



COVID-19 RESILIENCY & RECOVERY STRATEGY

NOVEMBER 2020

BWCG

ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT 

BUILD • WORK • GROW

BWG COVID-19 Economic Development Resiliency and Recovery Strategy (2020-2022)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 Resiliency and Recovery Strategy is the culmination of months of work to address the immediate and specific needs of the businesses community, which has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The BWG Office of Economic Development (OED), which was preparing a 5-Year Economic Development Strategy prior to the onset of Novel Coronavirus, quickly determined that a traditional strategy would be insufficient to manage the acute and largely unprecedented circumstances that COVID posed. The Town partnered with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to help facilitate the preparation of the strategy and engaged with the Town's Economic Development Advisory Committee who served as the steering group for the project.

Based on multiple business surveys, conducted in partnership with the County of Simcoe, industry-specific focus groups, consultation with other key stakeholders and economic data gathered during COVID, a 2-Year Strategy was selected with a focus to provide immediate relief and stability to the various affected business sectors.

The BWG COVID-19 Resiliency and Recovery Strategy has four key goals that are intended to be implemented simultaneously, coupled with an ambitious number of recommended action items to help bring these goals to fruition. Ultimately some of these recommendations may not be implemented, given the time restrictions involved and the need to coordinate with third-party agencies; however, they will serve as valuable guidelines for work already underway and future initiatives.

In addition to this strategy document, there are 2 supporting compendiums:

1. Strategic Workplan – consolidation of goals, objectives and action items;
2. Research Summary – Support documentation from primary and secondary research.



Mission/Vision Statement: The business community of Bradford West Gwillimbury will sustain and thrive through COVID-19 recovery as a result of enhanced supports for business retention and attraction. These supports will help position the Town as a key destination north of the Greater Toronto Area for business and lifestyle.

Goals: Listed in order of priority as selected by members of Council and the Economic Development Advisory Committee.

1. Ensure the BWG business and agricultural community have the support and information they need to remain resilient and be successful in addressing the challenges and opportunities created by COVID-19.
2. Support increased access to the infrastructure businesses and producers in BWG need to be successful.
3. Create an attractive and vibrant downtown core that attracts residents and visitors and facilitates a thriving business environment.
4. Position BWG to capitalize on investment attraction opportunities that may arise from the COVID-19 situation.

Timeline: Short = immediate to 6 months,
Medium = 6 to 18 months,
Long = 18 months+

Goal 1: Ensure the BWG business and agricultural community have the support and information they need to remain resilient and be successful in addressing the challenges and opportunities created by COVID-19.

The Town will work with their partners to provide the supports and information businesses need to seize opportunities and address challenges that have been presented as a result of the pandemic. In order for businesses to remain competitive in this time, there must be a focus on enabling their digitization and allowing customers to find and access their goods online. Beyond this, the business community will benefit from improved peer and best practice learning and B2B connection opportunities. The Town must also address labour challenges to ensure local businesses remain productive and are able to grow. Finally, in order to enable strategic growth and transition in key areas of BWG, the Town must review its incentive programs to ensure they are relevant in accomplishing community and economic development goals.



Why pursue this goal?

- Consumers are becoming more digital in their engagement with businesses and organizations during the pandemic and there is strong evidence that this trend will continue.
- Businesses felt there was a need for more awareness about locally owned businesses in BWG, in particular because of a high commuter population, and messaging that those businesses are safe to visit.
- Businesses also felt there was disconnection within the business community and additional opportunities to connect and learn from each other would be useful.
- Businesses have needed to adapt and change their operations to respond to the pandemic, in many cases multiple times. Support and resources to continue to aid them in responding to changes presented by the pandemic is critical.
- Labour continues to be the biggest challenge faced by business and it is impacting regular operations and the ability of your business community to grow.

There are 7 objectives and 22 action items associated with this goal.

Objective 1: Connect with partners to ensure the business community has access to and understands the importance of improving their online presence. (Build)

Specific actions could include:

- Work with partners such as the Board of Trade, Nottawasaga Futures and South Simcoe municipalities to identify an education schedule on this topic for business (short)
- Work with partners, including Nottawasaga Futures and Simcoe County's Digital Main Street program to provide support and resources to help businesses get online (short)

Objective 2: Utilizing BWG's new economic development website, undertake a marketing campaign to create awareness about locally-owned business in BWG. (Build)

Specific actions could include:

- Create an advertising campaign geared to residents about unique gems, sectors, or areas in BWG, promote them on Town media channels, including in town-owned advertising spaces. (short)
- Educate businesses on how to utilize their YLM listing. (short)



Objective 3: Work with partners to support on-going education programming for businesses on resiliency and best practices. (Build)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Create a South Simcoe schedule of programming working with local municipalities, Community Futures, Board of Trade, SWAN, BNI, County and other relevant partners to identify needs and source content. (short)
- b. Support the implementation of programming. (short – on-going)

Objective 4: Create an environment that facilitates innovative and improved connections between business, including the development of mentorship opportunities and co-working/incubation space. (Build/Work)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Work with BBT and Nottawasaga Futures to facilitate a business mentorship program. Assess various models and determine the one that will be most appropriate for Bradford West Gwillimbury (e.g. One-on-one versus group mentorship). (short)
- b. Explore opportunities to connect the private sector more strongly to address local need gaps (Southlake hospital/VentureLab example). As a result of COVID-19, businesses have new needs as well as new gaps in their supply chain. Leverage VentureLab's Health Ecosphere program as a model (<https://riccentre.ca/2016/08/health-ecosphere-innovation-pipeline-and-commercialization-program/>) to connect local businesses together to address this gap. (medium/long)
- c. Further assess community needs for an incubation and/or co-working space – including space capacity and programming needs. (medium)
- d. Create a business plan related to the operation of above facility, including a sustainable funding model. (long)
- e. Apply for funding to support development of the facility where possible. (long)
- f. Develop facility. (long)



Objective 5: Work with partners to address barriers to ready and available workforce, i.e. limited local training opportunities, attainable housing and access to transportation. (Work)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Connect with local public and private colleges to explore opportunities around developing custom programming to be delivered in BWG. (medium)
- b. If possible, expand provision of space and support to new suppliers to launch new training opportunities related to workforce gaps. (medium)
- c. Consider ways to assist women with re-entering the workforce. (medium)
- d. Connect with relevant partners to understand opportunities and challenges facing housing and transportation in the region. (medium)
- e. Lobby internally and externally to make the changes necessary to facilitate more attainable housing development. (long)
- f. Ensure new transportation nodes are situated to meet the needs of the Town's major employers. (short)

Objective 6: Undertake mandatory review of existing IACIP and DCIP financial incentive programs and redevelop programs to meet the needs of business and the community in a more targeted manner. (Build)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Consult business community on specific funding needs. (short)
- b. Identify the most relevant funding and create financial incentive programs, through the CIP program, to drive key community goals. These goals may include, for example, infrastructure provision, downtown enhancement, employment creation, COVID recovery/sustainability, etc. (medium)



Objective 7: Work with Planning and Development Department to review Home Occupancy Bylaw to support the needs of the broader business community. (Work)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Promote public consultations on potential revisions to Home Occupancy Bylaw (Short)
- b. Communicate any changes to business community (Short)

Goal 2: Support increased access to the infrastructure businesses and producers in BWG need to be successful.

In order for businesses to remain competitive, particularly in the face of COVID-19, businesses require access to critical infrastructure, and in particular high speed internet, but also natural gas and phase 3 hydro. Without these, the business and agricultural community cannot keep up with the current technological shifts taking place in their industries, be it selling online or adding value to raw or semi processed product on-site. Downtown businesses require access to a different infrastructure, an anchor tenant and space that brings significant employment and activity to the downtown. Locating the BWG civic centre in the downtown will do just that, adding people on the street and providing a space for the public to gather both outside and in.

Why pursue this goal?

- It is critical for businesses to adopt technology to adapt to the current pandemic-related operating environment. Access to high speed internet is necessary to facilitate this.
- Businesses noted access to broadband was a significant challenge for them.
- Home-based business and producers also noted they require but do not have access to natural gas and phase 3 power.
- There is an anticipated increased interest in working from home and home based business, better internet access enables this.

There are 4 objectives and 11 action items associated with this goal.

