



Subject:	2022 Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund Allocation
To:	Committee of the Whole – Planning & Economic Development
From:	Office of The Chief Administrative Officer

Report Number:	AD-14-22
Wards Affected:	All
Date to Committee:	September 14, 2022
Date to Council:	September 19, 2022

Recommendation:

That Council receive and file as information Report AD-14-22 regarding the 2022 Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund Allocation; and

Approve the disbursement of \$25,000 from the 2022 Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund to the six successful applicants as outlined in this report.

Purpose:

The purpose of the Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Grant Policy is to assist the Town of Lincoln in growing awareness of the Niagara Benchlands tourism destination while increasing opportunities for sustainable economic growth, job creation, as well as continued economic prosperity in Lincoln's tourism sector.

By supporting Lincoln's tourism-based businesses and organizations with financial aid, encouraging greater collaboration amongst private-sector businesses, and utilizing Town-owned marketing and promotional channels; the policy ensures that municipal funds are disbursed in meaningful, equitable, and measurable ways.

This report highlights the received applications and the Evaluation Committee's recommendations for the allocation of funds in 2022.

Background:

It is recognized that in these unprecedented times there is a need to identify new opportunities to support Lincoln's tourism industry. The aftermath of COVID-19 will frame a new normal and the Town can help our local tourism sector prepare for what lies ahead. The Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund supports new and expansion-driven projects in both the short and long term, encouraging local businesses and tourism

operators to collaborate and foster innovative, capacity-building tourism products and events that have a measurable impact on Lincoln's tourism economy. Tourism-based events and activations help draw visitors to our community, to engage with our local businesses creating opportunities for economic growth and future investment attraction.

In 2021, Council approved report AD-14-22, which created a grant fund allocation of \$25,000 from the Economic Development/Tourism operating budget to be disbursed to Lincoln's Tourism-based businesses in 2022 through a fair and equitable grant application process.

In addition, Economic Development/Tourism Staff recommended and Council at the time approved, that the following project eligibility categories would be established for accessing the funds:

- The project must support new tourism events or festivals, or expansion of existing programming
- The project must foster the development of new tourism products, such as a Winterlicious culinary activation, or a culinary/beverage taste trail, for example.
- The project must support feasibility studies and business plans that investigate the potential for the development of increased visitation and visitor spending, for example, Bed and Breakfasts coming together to form an association to help advance their interests here in Lincoln

It was also established that funding awarded to local businesses could be up to, 100% of the ask, or a portion thereof. The goal would be to support as many applicants as possible. While a project could satiate all program criteria and eligibility requirements; applications that show the greatest amount of sector collaboration and greatest alignment with the overarching goals of the Fund will be considered for award.

Report:

Commencing on July 11, 2022, the application for the Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund was advertised through a diverse mix of both the Town's digital marketing channels (social media, website, e-newsletter, media releases) as well the Niagara Benchlands digital channels, and local print publications. All promotional outlets provided an overview of the inaugural fund, as well as included the relevant links and information required for interested applicants to apply. The application was available online until the submission deadline on August 12, 2022.

Following the application deadline, the Evaluation Committee was engaged to evaluate the merit of the application submissions to which all eligible applications were distributed via email in advance of the scheduled review meeting using the provided fund evaluation matrix tool. This Evaluation Committee was comprised of the following key personnel:

- Two (2) representatives from the Town Council
- One (1) representative from the local DMO (Twenty Valley Tourism Association)
- Two (2) Town Staff from Economic Development
- One (1) Town Staff from Community Services

- One (1) Town Staff from Legislative Services

The following organizations submitted request for the fund as outlined below.

