

# Staff Report



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To	<b>Committee of the Whole</b>
Service Area	Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Date	Monday, February 7, 2022
Subject	<b>Smart Cities Update – Our Food Future and Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad</b>

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## Recommendation

1. That the report “Smart Cities Update – Our Food Future and Circular Opportunity Launchpad” dated February 7, 2022 be received.
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## Executive Summary

### Purpose of Report

To provide Council with an update on the progress of the Smart Cities initiatives – Our Food Future and Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad (COIL) - since the last update presented in March 2020.

### Key Findings

Since the last report to Council, Our Food Future has achieved many milestones while adapting to the changing needs of our community due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We rapidly shifted priorities and launched [Grow Back Better](#) to support the economic and social recovery efforts in Guelph and Wellington County over 18 months. With additional funding and resources from FedDev Ontario we launched the COIL business accelerator program. COIL broadens program reach both geographically and thematically with the introduction of businesses from the environmental and sustainability sectors. Combined, Our Food Future and COIL have laid the groundwork for a growing number of Guelph-Wellington circular economy initiatives.

Notable achievements at the midpoint of this work include:

- Victory on our goal of supporting the development of 50 new circular businesses and collaborations – identifying over 181 that have established or expanded their circular practices since the launch of the initiative
- Secured an additional \$14.2 million dollars in funding to support the work of City, County and community collaborators (details below)
- Launched the Guelph-Wellington Urban Agriculture Challenge providing \$106,000 to ten successful community projects
- Prevented 1,769 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions
- More achievements can be seen in our short [video](#) (Attachment 4) “Our Food Future: Circular Food Systems”

# Financial Implications

## Leveraged Funds

The Smart Cities Office seeks private and public sector funding and support for the ongoing work of Our Food Future and COIL to position Guelph-Wellington as a circular economy innovation hub. One of the key deliverables of the initiative is to demonstrate the degree to which the original \$10 million in funding can leverage additional investment from partners. Over \$14.2 million in additional funding has been secured to date.

## Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad (COIL)

In April 2021, the Smart Cities Office confirmed an additional \$4.96 million in funding from FedDev Ontario to extend a range of programs focused on the incubation and acceleration of circular economy businesses and innovations. The City of Guelph entered into a grant funding agreement for the period April 2021-2024.

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## Report

### Context – Growing momentum of circular economy in Canada and globally

Since Our Food Future launched, momentum around the circular economy has increased significantly. We are seeing:

- Canada's largest trading partners setting targets and making major investments into the circular economy including China ([US\\$468 billion investment by 2024](#)) and the EU ([€10 billion investment by 2023](#))
- Major corporations in the food sector, including General Mills, McCain Foods and Danone have committed to creating more sustainable and circular supply chains
- Canada's federal political parties articulated commitments referencing food security and the circular economy in their 2021 election platforms

Guelph-Wellington has positioned itself at the forefront of this global movement. Our initiatives have been featured in reports at the World Economic Forum and on multiple panel discussions at the World Circular Economy Forum. The City has also signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. This international agreement of 200 Mayors around the world is tackling food and sustainability issues at the urban level and is committed to developing sustainable food systems that are "inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse."

### Circular Economy & Local Government

Transitioning to a circular economy must happen at the local level, and municipalities can both support and steer the evolution. Municipal public policy influences activities such as waste management, zoning, and urban planning which can be engaged as drivers of the circular economy. Municipal governments also have the power to create markets for circular products and services through public procurement and to cultivate localized networks and innovation systems.

It is estimated that 44% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) are controlled by municipalities. Both the City of Guelph and the County of Wellington have climate plans and are committed to reducing GHGs. The City of Guelph is a

designated member of the Cities Race to Zero campaign due to its pledge to a 100 per cent renewable energy transition, commitment to carbon neutrality, and acknowledgment of the climate crisis. The County of Wellington also has a [climate change mitigation plan](#) that commits to a 6% reduction in GHGs by 2030 and an 80% reduction by 2050.

The Smart Cities Office is at the forefront of a nationwide discussion on how the circular economy can address climate change and advance a waste prevention agenda that maximizes local economic opportunity. We are advising in the [Canadian Circular Cities and Regions Initiative](#), connecting 15 local governments with knowledge and tools to accelerate circular economy strategies. This initiative is led by key partners such as the National Zero Waste Council, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Recycling Council of Alberta and RECYC-Quebec.

The Smart Cities Office alongside Solid Waste Services will also be representing the City as a member of the National Zero Waste Council (NZWC). In joining the country's largest metropolitan centres, the City of Guelph offers a unique position as a mid-sized city. Our strong partnership with Wellington County also offers an important perspective for resources, networks and toolkits that are adaptable to the place-based needs of similarly sized communities from coast to coast to coast.

## **Midterm Report Overview**

### **Key Activities: 2020 -2021**

Nearing the midpoint of this initiative we have updated our strategic framework to reflect both new program funding and understandings of the potential and impact of the circular economy initiatives. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Smart Cities Office reported to council regularly providing updates on the [Grow Back Better](#) program.