Objective 1: Working with the Development and Engineering Department, connect with internet service providers and other utility providers to better understand the role the Town can play in facilitating the development of and connection to needed infrastructure. (Build)



Specific actions could include:

- a. Identify smaller internet service providers servicing Ontario.(short)
- b. Connect and organize meetings with all relevant ISPs to understand their needs and how the Town can attract them to support broadband development . (short)
- c. Explore funding partnerships with the internet service providers to increase broadband provision. (medium – on-going)
- d. Install needed conduit for fibre when undertaking any sort of road works (on-going)

Objective 2: Allocate funding to assist with the provision of broadband into areas with critical needs, in particular for agricultural producers and home-based businesses.
(Build)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Identify areas to service in order of critical need (number of businesses, types of businesses, number of employees, level of reliance on internet, etc.). (short)
- b. When possible, allocate funding to partner with private sector to develop out broadband network. (medium – long)

Objective 3: Work with partners to lobby for additional funding and support for the continued build out of critical infrastructure, such as broadband, natural gas and phase 3 hydro. (Build)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Identify relevant partners (i.e. County of Simcoe, agricultural associations, BBT, etc.). (short)
- b. Work with CAO and partners to establish lobbying strategy that employs traditional and out of the box tactics to gain the support of governments to support needed investment in infrastructure. (short)
- c. Explore unique financing strategies that have been employed in other jurisdictions. (medium)



Objective 4: Support the Town's efforts to locate the Civic Centre into downtown Bradford West Gwillimbury. (Build)

Specific actions should include:

- a. Identify and apply for funding to make it a reality (on-going)
- b. Inform the design to maximize public space benefit and animation.
(long)

Goal 3: Create an attractive and vibrant downtown core that attracts residents and visitors and facilitates a thriving business environment.

The Town of BWG will focus on the development of a vibrant and healthy downtown core to serve as the hub of the community. This will require investment into connectivity, programming and assets, coupled with promotion, that will draw the public and regional visitors in to patronize the downtown area and its businesses. Additional work must be done to engage business and property owners in the shared vision for a prosperous downtown.

Why pursue this goal?

- Feedback from focus groups indicated the Town lacks a central community focal point and true identity, and the current downtown is uninviting with little in the way of anchors to draw people in.
- Downtown revitalization has been on the agenda for a long time but lacks a firm vision and the more comprehensive engagement and buy-in from downtown business and property owners.
- The main street retail and service sector has been especially hard hit in the current pandemic.
- Tourism was identified as an unrealized opportunity for the Town.

There are 8 objectives and 22 action items associated with this goal.



Objective 1: Create a marketing campaign to build awareness about downtown businesses and amenities to draw residents and visitors to the downtown. (Build/Work)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Engagement of business owners (short)
- b. Development of campaign (short)
- c. Implementation (short)

Objective 2: Facilitate the creation of well used public space in the downtown core through the development of activities and attractions on a small and managed scale during COVID-19, increasing in scale and scope as the pandemic threat evolves/permits. (Build)

- a. Specific activities may include a daily local produce market, downtown beautification, murals and art displays, activity booths, concerts, etc. (Short, on-going)
- b. Specific attractions may include the development of a public square in conjunction with a civic centre and a market/co-working space. (Long, on-going)

Objective 3: Create and share a master vision for the downtown to generate excitement and buy in amongst business and property owners. (Build)

Specific actions could include

- a. Reaffirm the Town's complete vision, including defining the role the Town will play in creating a vibrant space and what business owners can do to maximize benefit from this. (short)
- b. Explore the development of downtown specific design and property by-laws. (medium)
- c. Create public buy-in for that plan (medium)
- d. Promotion of plan (medium)



Objective 4: Monitor downtown vacancy and where possible seek to attract anchor businesses and employment to the downtown. This could leverage a Renew New Tecumseth/pop-up store model. (Grow)

Specific actions could include:

- a. On-going monitoring of downtown vacancies (short)
- b. Undertake strategic site selection support if downtown vacancies rise (medium, on-going)
- c. Where suitable tenants cannot be found, work with property owner to utilize Renew model and create pop up retail/service spaces (medium – long)

Objective 5: Using the Downtown Revitalization Committee as a driver, find ways to increase collaboration, cohesion and commitment amongst business and property owners in the downtown with consideration to create a Business Improvement Area. (Build)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Brainstorming tactics with downtown committee to engage businesses and property owners in broader conversation on downtown management and direction (short)
- b. Explore opportunities to partner with the downtown community to test preferred tactics (medium/on-going)
- c. Create interest and support in a business improvement area model (long)

Objective 6: Support the transportation division to ensure transit hubs are well connected and integrated with the downtown core. (Grow)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Identify locations of transit hubs (short)
- b. Map out surrounding uses and ensure there are easy active transportation linkages to your downtown core. (medium – long)



Objective 7: Work with County Tourism to undertake a tourism asset mapping exercise to identify visitor attractions to the community, and connect them to the downtown. (Build)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Discuss partnership opportunities with Tourism Simcoe County (long)
- b. Determine if TSC has the capacity to complete an asset mapping exercise, if not, partner on a funding application to complete asset mapping (long)

Objective 8: Work with Development and Engineering Department on an ongoing seasonal patio application process. (Grow)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Review existing application process (Short)
- b. Propose and implement new process (Short)
- c. Promote new program to applicable businesses (Short)

Goal 4: Position BWG to capitalize on investment attraction opportunities that may arise from the COVID-19 situation.

BWG is ideally positioned to attract incoming investment, surrounded by existing and developing transportation corridors, home to the Bradford West Gwillimbury Industrial Strategic Employment Area and on the edge of the Greater Toronto Area. In order to maximize investment attraction opportunities, the Town will ensure that their planning processes are streamlined, and they are working with approval partners to ensure planning processes are not drawn out and costly where possible. The Town will concentrate efforts on strategic investment attraction outreach, to ensure efficient and effective use of resources. Finally, the Town will also ensure those seeking to work from home on a full time basis, whether for themselves or another employer, have access to the tools they need to operate in the community.

Why pursue this goal?

- It is anticipated that demand for industrial real estate will remain strong through the pandemic as manufacturers seek to make their supply chain more resilient by geographically consolidating production across the supply chain.



- Due to the high density nature of office space in urban centres, there may be an opportunity to attract more office based businesses to the region as they seek a space that facilitates social distancing.
- Outside of the manufacturing sector, there was a perception that there was too much red tape, and in particular, zoning by-laws did not align with the needs of the agricultural sector.
- Many employers are realizing there are benefits to allowing employees to work from home, including cost savings, and it is anticipated this trend will continue.

There are 5 objectives and 13 action items associated with this goal.

Objective 1: Economic Development should support the review and streamlining of building and planning processes to ensure easier access to development opportunities across all sectors. Once this process is complete the business community must be made aware of the changes. (Grow)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Review of building and planning processes, which could include consultations with businesses from multiple sectors. (medium)
- b. The development of a streamlined process that shortens the time for approvals and allows applicants to track application status online. (medium)
- c. Promote changes. (medium)
- d. Continue with the Investment Readiness Team approach in support of the mandatory pre-consultation process. (on-going)

Objective 2: Establish relationship with regulatory partners to help incoming investment navigate development approvals with other regulators. (Grow)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Identify all potential external regulators that impact the approvals process. (long)
- b. Leveraging changes in Bill 108, connect with regulators to determine if and how their approval requirements can be integrated into BWG's approval process to simplify application process and complexity. (long)



Objective 3: Leverage new website branding and layout to strategically promote BWG investment opportunities. Complete implementation of contact management system KEAP. (Grow)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Work with Amplify to implement strategic outbound investment attraction activities, including leveraging LinkedIn and other online platforms to make and build connections. (short)
- b. Complete implementation of contact management system. (medium)

Objective 4: Connect with existing employers and stakeholders to better understand and where relevant, leverage, supply chain attraction opportunities. (Grow)

Specific actions could include:

- a. Leverage Manufacturing Roundtable to connect with local multinational firms to understand their supply chain challenges and if there are opportunities to attract additional components of their supply chain to BWG. (short)
- b. Pursue warm leads. (medium)

Objective 5: Ensure BWG provides the space and supports needed to help those working from home stay connected to and within the community. (Work)

Specific actions could include:

- a. When promoting local business, ensure to include a focus on office supplies and other resources to support home-based work in Bradford. (short)
- b. Survey residents to understand their work-from-home needs. (medium)
- c. Where possible, create a space that can help support their most critical needs. This can overlap with a co-working and/or incubation space. (long)

For additional information please reference the following compendiums: 1. Strategic Workplan – consolidation of goals, objectives and action items; 2. Research Summary.



