

Lanark County launches Business Retention & Expansion Project for 2018-2019

Lanark County, in partnership with Valley Heartland Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC), is set to launch a Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) project that aims to build and strengthen local business.

The project, delivered by Valley Heartland CFDC, will benefit from \$28,450 in funding under the Community Innovation stream of the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario \(FedDev Ontario\)'s Eastern Ontario Development Program \(EODP\)](#).

“Statistics from 2016 show that in Lanark County, 85 percent of our employment comes from small businesses, so it’s very important that we nurture and support our business community and what better way to do that than a BR+E Project,” says Lanark County Warden John Fenik (Perth Mayor).

The initiative consists of recruiting and training volunteers to visit businesses and conduct confidential interviews/surveys with senior management or owners. These face-to-face meetings will be key to understanding the challenges and opportunities that businesses face daily. The goal is to build capacity for continued BR+E amongst the participants and the information gathered through the process will inform strategic action planning and implementation. The information collected will also be vital for long-term economic development planning to support continued business retention and expansion and inform the development of community policies, programs and initiatives to support businesses, including those provided by Valley Heartland CFDC.

“The BR+E project is in direct response to the recently completed Lanark County Economic Development Strategic Plan 2018-2020 that identified a county-wide BR+E as a key priority action for implementation under the theme of supporting entrepreneurs and business owners,” says Kurt Greaves, Lanark County CAO. “It’s very exciting to see such swift implementation of one of the top priorities from the strategic plan, and the county is looking forward to working with Valley Heartland CFDC and all eight of our local municipalities, and their business communities on this BR+E project.”

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) will also play a significant role through the use of its BR+E Tool. The tool provides guidance and training on established interview framework for gathering business development data in Ontario. The OMAFRA BR+E program was first introduced in 1998 and has since seen over 230 communities participate, with over 8,100 businesses interviewed across the province.

The BR+E project includes the recent hiring of Teri Devine, a seasoned economic development professional, to coordinate the project over the next year. “We are very fortunate to have Teri on board,” says Stacie Lloyd, Regional Economic Development Officer, Valley Heartland CFDC.

“Having strong coordination with a project of this size is important to ensure great results, including

learning about and responding to local business issues and opportunities and setting priorities and goals for continued business retention and expansion in Lanark County,” adds Tina Stevens, General Manager, Valley Heartland CFDC.

For more information about the Lanark County BR+E project, updates and timely information, please visit <http://www.valleycfdc.com/bre>.

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About Valley Heartland CFDC

At Valley Heartland Community Futures Development Corporation, we’ve been building entrepreneurship for over 30 years, helping to strengthen and grow the local economy. We work with entrepreneurs and communities to help them nurture the most innovative, sustainable businesses and communities imaginable. As a community-based, nonprofit organization funded through FedDev Ontario’s [Eastern Ontario Development Program](#), we invest in job creation, business and community innovation. Contact us at valleycfdc.com

About the Eastern Ontario Development Program (EODP)

The Eastern Ontario Development Program (EODP) advances economic development in rural eastern Ontario by promoting the growth of new and existing businesses in rural communities. The Valley Heartland Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) is one of 15 CFDCs funded through this program.