The **Our Circular Future: Midterm Report** (Attachment 1) provides an updated vision statement, expanded outcomes, guiding principles and an overview of the array of programs, pilots, demonstration projects and interventions underway in each area of the food system value chain. The framework is integrated into an interactive digital map and [graphic \(Kumu\)](#) and [presentation \(Prezi\)](#) that will serve as a tool for further education and community engagement on the project. Further, this newly released short [video](#) provides an overview of our progress to date.

Moving forward, the initiative will be producing an annual program impact report for the City and County Councils, and the public.

## **Financial Implications**

### **Leveraged Funds**

Alongside our community collaborators, the Smart Cities Office seeks private and public sector funding and support for the ongoing work of Our Food Future and COIL to position Guelph-Wellington as a circular economy innovation hub. One of the key deliverables of the initiative is to demonstrate the degree to which the \$10 million in funding can leverage additional investment from the community and contribute to the building of the circular economy. Some of the additional \$14.2 million dollars in funding includes:

- \$4.96 million from FedDev Ontario to support the COIL program
- \$4.95 million from Canadian Institute of Health Research for the SMART Training Platform via the University of Guelph
- \$1.5 million from the Helderleigh Foundation for the University of Guelph Food Literacy research for the Guelph Family Health
- \$350,000 from the Co-operators Group to launch COIL's Zero Waste Economic Transformation Lab (details below)

## **Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad (COIL)**

In April of 2021, the Smart Cities Office confirmed an additional \$4.96 million in funding from FedDev Ontario to extend a range of programs focused on the incubation and acceleration of circular economy businesses and innovations. The City of Guelph entered into a grant funding agreement for the period April 2021-2024.

The funding allows for coverage of all expenses related to the execution of the COIL leveraging the partnerships and resources of the Our Food Future initiative, enabling additional staffing resources, and program funds.

## **Contract Management**

The Smart Cities Office continues to maintain funding agreements in good standing with both Infrastructure Canada and FedDev Ontario. Throughout the funding period, the Smart Cities Office has established and monitored agreements with six key project collaborators that provide leadership and delivery of a range of programs. These collaborators include the County of Wellington, 10C, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, Innovation Guelph, Provision Coalition, and Toward Common Ground. The project management plan continues to be monitored in accordance with the City of Guelph's Tier 1 project management protocols.

## **Building a Circular Food Economy Movement**

The goal of Our Food Future and COIL is to transform the food system by embedding circular economy practices throughout municipal departments, local organizations, and residents as well as catalyze a circular food economy social movement that will outlive the program. Throughout Guelph-Wellington, the project is sparking a conversation that inspires the community to see themselves as agents of change, participating in and advancing the goals in novel ways.

Below is a snapshot of program achievements highlighting some communications and engagement activities that have advanced this movement:

- Presented at over 115 conferences, broadcasts and events, locally, nationally and internationally, reaching an audience of over 1,103,331 people
- Supported the launch of the world's [first circular restaurant meal](#)—a gourmet restaurant meal created entirely from unavoidable waste
- Held the first meetings of the Food System Resiliency Table, an organization that supports the development of a resilient regional food system that contributes to a green recovery from COVID-19

- Launched [Our Food Future Data Hub](#), an open-source platform which compiles over 52 food-system datasets from federal, provincial and local sources, providing a test bed for a public open data utility
- Produced meaningful content for capacity building and education:
  - On Our Plate, a quarterly newsletter with a reach of 861
  - [In Conversation with Our Food Future](#), a monthly podcast series which has been downloaded 617 times

## **Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad**

COIL launched a suite of four business accelerator programs since August 2021. Evolve is a pre-accelerator program for early-stage businesses or early-stage circular transitions. The [Activate Accelerator](#) supports the growth and scaling of circular economy business, products, and solutions through mentorship, a CE curriculum, and international networking. [The Circulate CoLab](#) supports the emergence of new ideas, products or models through collaborative interdisciplinary ventures. The [Re\(PURPOSE\) Incubator](#) provides a business audit and plan to revalorize by-products and generate revenue streams for food-based businesses. Forty organizations, companies, research labs and non-profits are now participating in the first round of programming. Applications for the second round of all four programs will begin in Spring 2022.

Complementing the programming is COIL's Circular Business Toolkit. By opting in to the Circular Economy Digital [Passport](#), participants are connected to our [Urban-Rural Testbed](#) of concentrated innovation and leadership across the Guelph-Wellington region. Individuals and enterprises across Ontario can sign up for [Resource Exchange Marketplace](#), our free business-to-business material exchange platform. Additional investment is available through Harvest Impact, a community finance intermediary run through 10C.

In November 2021, COIL formed an Advisory Committee of eleven industry leaders from Deloitte, Maple Leaf Foods, Telus, Tim Hortons, Co-operators, Canadian Food Innovation Network (CFIN), and more. This Committee will help guide the strategic direction and innovative leadership of the project.