GOAL 1 - Ensure the BWG business and agricultural community have the support and information they need to remain resilient and be successful in addressing the challenges and						
Objective	Potential Actions (timeframe)	Potential Lead	Potential Partners	Potential Metrics	Budgetary requirements	Linked to Existing Strategy
1. Connect with partners to ensure the business community has access to and understands the importance of improving their online presence. (Build)	a) Work with partners such as the Board of Trade, Nottawasaga Futures and South Simcoe municipalities to identify an education schedule on this topic for business. (Short) b) Work with partners, including Nottawasaga Futures and Simcoe County's Digital Main Street program to provide support and resources to help businesses get online. (Short)	Economic Development	BBT, Nottawasaga Futures, South Simcoe municipalities, County of Simcoe, BDC, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Banks, Downtown Revitalization Committee	% of businesses who improved online presence after attending a workshop or using a resource, # of attendees	Cost of speakers, hosting software if required	New
2. Utilizing BWG's new Economic Development website, undertake a marketing campaign to create awareness about locally-owned business in BWG. (Build)	a) Create an advertising campaign geared to residents about unique gems, sectors, or areas in BWG, promote them on Town media channels, including in town-owned advertising spaces. (Short) b) Educate businesses on how to utilize their YLM listing. (Short)	Economic Development	BBT, Nottawasaga Futures, Downtown Revitalization Committee	Traffic to advertising campaign, number of businesses making use of YLM listing	Production of advertising campaign, promotion costs, staff time for development	Yes
3. Work with partners to support ongoing education programming for businesses on resiliency and best practices. (Build)	a) Create a South Simcoe schedule of programming working with local municipalities, Community Futures, Board of Trade, SWAN, BNI, County and other relevant partners to identify needs and source content. (Short) b) Support the implementation of programming. (Short – Ongoing)	Economic Development	BBT, Nottawasaga Futures, South Simcoe Municipalities, County of Simcoe, BDC, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Banks, Downtown Revitalization Committee	New information/skills successfully adopted/implemented by business community via from resiliency programs	Shared cost of implementation	New

GOAL 1 - Ensure the BWG business and agricultural community have the support and information they need to remain resilient and be successful in addressing the challenges and						
Objective	Potential Actions (timeframe)	Potential Lead	Potential Partners	Potential Metrics	Budgetary requirements	Linked to Existing Strategy
4. Create an environment that facilitates innovative and improved connections between business, including the development of mentorship opportunities and co-working/incubation space. (Build/Work)	<p>a) Work with BBT and Nottawasaga Futures to facilitate a business mentorship program. Assess various models and determine the one that will be most appropriate for Bradford West Gwillimbury (e.g. One-on-one versus group mentorship). (Short)</p> <p>b) Explore opportunities to better connect private sector businesses to address local need gaps (Southlake hospital/VentureLab example). As a result of COVID-19, businesses have new needs as well as new gaps in their supply chain. Leverage VentureLab's Health Ecosphere program as a model (https://riccentre.ca/2016/08/health-ecosphere-innovation-pipeline-and-commercialization-program/) to connect local businesses together to address this gap. (Medium/Long)</p> <p>c) Further assess community needs for an incubation and/or co-working space – including space capacity and programming needs. (Medium)</p> <p>d) Create a business plan related to the operation of above facility, including a sustainable funding model. (Long)</p> <p>e) Apply for funding to support development of the space where possible. (Long)</p> <p>f) Develop space. (Long)</p>	Economic Development	BBT, Nottawasaga Futures, South Simcoe Municipalities, County of Simcoe, BDC, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Banks, VentureLab	New mentorship, business satisfaction, new innovations, co-working/incubation space developed, successful attraction and retention of tenants	Staff time to facilitate coordination of mentorship, addressing supply chain gaps, assessment of needs for incubation space, cost to develop space, cost of run programming	New

GOAL 1 - Ensure the BWG business and agricultural community have the support and information they need to remain resilient and be successful in addressing the challenges and						
Objective	Potential Actions (timeframe)	Potential Lead	Potential Partners	Potential Metrics	Budgetary requirements	Linked to Existing Strategy
5. Work with partners to address barriers to ready-and-available workforce, i.e. limited local training opportunities, attainable housing and access to transportation. (Work)	a) Connect with local public and private colleges to explore opportunities around developing custom programming to be delivered in BWG. (Medium) b) If possible, expand provision of space and support to new suppliers, to launch new training opportunities related to workforce gaps. (Medium) c) Consider ways to assist women with re-entering the workforce. (Medium) d) Connect with relevant partners to understand opportunities and challenges facing housing and transportation in the region. (Medium) e) Lobby to make the changes necessary to facilitate more attainable housing development. (Long) f) Ensure new transportation nodes are situated to meet the needs of the Town's major employers. (Short)	Economic Development	Transportation Division, Georgian College, Georgina Skilled Trades College, Building and Development, County of Simcoe	New training programs are developed, employers have an easier time finding employees	Staff time, possibly space and resources for new training programs	New
6. Undertake mandatory review of existing IACIP and DCIP financial incentive programs and redevelop programs to meet the evolving needs of businesses and the community. (Build)	a) Consult business community on specific funding needs. (Short) b) Identify the most relevant funding needs and create financial incentive programs, through the CIP program, to drive key community goals. These goals may include infrastructure provision, downtown enhancement, employment creation, COVID recovery/sustainability, etc. (Medium)	Economic Development	Building and Development, Downtown Revitalization Committee, Manufacturers' Roundtable, BBT, Nottawasaga Futures	Funds matched, business sales increase, downtown traffic increases, grant-assisted improvements, new programs established	Matching funds, staff time	New
7. Work with Planning and Development Department to review Home Occupancy Bylaw to support the needs of the broader business community. (Work)	a) Promote public consultations on potential revisions to Home Occupancy Bylaw (Short) b) Communicate any changes to business community (Short)	Economic Development, Development and Engineering	Development and Engineering, Business community	Growth in home-based businesses	Staff time	New

GOAL 2 - Support increased access to the infrastructure businesses and producers in BWG need to be successful.						
Objective	Potential Actions (timeframe)	Potential Lead	Potential Partners	Potential Metrics	Budgetary requirements	Linked to Existing Strategy
1. Working with the Development and Engineering Department, connect with Internet service providers and other utility providers to better understand the role the Town can play in facilitating the development of and connection to needed infrastructure. (Build)	a) Identify smaller Internet service providers servicing Ontario.(Short) b) Connect and organize meetings with all relevant ISPs to understand their needs and how the Town can attract them to support broadband development . (Short) c) Explore funding partnerships with the Internet service providers to increase broadband provision. (Medium – Ongoing) d) Install needed conduit for fibre when undertaking any sort of road works (Ongoing)	Development and Engineering	Economic Development, ISPs, Utility Providers	Provision of Internet, new partnerships	Staff Time, cost of fibre conduit	New
2. Allocate funding to assist with the provision of broadband into areas with critical needs, in particular for agricultural producers and home-based businesses. (Build)	a) Identify areas to service in order of critical need (number of businesses, types of businesses, number of employees, level of reliance on Internet, etc.). (Medium) b) When possible, allocate funding to partner with private sector to develop out broadband network. (Medium – Long)	Economic Development	Development and engineering, CAO's Office, private sector	Funding allocated, matched funds, utility provision	Cost to build, staff time	New
3. Work with partners to lobby for additional funding and support for the continued build out of critical infrastructure, such as broadband, natural gas and phase 3 hydro. (Build)	a) Identify relevant partners (i.e. County of Simcoe, agricultural associations, BBT, etc.). (Short) b) Work with CAO and partners to establish lobbying strategy that employs traditional and out of the box tactics to gain the support of governments to support needed investment in infrastructure. (Medium) c) Explore alternative financing strategies that have been employed in other jurisdictions. (Medium-Long)	CAO's Office	Economic Development, County of Simcoe, agricultural associations, BBT, utility providers	Financing strategies employed, funding received, funding matched, utility provision	Cost to build, staff time	New
4. Support the Town's efforts to locate the Civic Centre into downtown Bradford West Gwillimbury. (Build)	a) Identify and apply for funding to make it a reality (Ongoing) b) Provide input into design to maximize public space benefit. (Long)	CAO's Office	Economic Development, Downtown Revitalization Committee	Funding received, Civic centre construction started, number of partners, number of other amenities and animation included, resident satisfaction with space	Cost to build, staff time	Yes

