistics and Warehousing – industrial network and industry 4.0 support
  - ii. Advanced Manufacturing / Chemistry Innovation – industrial network and industry 4.0 support
  - iii. Agriculture / Food - buy local, value-added products
  - iv. Tourism and Hospitality - destination development activities for 1000 Islands, St. Lawrence River and Rideau Canal
- b) Research emerging and innovative sectors that would be well supported and positioned within the region. Develop location positioning business case.
- c) Continue to react on decisions impacting the local economy. Previous examples include Kemptonville Campus and Rideau Canal - Parks Canada.

## **Marketing and Communications**

- a) Update as needed, Economic Development marketing tools – websites, eNewsletter, social media, photography, video, promotional publications and advertising. Increase and enhance digital marketing tools – social media, videography and website.
- b) Maintain current areas of content and expand coverage to village and hamlets, shop local, and young entrepreneurs' features.
- c) Enhance digital marketing outreach and partnerships within Leeds Grenville, Eastern Ontario, provincially and nationally.
- d) Develop a comprehensive marketing plan for United Counties of Leeds and Grenville that identifies the Counties scope of products and services, audiences, competitive analysis and positioning, and media channels of promotion.

Counties' Economic Development Office will develop annual work plans in support of these strategic areas for focus, while adjusting activities based on economic trends and opportunities.