Meeting Date:	Monday, September 08, 2025
To:	Mayor and Members of Council
From:	Carol Maitland, Economic Development Officer
Report:	Economic Development 2025-01
Subject:	Dufferin County Community Harvest Initiative Grant

Recommendation

BE IT RESOLVED that Council receives report EcDev 2025-01 for information;

AND THAT the Town of Shelburne's funding contribution of $52,484 for the project be approved and funded from the Economic Development Reserve ($45,500) and Marketing and Communications accounts ($6,984);

AND THAT Council authorizes the Mayor and Clerk to enter into an agreement with the Ministry of Infrastructure for the Dufferin County Community Harvest Initiative with the passing of Bylaw#34-2025.

Background

The Town of Shelburne has been committed to supporting food security through the Municipal Grant program. The Town currently supports various food security initiatives including the Shelburne Community Garden, food forest development, financial support for the Shelburne Food Bank's food rescue van, and support for the Orangeville Food Bank's Neighbours Community Market.

The Town also participates in the Dufferin Food Access Sub-Committee, whose active members include Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health, Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA), Headwaters Food and Farming

Alliance (HFFA), Children's Foundation, Georgian College, Orangeville Food Bank and community members. This collaborative group builds local food security in Dufferin County by uniting community members to develop evidence-based programs that address food insecurity. It was through this collaborative group that making an application for a food security project grant was discussed and recommended by Town staff.

The federal government administers programs through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) that support projects addressing food security-related issues for equity-deserving groups. Grant funding has been made available for infrastructure and equipment initiatives designed to increase access and availability of food to vulnerable populations.

The Town of Shelburne applied under this federal program to address food security challenges and has been approved for funding support.

The "Dufferin County Community Harvest Initiative" addresses food security throughout Dufferin County. The initiative increases access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food for equity-deserving groups including low-income families and newcomers, while addressing critical gaps in food production, processing, and preservation capacity at Fiddle Park's concession building. The program will operate alongside the commissary kitchen at Fiddle Park's concession building, providing professional kitchen facilities to support local food entrepreneurs with production, processing, and preservation needs. Revenue from commissary kitchen rentals will fund ongoing programming and equipment maintenance to ensure the program's sustainability.

A separate report will be provided to Council, expected at the September 22, 2025, detailing the commissary kitchen's operations, and impact on local food entrepreneurs.

The Town has been approved for federal grant funding with the federal government, however information on our funding is not being released at this time. That grant covers about 75% of the project costs with the balance funded through municipal contribution and partner support. Specific funding amounts will be disclosed following the official media announcement by the funding partners. The project has received strong partnership commitments from multiple organizations contributing both financial and in-kind support to ensure successful implementation.

Primary Partners:

- Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance (HFFA): Community support programming coordination, Community connections, expertise, and local food system knowledge
- County of Dufferin: Financial ($10,000) and Organizational Support
- Orangeville Foodbank and Dufferin Food Share: Research and Data. Direct service provision and distribution

Analysis

Project Overview

The Dufferin County Community Harvest Initiative will serve as a comprehensive hub for local innovation in agriculture, and food production. The project addresses four key food security challenges while simultaneously supporting economic development through local food business incubation:

1. **Limited Access to Nutritious Food:** Rural residents face challenges accessing fresh, nutritious food due to limited grocery stores and transportation options
2. **Food Insecurity Among Vulnerable Populations:** Equity-deserving groups including low-income families, seniors, and individuals experiencing homelessness struggle to obtain sufficient food
3. **Lack of Awareness and Education:** Need for increased awareness about healthy eating habits and local food resources
4. **Insufficient Community Food Programs:** Existing programs require enhanced funding and equipment to meet growing demand

Project Components

Component 1: Food Production and Security Activities

- Partnerships with local farmers to grow diverse produce supporting food banks
- Provision of high-quality seeds to community gardens and food banks
- Management of small plots (600 square feet) at Fiddle Park for culturally appropriate vegetables and legumes

Infrastructure and Equipment:

- Commercial dehydrators for food preservation
- Interior and exterior refrigeration and freezer units
- Electric salad spinner and canning supplies
- Food processing equipment for community and commercial use

Community Engagement and Education:

- Cooking demonstrations and food preservation workshops
- Canning classes using harvested produce
- Business skills training for food entrepreneurs
- Educational programs on sustainable farming and nutrition

Project Objectives

1. **Food Security Objectives:**

- Increase access to fresh, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for equity-deserving groups, reduced dependence on processed foods
- Enhance local food production capacity and community self-sufficiency
- Reduce food waste through preservation and processing capabilities
- Build community connections through collective growing, harvesting, and food preparation

2. **Economic Development Objectives:**

- Foster community growth through collaborative workspace and knowledge sharing
- Enhance skills and education through workshops on cooking, food preservation, and business management
- Build community connections by linking food entrepreneurs with local resources

Council Priorities

Council's Priorities have three Pillars - Sustainable, Engaged and Livable.

There is a total of 14 Priorities within the three Pillars. This report aligns with the Sustainable, Engaged and Livable Priorities:

Sustainable Priorities:

SP4 - Support Environmental SustainabilityEngaged Priorities

Engaged Priorities

EP1 - Promote Effective Partnerships

EP3 - Consultation and Collaboration with Community

Livable Priorities:

L1 - Promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

L3 - Promote Strong Local Economy

Financial Impact

The project and remitting a grant funding application for consideration was not included in the approved 2025 budget.

Project Budget: $249,937

Town of Shelburne Contribution:

- Total Contribution: $52,484 (21%)
    - $45,500 transfer from Economic Development reserve (depletes the reserve)
    - $6984 from the Economic Development Marketing and Advertising 2025 budget account

Partner Funding Contributions:

- Dufferin County Contribution: $10,000 (4%)

- Federal Contribution (Funding details will be released following the official announcement from our funding partner): $187,453 (75%)

The operation of the kitchen is based on a break-even budget starting in 2026. If any revenue proceeds are generated from the rental of the commissary kitchen they could be reinvested back into the kitchen assets and programs that support the initiatives.

Policies & Implications (if any) Affecting Proposal

Consultation and Communications

The project development involved consultation with:

- Dufferin Food Access Subcommittee including Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health, Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance, and other community stakeholders
- Local area food banks and community agencies to identify specific cultural food needs
- Community members with lived experience through partner organizations

Stakeholder Support

Letters of support were provided from:

- Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance (confirmed partnership)
- County of Dufferin (confirmed collaboration and financial contribution)
- Orangeville Food Bank and Dufferin Food Share (confirmed collaboration)

Supporting Documentation

Appendix 1: Bylaw #34-2025

Appendix 2: WDGPH Monitoring Food Affordability 2024 Report

Respectfully Submitted and Prepared by:

Carol Maitland, Economic Development Officer

Reviewed by:

Denyse Morrissey, CAO