GOAL 3 - Create an attractive and vibrant downtown core that attracts residents and visitors and facilitates a thriving business environment.						
Objective	Potential Actions (Timing)	Potential Lead	Potential Partners	Potential Metrics	Budgetary requirements	Linked to existing Strategy
1. Create a marketing campaign to Build awareness about downtown businesses and amenities, to draw residents and visitors to the downtown. (Build/Work)	a) Engagement of business owners. (Short) b) Development of campaign. (Short) c) Implementation. (Short)	Economic Development	Bradford Board of Trade, Downtown Revitalization Committee, SWAN, BNI	# of businesses engaged, online traffic, downtown traffic (in businesses)	Cost of production, Staff time to engage partners/business and develop content or the cost to outsource	Yes
2. Facilitate the creation of a well-used public space in the downtown core by developing activities and attractions on a small and managed scale during COVID-19, increasing in scale and scope as the pandemic threat evolves/permits. (Build)	a) Specific activities may include a daily local produce market, downtown beautification, murals and art displays, activity booths, concerts, etc. (Short, Ongoing) b) Specific attractions may include the development of a public square in conjunction with civic centre and a market/co-Working space. (Long, Ongoing)	Downtown Revitalization Committee	Economic Development, BBT, Holland Marsh Growers, Arts and Culture sector	Traffic downtown, downtown business revenue	Staff and DR Committee time to prepare, Cost to pilot activities/Build attractions	New
3. Create and share a master vision for the downtown to generate excitement and buy-in amongst business and property owners. (Build)	a) Reaffirm the Town's complete vision, including defining the role the Town will play in creating a vibrant space and what business owners can do to maximize benefit from this. (Short) b) Explore the development of downtown-specific design and property by-laws. (Medium) c) Create public buy-in for that plan. (Medium) d) Promotion of plan. (Medium)	Downtown Revitalization Committee	Economic Development, Downtown business and property owners	Participation of businesses and property owners, Investment into downtown properties/businesses	Staff time, funds for promotion	Yes
4. Monitor downtown vacancy and where possible seek to attract anchor businesses and employment to the downtown. This could leverage a Renew New Tecumseth/pop-up store model. (Grow)	a) Ongoing monitoring of downtown vacancies and needs of existing tenants. (Short) b) Undertake strategic site selection support if downtown vacancies rise. (Medium, Ongoing) c) Where suitable tenants cannot be found, Work with property owner to utilize Renew model and create pop up retail/service spaces. (Medium – Long)	Economic Development	Downtown Revitalization Committee	Vacancy rate	Staff time, dollars for promotion	New

GOAL 3 - Create an attractive and vibrant downtown core that attracts residents and visitors and facilitates a thriving business environment.						
Objective	Potential Actions (Timing)	Potential Lead	Potential Partners	Potential Metrics	Budgetary requirements	Linked to existing Strategy
5. Using the Downtown Revitalization Committee as a driver, find ways to increase collaboration, cohesion and commitment amongst business and property owners in the downtown with consideration to create a Business Improvement Area. (Build)	a) Brainstorming tactics with Downtown Committee to engage businesses and property owners in broader conversation on downtown management and direction. (Short) b) Explore opportunities to partner with the downtown community to test preferred tactics. (Medium/Ongoing) c) Create interest and support in a Business Improvement Area model. (Long)	Downtown Revitalization Committee	Economic Development, Downtown business and property owners	# of businesses engaged, # of property owners engaged, # of successful initiatives, BIA created	Staff time	
6. Support the transportation division to ensure transit hubs are well connected and integrated with the downtown core. (Grow)	a) Identify locations of transit hubs. (Short) b) Map surrounding areas and ensure there are easy active transportation linkages to your downtown core. (Medium – Long)	Transportation Division	Economic Development, Downtown Revitalization Committee	Hubs are well connected to the downtown - traffic is flowing from hubs to downtown	Staff time	Yes
7. Work with County Tourism to undertake a tourism asset mapping exercise to identify visitor attractions to the community, and connect them to the downtown. (Build)	a) Discuss partnership opportunities with Tourism Simcoe County (TSC). (Long) b) Determine if TSC has the capacity to complete an asset mapping exercise, if not, partner on a funding application to complete asset mapping. (Long)	Economic Development	Tourism Simcoe County	Asset mapping is completed	Staff time, cost of an asset mapping exercise	New
8. Work with Development and Engineering Department on an ongoing seasonal patio application process. (Grow)	a) Review existing application process (Short) b) Propose and implement new process (Short) c) Promote new program to applicable businesses (Short)	Economic Development	Economic Development, Development and Engineering, Business community	# of new patios, increased customer use	Staff time	New

GOAL 4 - Position BWG to capitalize on investment attraction opportunities that may arise from the COVID-19 situation.						
Objective	Potential Actions (timeframe)	Potential Lead	Potential Partners	Potential Metrics	Budgetary requirements	Linked to Existing Strategy
1. Economic Development should support the review and streamlining of building and planning processes to ensure easier access to development opportunities across all sectors. Once this process is complete the business community must be made aware of the changes. (Grow)	a) Review of building and planning processes, which could include consultations with businesses from multiple sectors. (Medium) b) The development of a streamlined process that Shortens the time for approvals and allows applicants to track application status online. (Medium) c) Promote changes. (Medium) d) Continue with the Investment Readiness Team approach in support of the mandatory pre-consultation process. (Ongoing)	Development and Engineering Department	Economic Development, Holland Marsh Growers, Manufacturer's roundtable, home-based businesses	Length of time application process takes, applicant satisfaction with process	Staff time	Yes
2. Establish relationship with regulatory partners to help incoming investors navigate development approvals with other regulators. (Grow)	a) Identify all potential external regulators that impact the approvals process. (Long) b) Leveraging changes in Bill 108, connect with regulators to determine if and how their approval requirements can be integrated into BWG's approval process to simplify application process and complexity. (Long)	Economic Development	Development and Engineering, MTO, LSRC, other regulators	Regulators engaged, approval processes integrated	Staff time	New
3. Leverage new website branding and layout to strategically promote BWG investment opportunities. Complete implementation of contact management system KEAP. (Grow)	a) Work with Amplify to implement strategic outbound investment attraction activities, including leveraging LinkedIn and other online platforms to make and build connections. (Medium) b) Complete implementation of contact management system. (Short)	Economic Development	Amplify, County of Simcoe	New connections made, number of warm leads, number of successful, closed leads, contact management system implemented	Staff time, Amplify costs, advertising costs	Yes
4. Connect with existing employers and stakeholders to better understand and leverage supply chain attraction opportunities. (Grow)	a) Leverage Manufacturing Roundtable to connect with local multinational firms to understand their supply chain challenges and if there are opportunities to attract additional components of their supply chain to BWG. (Short) b) Pursue warm leads. (Medium)	Economic Development	Manufacturers Roundtable, County of Simcoe	Warm leads, successful, closed leads	Staff time	New

GOAL 4 - Position BWG to capitalize on investment attraction opportunities that may arise from the COVID-19 situation.						
Objective	Potential Actions (timeframe)	Potential Lead	Potential Partners	Potential Metrics	Budgetary requirements	Linked to Existing Strategy
5. Ensure BWG provides the space and supports needed to help those working from home stay connected to and within the community. (Work)	a) When promoting local business, ensure to include a focus on office supplies and other resources to support home-based work in Bradford. (Short) b) Survey residents to understand their work-from-home needs. (Medium) c) Where possible, create a space that can help support their most critical needs. This can overlap with a co-working and/or incubation space. (Long)	Economic Development		Number of home-based employees in Town	Staff time, advertising costs, equipment/resource costs	New

Background

The Town of BWG Office of Economic Development partnered with the Province (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs) to develop the Resiliency and Recovery Strategy. As part of this process, both primary and secondary research initiatives were conducted. This document serves to outline the results of these efforts.

Primary research included analyzing results from a local business impact survey (106 responses) and 2 County wide COVID-19 surveys (1,292 responses) undertaken between March and September 2020. In addition, 6 focus group sessions were coordinated to get feedback from multiple stakeholders on the development of the strategic plan.

The goal of each focus group was to:

- Better understand the nature of the challenges and opportunities business is facing in this difficult time;
- Learn about where each participant's respective industry/sector may be heading and how the Town could help them to adapt; and
- Generate ideas and get feedback on the feasibility of potential action items.