## **Impact**

We have designed, developed and/or delivered 80 cross-functional pilots/projects that connect our four goals and demonstrate broad community impact. Attached (Attachment 2 – Our Impact 2020-2021) is a graphic showing the broad impact the program is having in the community.

## **Consultations**

We work cross-departmentally with Solid Waste Services, Economic Development and Tourism, Engineering and Transportation Services, Planning and Building Services, and the Parks Department to inspire and support the shift to a circular mindset throughout the organization. Internal teams have articulated Circular Economy (CE) ideas in the City's Solid Waste Master Plan. The City's Economic Development and Tourism Strategy positions the CE as a set of tools for attracting investment to grow a resilient local economy, and champion our innovation ecosystem. Further, we work in partnership with many departments at the County.

## **What's Next: 2022-2023**

### **Zero Waste Economic Transformation Lab**

The [Zero Waste Economic Transformation Lab \(ZWETL\)](#) aims to both maximize diversion and expand secondary markets for material-streams across all sectors. With private sector support from the Co-operators, our region will be a living lab to both research and test ideas, to fill gaps and overcome barriers. Beginning with construction and demolition materials (CDM), we will then expand to other sectors that could include textiles, electronics, plastics, etc. ZWETL will aid the transition to a circular economy through the development of a strong and robust economic system for each material-stream that can be replicated in, or scaled to, other cities, regions, and jurisdictions across Canada.

### **Regenerative Agriculture**

Regenerative agriculture describes a suite of practices focused on improving the soil microbiome and is a key approach in transitioning the agricultural sector to a more sustainable model. In the context of Our Food Future, this program aims to encourage a shift in agricultural practices without placing more stress on our food producers. The Experimental Acres pilot is being shaped in partnership with local agronomists and farmers as well as students from the University of Guelph's Arrell Food Institute and ICON program. The aim of the project is to better understand the mechanisms needed to protect farmers from risk as they transition into more sustainable practices. Partnerships and public events are planned to share these findings in 2022. In addition to this, we will be launching a place-based carbon study to further understand the value of this work in the regulatory and voluntary carbon markets.

### **Food Hub Feasibility Study**

In addition to a suite of activities to support the expansion of access to rural broadband, the County of Wellington Smart Cities Office and Our Food Future has partnered with Next Generation Manufacturing Canada (NGEN) to contract a Food Hub Feasibility and Circular Food Manufacturing Capability Model. This report will evaluate the gaps and opportunities within the regional food growing, processing and distribution system. It will inform future partnerships or interventions intended to support local food businesses and introduce advanced manufacturing required for modern food-chain transparency and traceability. It will also provide a reproducible framework for evaluating other food regions.

### **Upcoming Community Engagements & Interventions**

#### **Reimagine Food Engagement Campaign & Motivations Survey**

The Reimagine Food public awareness and engagement campaign aims to spark conversation with local businesses and residents about lighter living, food access, and the real costs of food waste. Research including a Motivations Survey are part of this work and will help us to discover the diverse motivations that lead residents to support circular products and services, reduce food waste, and live more sustainably. Findings will also help fine tune campaign messaging and program design to better support the uptake of climate and planet-friendly initiatives and pilot projects.



## **Nutritious Foods Community Engagement & Interventions**

The Nutritious Foods Workstream initiative completed a [Food Environment Assessment](#) for Guelph-Wellington that brings together local data and past research to provide a snapshot of food access and security in our region. The Food Environment Assessment is intended to be a launch point for community engagement in February and March 2022 that will define the most effective actions we can take as a community to improve access to affordable, nutritious food. These community-identified interventions will receive over \$300,000 in funding.

## **Strategic Plan Alignment**

The Our Food Future and COIL initiatives specifically align with the Strategic Plan priority areas of Powering our future, Building our future and Sustaining our future.

Our Food Future and COIL support local and regional economies through the creation of new circular food businesses/collaboration opportunities and increasing revenues by recognizing the value of waste. Innovation through collaborations is encouraged and businesses opportunities fostered, all of which contribute directly to the priority of [Powering our future](#).

The Our Food Future initiative contributes to the [Building our future](#) priority area of the Strategic Plan. Food access programs nurture social well-being, and increasing access to affordable, nutritious food, is a building block for strong, vibrant, safe and healthy communities.

Key goals to both reduce food waste in businesses and residences will result in a reduction of GHG emissions and continue the City's commitment to care for the local environment which is directly supportive of the [Sustaining our future](#) priority area of the Strategic Plan.

One of the values articulated in the Strategic Plan as well as the Guelph Community Plan is "inclusion". The Smart Cities Office is committed to listening to our community, reflecting on internal bias and delivering programs and services that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of communities who have been historically marginalized.

## **Attachments**

Attachment 1 – Our Circular Future: Midterm Report

Attachment 2 - Our Impact 2020-2021

Attachment 3 - Smart Cities Office Update Report to Council Presentation

Attachment 4 - [Our Food Future: Circular Food Systems Video](#)

## **Departmental Approval**

None.

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