Focus Group Summary (32 Participants):

Session	Date/Time	Focus
Economic Recovery Task Force	Monday, June 22 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.	Comprised of local business and community groups along with Federal & Provincial representatives
Major Employers	Tuesday, June 23 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.	Larger employers in the manufacturing sector
Home Based Businesses	Wednesday, June 24 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.	Invitation being sent through Bradford Board of Trade to solicit participation.
Downtown Businesses	Thursday, June 25 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.	Downtown Revitalization Committee members along with other willing participants
Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME)	Friday, June 26 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.	Any SME not operating as home based. Targeting businesses outside downtown BWG
Agricultural	Tuesday, June 30 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.	Businesses operating within agricultural sector including growers, packagers, processors and farm related activities

Secondary research consisted of analysing several existing policy and planning documents along with the following:

- Existing local and regional economic development related planning documents
- EMSI Analyst labour market data 2013-2018
- Canada Census, 2016
- Institutional research studies
- Industry association publications (e.g. IEDC, Co-Star, CFIB)
- News media

Highlights from Primary Research

Challenges

Infrastructure

- Broadband
 - High speed internet is not available to all. This makes it challenging for home-based business to find and operate out of a suitable location.
 - Agriculture in particular highlighted the critical need for broadband. Farmers indicated they needed to drive into town to access the internet required to update their tractors and other equipment which require significant use of technology. Farmers also indicated that poor internet made it challenging to conduct business from their existing locations, regardless of the type of operation. As farmers look to leverage more technology to help address some of the Temporary foreign worker shortages, technology and access to broadband become an immediate need.
- Natural Gas
 - Rural areas are underserved, limiting diversification/expansion opportunities
- 3 Phase Power
 - Rural areas are underserved, limiting diversification/expansion opportunities

Labour

- Recruiting for especially skilled, but also unskilled labour – however agencies have been good at filling unskilled gap
- Using a lot of temporary workers from the city
- Awareness of scope of technology careers in the agri-food sector
- Helping those who are un or underemployed to identify new career paths and training opportunities
- Shop local, work local should be promoted
- There are less and less people looking for a job – potentially attributed to the limitations of the CERB program
- Current and future employees need to understand that it is safe to return to work and employers need to be able to provide that environment

BWG COVID-19 Economic Development Resiliency and Recovery Strategy 2020-2022 Research Framework Compendium

- Challenges finding childcare when everything is shutdown
- No Post-Secondary
- Transportation to work or education facilities can be a challenge
- More affordable housing is needed to attract the required labour

COVID Recovery

- This is a highly uncertain environment for businesses
- Lacking clarity and guidelines as to how to safely operate – keep staff and customers safe
- Don't need more debt – which is primarily what has been offered to support business
- Businesses are now burdened with increasing insurance and potential significant liability should an employee or customer contract COVID-19 after visiting their place of business.

Awareness

- High commuter population means people are not familiar with/shopping in Town
- It has felt like big business is the focus for BWG, but the Town is made of small businesses generally and more focus could be directed here
- Advertising in Town-owned spaces is costly and challenging for a small business to access

Identity

- Business community is not cohesive right now – we need to connect and rally as a group
- Generally, the Town lacks an identity – we are not known for one thing.
 - Need to find an identity and market it

Planning and Development

- Zoning by-laws do not align with the needs of the agricultural sector. Perception is there is no room for value-added activities from farm gate sales to wedding venues.
- Perception that there is a lot of red tape – process to apply for amendments and permits can be complex, lengthy, and exceedingly costly
 - This did not apply to the manufacturing sector – manufacturers felt well supported by Town through various processes
 - In particular timeliness was an issue for the agriculture sector who need to erect storage buildings and other structure on short notice
 - Recommendations for streamlining processes and updating bylaws to align with economic goals

Opportunities

COVID Recovery

- Need to encourage people to come out and patronize business, convince them it's safe

BWG COVID-19 Economic Development Resiliency and Recovery Strategy 2020-2022 Research Framework Compendium

- Many customers are not returning to in-person activities, preferring to stick with the digital adaptations they took up while isolating
- Advocacy to offset the cost of health and safety measures required to be implemented
- Open for Business prep kits to help businesses reopen (includes things like stickers marking distancing, masks, sanitizer, etc.)
- Support for business owner mental health in this very uncertain time
- Recovery Fund from Town was great – but delivered on a 1st come 1st serve basis – should be merit based
- Advocacy for more funding, improvements to CERB and rent programs and better information in regards to openings and related guidelines

CIP

- Requires a revisit – businesses would like to be involved and provide feedback
- Downtown boundary could be reconsidered to focus specifically on downtown footprint area
- Some businesses found it challenging to leverage the funding due to the requirement that building must be up to code
- Explore partnership with an “expert” organization to help businesses identify if there would be value in leveraging the CIP and how
- Industrial CIP could be expanded to include things like equipment, hiring and increasing productivity

Downtown

- Could be more inviting – needs an anchor to draw people in, right now there is an empty curling arena and minimal foot traffic– the river? A central patio?
 - A larger gathering space and connection to green space would encourage shoppers to linger
- Must be a destination – think Newmarket, Orangeville that are beautiful and distinctive
- Anchor tenants – the Town? Major employers?
- Downtown Revitalization has been on the agenda for a long time but lacks a firm vision
- Help facilitate equal opportunity – downtown businesses had to wait an extra week or more to open patios
- High rents for poor commercial rental stock

Awareness

- Need to do a better job of capturing the local resident market share, especially now that many commuters are staying home and can discover the community – these people are used to going outside of BWG to shop
- Videos for residents on where and what to shop for in BWG
- Shop local campaign that may involve a website with business listings
- Let the Highway 400 users know they are driving through the salad bowl of Ontario, and about other local assets

- Banners in Town to inform residents
- Better connections between businesses are also needed – more shared networking and across the sectors
- Advertising through Town venues is costly – perhaps the Town could consider a tiered scale to allow smaller businesses to access advertising opportunities
- Town lacks a central and affordable meeting space for networking and larger meetings

Development Land

- Bradford By-Pass and Transit hubs present commercial and industrial development opportunities
- Reagens Industrial Park needs a parking plan – not enough room for employees
- Town needs to be mindful of buffer zones between industrial and residential
- Businesses are looking to relocate out of the GTA for more affordable places to operate. BWG has a lower cost to run a business, work, own a home than GTA

Technology and Innovation

- In many cases businesses are adapting to operating with COVID-19 by employing technology
- Businesses would benefit from assistance in re-evaluating how best to operate and adapt their business to operate in this uncertainty
- Automation has been increased across a number of sectors and COVID is anticipated to increase that adoption
- Touchless items are in demand and may be a trend
- Some businesses may be willing to provide a platform to test new technologies
- BWG could be supporting businesses to adapt by encouraging the adoption of automation and innovation
 - Some felt there was a need for an innovation centre (co-working/innovation/shared services space)

Information

- Re-opening guidelines have been extremely unclear and created a lot of uncertainty
- Town could play a key role in sharing information about programs, best practices to assist businesses
- Those who have received an economic development newsletter during COVID-19 have found it useful. Broaden distribution list.
- Town could offer educational opportunities like using social media, or share information about COVID best practices – needs will vary by business

Communication

- There was significant interest from businesses to provide input to the municipality on an on-going basis. They want to be involved and partnering where possible, and they want to feel heard.

Agri-Food

- There is increased demand for local food during the pandemic. Holland Marsh Growers, other farmers, receiving regular calls from GTA looking for how to access the rich, agricultural assets of the region. Currently no single, reliable point of access
- Automation is an increasing need of the sector to offset declining/unstable labour forces. In order to maximize, need to increase access to internet. These will create high paying technology jobs in the sector
- Agriculture perceives they are a lower priority than other industries, sector would benefit from municipal advocacy support for funding and infrastructure
- Explore opportunities to streamline by-laws with municipalities across the Holland Marsh

Highlights from Secondary Research

Secondary research sources included but were not limited to: BWG Council Priorities, 2015-2020 BWG Economic Development Strategy, BWG OED Marketing Plan 2018-2021, Downtown and Industrial Areas Community Improvement Plans, County of Simcoe Draft Economic Development Strategic Plan, County of Simcoe EDO Foreign Direct Investment Strategy.

In addition

- BWG economy is subject to impacts from provincial, national and international economic trends and shocks
- A significant challenge that has and will continue to impact the economy is the COVID-19 global pandemic
- Pandemic initially halted most of the global economy, which resulted in millions of unemployed workers, disruptions to global trade and travel, and a significant amount of uncertainty as to when things will return to normal and what that normal will look like.

Pre-Pandemic Trends

Workforce

- The population of Canada is aging and growth in the working age population will remain below 0.2% for the decade to come, not growing at a fast enough rate to replace the baby boomer generations that are heading towards retirement.
- Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) identified workforce and technology as the biggest barriers to future business growth. Approximately 39% of Canadian SMEs are challenged to find the talent required for growth and only 19% of Canadian SMEs are considered digitally advanced, remaining

competitive from a technology perspective.¹ These are major roadblocks to the development of new employment opportunities and the sustainability of your existing business base.

- In Ontario, approximately 40% of SMEs are experiencing workforce shortages, which is on par with the Canadian average.²
- Resulting from the shortage, SMEs were experiencing employees working more hours, limited business growth, inability to fulfill contracts or work orders, decreased competitiveness and deteriorating product quality.³
- BDC workforce study found that 65% of businesses experiencing workforce shortages are low-growth companies, highlighting that the lack of talent is constricting overall economic growth.
- Sectors experiencing the most pronounced shortages were manufacturing, retail and construction and for firms with 5 or more employees.⁴
- Strategies businesses are using to address the labour shortage.⁵

¹ <https://www.bdc.ca/en/blog/pages/2019-economic-outlook-canada-in-good-place.aspx>.

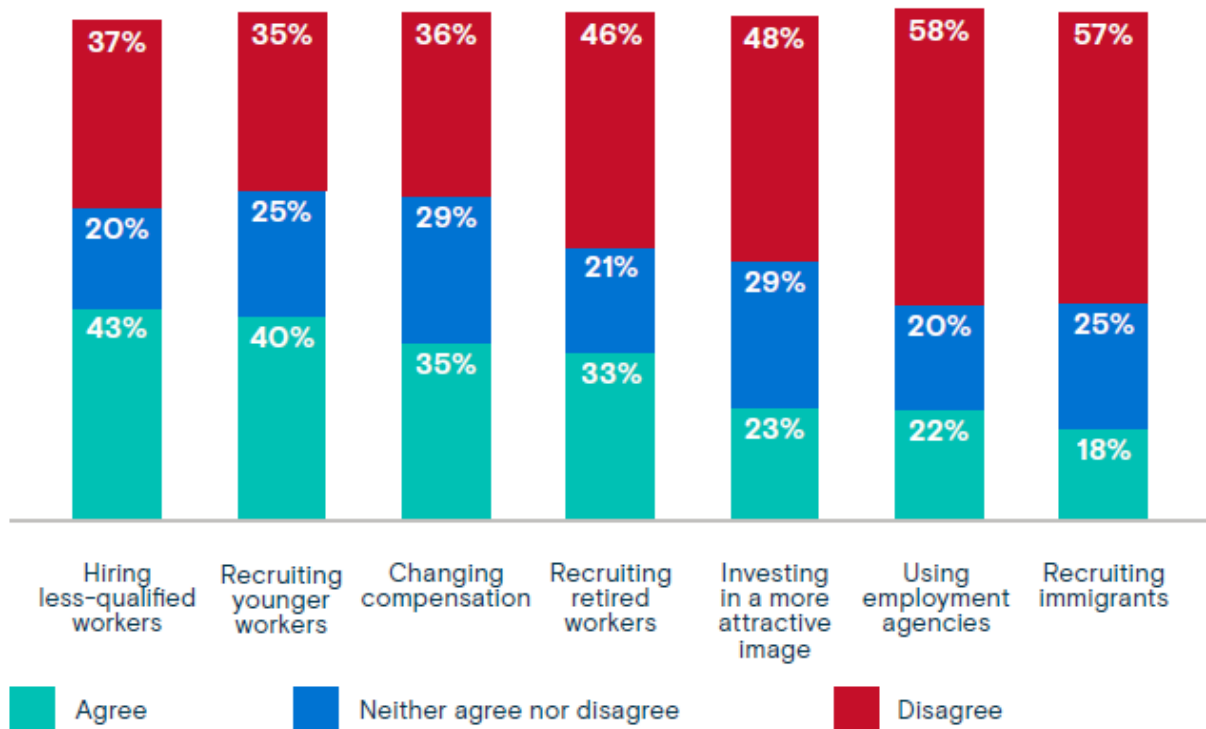
² https://www.bdc.ca/en/documents/analysis_research/labour-shortage.pdf?utm_campaign=Labour-Shortage-Study-2018--download--EN&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua

³ https://www.bdc.ca/en/documents/analysis_research/labour-shortage.pdf?utm_campaign=Labour-Shortage-Study-2018--download--EN&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua

⁴ https://www.bdc.ca/en/documents/analysis_research/labour-shortage.pdf?utm_campaign=Labour-Shortage-Study-2018--download--EN&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua

⁵ https://www.bdc.ca/en/documents/analysis_research/labour-shortage.pdf?utm_campaign=Labour-Shortage-Study-2018--download--EN&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua

Due to a shortage of labour, our business is...



Source: Maru/Matchbox survey on Canada's labour shortage, 2018. Results exclude respondents who said, "I don't know" or "I prefer not to answer." Results are weighted by region and company size to reflect Canada's economy more accurately. n = 1,123 to 1,156.

Technology

- Digital technologies are becoming increasingly critical in production processes⁶ as the rate of development and adoption of new technologies is taking place at a significantly faster pace than ever before.⁷
- Globally, trends point to higher rates of competitiveness for countries that promote the use of digital technologies. This promotion results in increased competitiveness, with the opposite effect if not achieved. The effect on competitiveness is especially pronounced in countries that have an aging society, making it a special consideration for Canada.⁸
- Organizations that are late adopters of automation can find it difficult to benefit from the impact because they will lag in the development of related capabilities and attracting talent. Early adopters, on the other hand, have the potential to

⁶ <https://ged-project.de/blogpostsen/digital-economy-how-is-digitalization-changing-global-competitiveness-and-economic-prosperity/>

⁷ <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/the-8-major-forces-shaping-the-future-of-the-global-economy/>

⁸ <https://ged-project.de/blogpostsen/digital-economy-how-is-digitalization-changing-global-competitiveness-and-economic-prosperity/>

double their cash flow over the next decade while non adopters could experience a 20% decline from current cash flow levels⁹.

- Technology like artificial intelligence, is expected to widen the economic gap between countries who can facilitate faster adoption, versus those who cannot¹⁰.
- BDC survey found that only 19% of Canada's SMEs are considered digitally advanced, and in Ontario, 57% of businesses were digitally conservative (those that were not investing in and adopting technology).¹¹ Digitally advanced companies are those that have a high use of digital technology (consumer-facing and back-end) and a high ability to manage change. They are considered more likely to export and more likely to have introduced one innovation in the past three years.¹² Businesses with less than 20 employees had the highest levels of digital conservatism (60%), while businesses with 20 or more employees ranked as digitally advanced (34%), highlighting that larger firms tend to be more digitally advanced.
- In Canada, firms that have higher use of digital technology are considered significantly more likely to experience annual revenue growth of 10% or more. Similarly, firms that have a high capacity to manage change are significantly more likely to have annual profit growth of 10% or more.¹³
- Low digital skill jobs are predicted to decline by about 40% over the next decade, to make up 30% of the workforce, and on the converse, digitally skilled jobs will increase by approximately 40% to over 50% of required talent.¹⁴
- The World Manufacturing Forum indicates the top two skills that will be in demand in the future are digital literacy and artificial intelligence and data analytics, respectively¹⁵.

Global Trade

- Globally, we have seen significant shifts in trade policy and partnerships, with Canada participating in a number of new trade agreements. In the past 5 years Canada entered into the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement

⁹ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/artificial-intelligence/notes-from-the-AI-frontier-modeling-the-impact-of-ai-on-the-world-economy>

¹⁰ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/artificial-intelligence/notes-from-the-AI-frontier-modeling-the-impact-of-ai-on-the-world-economy>

¹¹ https://www.bdc.ca/EN/Documents/analysis_research/how-to-make-the-digital-shift-in-your-business-study.pdf?utm_campaign=Digitize-now-Study-2018--EN&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua

¹² https://www.bdc.ca/EN/Documents/analysis_research/how-to-make-the-digital-shift-in-your-business-study.pdf?utm_campaign=Digitize-now-Study-2018--EN&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua

¹³ See above

¹⁴ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/artificial-intelligence/notes-from-the-ai-frontier-modeling-the-impact-of-ai-on-the-world-economy#0>

¹⁵ https://c00e521c-fc35-464f-8eef-9356e02fbfb5.filesusr.com/ugd/c56fe3_d617f7333fd347b0b2bb4a739ba72993.pdf

(CETA),¹⁶ providing access to the European Union, and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP),¹⁷ opening up access to a number of markets in the Asia-Pacific and South American regions. Most recently Canada was party to the new Canada, United States, Mexico Agreement.

- With CETA over 98% of Canadian goods are now able to enter the EU without tariffs, compared to only 25% before. The federal government believes this will improve export opportunities for a range of Canadian producers, processors and manufacturers.¹⁸ The EU is a \$20-trillion market, and the agreement also allows Canadian companies to bid on all levels of EU government procurement activity, an additional \$3.3-trillion dollar annual marketplace.¹⁹
- CPTPP is a free trade agreement between Canada and 10 countries in the Asia-Pacific region: Australia, Brunei, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. Currently 5 five of the above countries still need to implement the agreement. Once fully implemented, this agreement will create a trading bloc representing 495 million consumers and 13.5% of global GDP. Ultimately, this will provide Canada with preferential access to key markets in Asia and Latin America.²⁰ This trading bloc will allow for 94% of Canadian agriculture and agri-food products, 99% of industrial products, 100% of fish and seafood, and 100% of forest products to be exported duty free.²¹
- Canada becomes the only G7 country to have free trade agreements with all other G7 members and free trade access across the Americas, Europe and Asia-Pacific regions.
- Mexico only accounts for about 1% of Canadian exports.
- 400,000 people and over \$2.4 billion worth of goods cross the Canada-United States border on a daily basis²².
- Approximately 1.9 million Canadian and 9 million jobs in the United States are dependent on this trade relationship, making it a critical one for both parties going forward.
- Canada relies on the United States to a much greater degree as illustrated below.

¹⁶ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/ceta-europe-free-trade-1.4300071>

¹⁷ <https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/cptpp-ptpp/index.aspx?lang=eng>

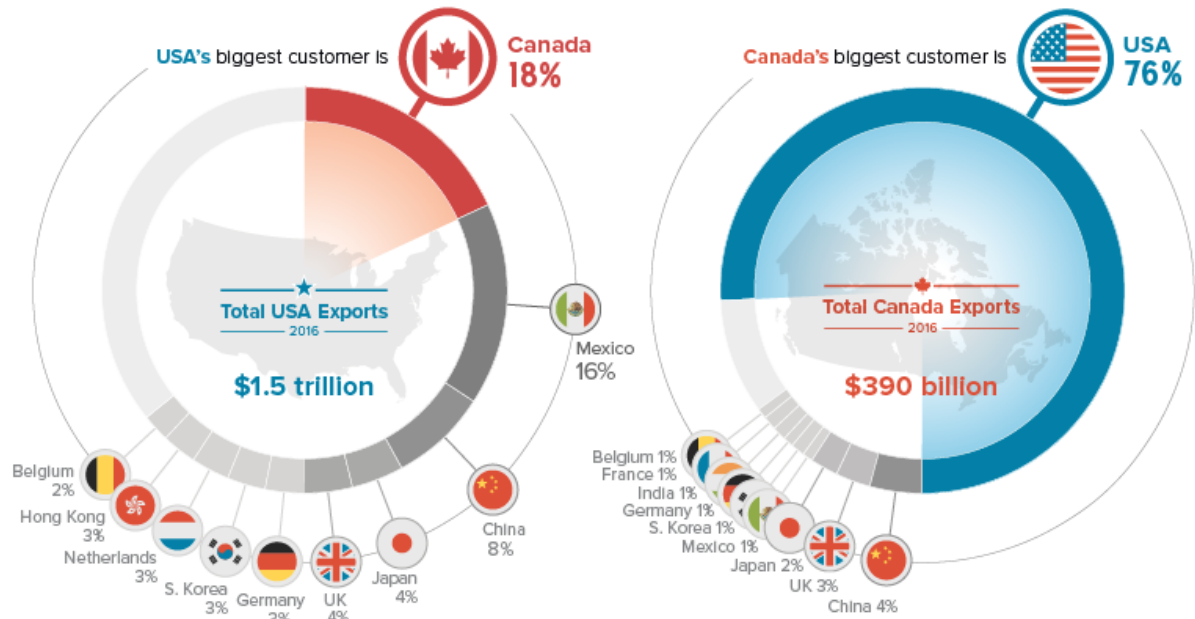
¹⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/ceta-europe-free-trade-1.4300071>

¹⁹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/ceta-europe-free-trade-1.4300071>

²⁰ <https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/cptpp-ptpp/index.aspx?lang=eng>

²¹ <https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/cptpp-ptpp/index.aspx?lang=eng>

²² <https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/consultations/nafta-alena/toolkit-outils.aspx?lang=eng>



Canada and US trade relationship highlighted, amongst other trade partners.²³

Climate Change

- It is predicted that extreme climate such as flooding, wildfires and drought will continue to be felt globally. Impacts range from a decrease in tourism, disrupted transportation networks, and challenges related to agriculture production.²⁴
- In 2018, it is estimated that economic stress and damage from natural disasters was equal to \$165 billion and 50% of that was uninsured.²⁵
- More severe weather affects the ability of agricultural producers to produce reliable crops. It will also cause widespread disruptions to ecosystems, causing flooding, drought, wildfire and extinctions, harming tourism potential and creating an unstable environment for investment to invest in.²⁶
- Investment in energy is transitioning towards more sustainable sources.²⁷ Since a student call for fossil fuel divestment in 2011, nearly 1,000 institutional investors with \$6.24 trillion in assets have committed to divest from fossil fuels globally, which is up from \$52 billion just four years ago, highlighting the rapid adoption of divestment taking place currently.

²³ <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/the-8-major-forces-shaping-the-future-of-the-global-economy/>

²⁴ <https://www.brookings.edu/research/ten-facts-about-the-economics-of-climate-change-and-climate-policy/>

²⁵ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risk_Report_2020.pdf

²⁶ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risk_Report_2020.pdf

²⁷ <https://www.arabellaadvisors.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Global-Divestment-Report-2018.pdf>

COVID-19

- Late 2019 saw the emergence of a new coronavirus, a global health pandemic, infecting tens of millions and killing almost a million people to date. Physical distancing measures, which require workforce and customers to be a certain distance apart, and the earlier closure of non-essential businesses have required businesses to innovate or face failure.
- The effect will be felt across almost all industries, in particular those most impacted by physical distancing such as food services, accommodations, air transportation, retail and culture²⁸.
- Pandemic had a significant initial impact on Canada. Since February 2020 Canada lost over 3 million jobs, including the largest monthly decline ever in April, and with many more working reduced hours²⁹³⁰. This rapid loss of jobs has raised the unemployment rate to 13% in Canada and 11.3% in Ontario³¹. Job losses were focused in the accommodation, food services, culture and retail industries as these industries depend on physical proximity more than most others³².
- Travel and quarantine restrictions were also creating significant challenges in terms of bringing in the full seasonal agricultural workforce, raising questions about food security and production capabilities³³.
- In April, the Index of Consumer Confidence decreased by 41.0 points, a record decline and low, as Canadians' concern for their finances grows and they shy away from making big purchases in this highly uncertain time³⁴.
- An early survey by McKinsey and company indicated approximately 80% of Canadians felt unsure or pessimistic about the economy, expecting recovery to take 6 months or more³⁵.
- Simcoe County may face additional barriers, as the Conference Board of Canada notes that urban centres like Toronto and Ottawa have a high number of professional and business service sector jobs that enable their population to work from home³⁶. Their dense population also better enables delivery services, meaning consumer spending will ultimately remain stronger in those regions³⁷.

²⁸ <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/focus-areas/canadian-economics/provincial-outlook/ontario>

²⁹ <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/insights/covid-19>

³⁰ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canada-jobs-april-1.5561001>

³¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canada-jobs-april-1.5561001>

³² <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/insights/blogs/job-losses-top-1-million-with-more-to-come>

³³ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/sunday-tfw-fruit-veg-1.5571508>

³⁴ <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/insights/covid-19>

³⁵ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/survey-canadian-consumer-sentiment-during-the-coronavirus-crisis>

³⁶ <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/focus-areas/canadian-economics/provincial-outlook/ontario>

³⁷ <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/focus-areas/canadian-economics/provincial-outlook/ontario>

COVID-19 Looking Forward

- Additional waves of the virus are anticipated to emerge in the future, and the Ontario government has referenced projections in the timeframe of 18 to 24 months³⁸.
- The World Trade Organization has forecasted double digit reductions in trade, almost across the globe, with North American and Asian exporters being the hardest hit³⁹. The pandemic has put global trade and supply chains in crisis⁴⁰.
- Business confidence dropped to its lowest level on record, indicating businesses will be unlikely to make significant investments in the near future⁴². With high levels of job losses, increasing government debt levels which will lead to tax implications, it is likely that consumers will remain cautious about spending for some time, which will limit the ability for the economy to bounce back to pre-COVID consumer spending⁴³.
- Across the board consumers are indicating they intend to spend less in the short term⁴⁵.
- Deloitte currently predicts that Canada's economy will begin to rebound by mid-Q3 2020, and return to recovery in Q2 of 2022⁴⁶.
- Data, forecasts and predictions are rapidly changing as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds globally. Businesses will need to remain informed to remain competitive.
- The shock to trade and global markets that have been experienced may lead to a process of creative destruction, where new models for business and global trade emerge and replace the ones we have become familiar with⁴⁷.
- When the pandemic will end, the economy will return to it's new normal, and social distancing will be a thing of the past is impossible to predict at this point. The economic impact has been deeper and longer than many have anticipated already, and the immediate term outlook continues to look bleak as social distancing measures stay in place⁴⁸.

³⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/pandemic-covid-coronavirus-ontario-doug-ford-1.5521639>

³⁹ <https://www.cfr.org/background/coronavirus-how-are-countries-responding-economic-crisis>

⁴⁰ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/covid-19-pandemic-disrupts-global-value-chains/>

⁴¹ <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/05/13/coronavirus-will-undo-globalization-make-supply-chains-regional-eiu.html>

⁴² <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/insights/covid-19>

⁴³ <https://knowledge.insead.edu/blog/insead-blog/the-shape-of-the-covid-19-economic-recovery-13841>

⁴⁴ <http://www.gub.ac.uk/coronavirus/analysis-commentary/dont-bank-on-a-rapid-economy-recovery/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/a-global-view-of-how-consumer-behavior-is-changing-amid-covid-19>

⁴⁶ <https://knowledge.insead.edu/blog/insead-blog/the-shape-of-the-covid-19-economic-recovery-13841>

⁴⁷ <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/a-long-time-until-the-economic-new-normal/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.spglobal.com/ratings/en/research/articles/200416-economic-research-covid-19-deals-a-larger-longer-hit-to-global-gdp-11440500>

⁴⁹ <https://knowledge.insead.edu/blog/insead-blog/the-shape-of-the-covid-19-economic-recovery-13841>

- Retail and population-based services are areas of the economy that will likely require a significant amount of pivoting⁵⁰.
- COVID-19 management and reduction measures will likely be in place for some time and the health component needs to remain a consideration for mid-term economic development. The World Health Organization has identified 6 areas that require consideration before re-opening their economy. These include having virus transmission under control, the health care capacity to handle an outbreak, no outbreaks in special settings like nursing homes, measures in workplaces and schools to prevent the spread, no imported cases from abroad, and the community is educated and the capacity to limit and fight the virus⁵¹.

Updates since the initial impact

- Canada's economic recovery continues, albeit at a slower pace. Employment rose by only 245,800 in August, the smallest increase since the recovery began in May. With restrictions largely lifted across the country, slower employment growth will be the norm through the recovery. While Canada has recovered 1.9 million of the 3.0 million jobs lost during the pandemic, the remaining 1.1 million yet to be recovered are likely facing more structural problems.
- The Global Workplace Analytics consulting firm has shown that a typical employer can save an average of \$11,000 per half-time telecommuter per year, in terms of increased productivity, lower real estate costs, reduced absenteeism, and turnover.⁵²
- Latest McKinsey Global Survey suggest a positive change, where more than half of all executives surveyed say economic conditions in their own countries will be better six months from now, while another 30 percent say they will worsen⁵³
- End of August CFIB survey indicated that only 25% of Ontario businesses were experiencing sales levels at or above normal sales levels compared to previous years.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ <https://www.scotiabank.com/ca/en/about/perspectives.articles.economy.market-insights.html>

⁵¹ <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/covid-19-the-who-has-issued-guidelines-for-lifting-restrictions-but-is-canada-ready>

⁵² <https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/07/27/digital-technology-in-business-joel-le-bon/>

⁵³ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/the-coronavirus-effect-on-global-economic-sentiment>

⁵⁴ <https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/sites/default/files/2020-09/COVID-19-survey-results-September2.pdf>

Innovation and Technology

- Businesses that are best able to adapt and pivot to the requirements, particularly those who are able to go digital, will have the best chance of succeeding and even leveraging the situation⁵⁵.
- Given the nature of a pandemic, which encourages isolation and limited contact with others, consumers are adopting new digital and low touch activities, and 40-60 % intend to continue using those post pandemic⁵⁶.
- MIT Technology Review Insights surveyed 372 business leaders from its Global Panel executive group to learn about covid-19's financial impact on organizations, its effect on their strategic decisions, and where management is investing company resources.⁵⁷
 - 61% of businesses expect their revenues to decrease, 23% expect them to remain flat and only 15% expect them to increase
 - 62% expect the coronavirus pandemic to disrupt the way their companies innovate.
 - Nine out of 10 business executives say technology adoption will increase.
 - Nearly three-quarters (72%) report that covid-19 has acted as a catalyst to their companies' innovation, but fewer (53%) have changed their technology roadmaps substantially.
 - 5% of survey respondents who say their companies' revenue will increase because of the pandemic. With money to spend, they expect to increase investments in new partnerships and collaborations (68%) and accelerate AI and automation (59%). They're less likely to invest more in research and development—just 18% are prioritizing R&D, compared with 29% overall.

Workforce

- There is also anticipated to be an increase in opportunities to work from home, as businesses evolve to operate in the current situation and assess the feasibility of it. This can again lead to a shift in purchasing habits, away from job-specific requirements such as business clothing and vehicle related costs towards home office related purchases and more casual clothing⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/post-pandemic-economy-favour-fastest-movers/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/a-global-view-of-how-consumer-behavior-is-changing-amid-covid-19>

⁵⁷ https://wp.technologyreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Amid-the-pandemic-shifting-business-priorities_083120.pdf

⁵⁸ <https://www2.deloitte.com/ca/en/pages/finance/articles/covid-19-voice-of-canadians-and-impact-to-retailers.html>

Real Estate

- With unprecedented global supply chain disruption, it is anticipated there may be a shift towards regionalizing logistics hubs to support long term resiliency⁵⁹⁶⁰.
- There is and has been an increasing desire from large businesses to eliminate single-source dependencies and to establish a flexible and adaptable supply chain⁶¹. This means that ultimately product integrators, sub-system suppliers and component suppliers may look to source, assemble and deliver from their own backyards, presenting both business development and attraction opportunities for global businesses based in Simcoe County⁶².
- Demand for commercial real estate, as anticipated, fell across the second quarter of 2020, however demand for industrial real estate remained strong, at least in Canada's urban centres. The expectation is that demand for industrial real estate will continue to grow as the economy responds to COVID-19.
- With office buildings only able to handle certain capacities, and logistical challenges with elevators and common areas, there's an anticipation that there will be an outward flow into more suburban markets
- Retail space is expected to suffer the most, as retail stores are feeling a significant impact. Demand for retail space is expected to decrease over the course of the pandemic.

IEDC Toolkit Summary

The International Economic Development Council has developed a resource to guide governments through emergency recovery and response. Some key considerations for the EDO's role in supporting pandemic recovery going forward, based on the resource, should include⁶³:

- Communication – Provide updates to the business community on changing information on recovery programs, regulations and opportunities. Communicating with stakeholders about economic development needs and planning during the response and recovery phases. Communication with key government officials and potential partners about impacts, opportunities and needs.

⁵⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/16/upshot/world-economy-restructuring-coronavirus.html>

⁶⁰ <https://www.imd.org/research-knowledge/articles/A-post-COVID-19-outlook-The-future-of-the-supply-chain/>

⁶¹ <https://www.imd.org/research-knowledge/articles/A-post-COVID-19-outlook-The-future-of-the-supply-chain/>

⁶² <https://www.imd.org/research-knowledge/articles/A-post-COVID-19-outlook-The-future-of-the-supply-chain/>

⁶³ <https://restoreyoureconomy.org/clientuploads/2015/03/IEDC-Leadership-in-Times-of-Crisis-Toolkit.pdf>

BWG COVID-19 Economic Development Resiliency and Recovery Strategy 2020-2022 Research Framework Compendium

- Assessing impacts – Starting with surveying, economic developers should assess their business communities impacts and needs in the immediate term. Further surveying and BRE efforts should focus on gathering information to guide long term recovery efforts.
- Support for small business – Small businesses are more financially vulnerable than larger businesses, yet make up the bulk of our economic activity. Mobilize supports for small business and make it easy for them to access those supports.
- Strategic planning – Planning for short and long term recovery is critical. IEDC recommends forming a group of key stakeholders, which may include a different set of stakeholders than typically involved, for example, in the case of COVID-19, this may include hospitals or local health units. Assess the impacts and opportunities presented by the crisis, as well as different recovery scenarios and vulnerabilities. Based on different impacts, opportunities, scenarios and highlighted vulnerabilities in the community, an action plan with strategies, resources, responsible agencies, and suggested timelines should be developed



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