Business/Organization	Project Submitted	Project Description
Bench Brewing Company	Harvest Festival	<p>A new community festival to encourage Ontarians to explore local tourism offerings. The harvest festival will showcase the region's top-quality produce, and will consist of fun family-friendly activities, exciting drinks, and dining experiences, live music, locally inspired menus, and an outdoor artisan market.</p> <p>This project will collaborate with local charities such as OUTNiagara and Community Care of West Niagara, local musicians, and artisans that make products with local ingredients to conduct this event. To better support these businesses, Bench Brewing Company provide their space free of charge so businesses can focus on economic recovery.</p>
Creekside Estate Winery *Proprietary	Holiday Market	<p>A collaborative holiday market hosted at Creekside Winery with 15 - 20 local artisans and food merchants. Attendees will be treated to live music and encouraged to shop with a glass of wine in hand while holiday shopping amongst the vendors.</p> <p>Holiday market vendors will be encouraged to support the program by cross-promotion onsite, their website, databases, and social media channels via signage and posts. Hosting this event in the Benchlands will serve as a destination but also drive traffic to local businesses.</p>
Creekside Estate Winery *Proprietary	Creekeasy Fridays	<p>This new experiential tourism offering will allow guests to enjoy wine-based cocktails paired with small bites made by their resident Chef either out on the back deck or inside the retail store in the cooler months. Benchlands partner</p>

		businesses will be featured as cocktail ingredients (i.e., Dillon's Small Batch Distillers, local fruit growers, breweries, and artisan beverage producers. Local food merchants will also be featured in the food program - local fruits & vegetables, bakeries, and cheese providers. The event features live music from local talent.
Creekside Estate Winery <i>*Lead Applicant for the Wineries of the Niagara Benchlands Association</i>	Niagara Benchlands Holiday Safari	An awareness & traffic driving program to promote holiday shopping throughout the Niagara Benchlands via a holiday-themed passport tour, that guests can complete over an extended holiday/winter period. Guests will be invited to visit participating Benchlands businesses and upon completion of their Holiday Safari, they will be entered to win a gift basket filled with local Benchlands products. Consumers can start and finish their tour at any location. A printed passport will be stamped at each location.
House by the Side of the Road Bed & Breakfast	B&B Open House and Visitor Guide Launch	A project aimed at promoting the Niagara Benchlands and its tourism-based businesses through a vacation planning guide that will be offered to B&B guests and available on their B&B website. To launch the new guide, their team will hold an open house event, inviting local businesses to promote their products/services as well as their new vacation planner guide. This event will feature a sampling of these featured local businesses who will also erect a booth at the launch event (such as a winery, restaurant, wine tour companies, and more) and further reinforce the helpful nature of the new visitor guide.
Niagara Nature Tours	Garden Tours, Adventures with Tea & Treats	This new experiential offering will feature private and public garden tours such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wonderland Family Garden Tours: A whimsical treasure hunt among the enchanted

		<p>gardens. In partnership with Party Perfect Niagara and created to delight young and old; guests will enjoy an informal and entertaining tour filled with enchantment and surprises! With the choice to attend the Mad Hatters Tea Party or a custom Victorian tea table.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idyllic Victorian Garden Tour: Enjoy tea and treats surrounded by native and Carolinian flora species. • Paleo Art in the Gardens: An entertaining and informative presentation, this interactive experience will feature activities such as painting a fossil and downloadable/printable assets to take home and commemorate the experience.
The Restaurant at Pearl Morissette	Garden Tours, Experiences, and Products	<p>Onsite farm & garden tours that showcase the beauty of their diverse property and educate visitors on their cohesive vision for a thriving, biodiverse property that honours the land and aims to give back more than what is taken to run the business.</p> <p>Tours are offered to both guests of the winery and restaurant, and involve several, internal departmental collaborations (sommeliers, winemaker, chefs, foragers, farming partners) and are aimed at offering an experience that connects guests with nature, the realities of the growing season while educating visitors about the important food system they're a part of.</p>

Financial, Legal, Staff Considerations:

Financial:

The Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund balance as of December 31, 2021, was \$25,000. Staff recommends that Council approve the full fund allocation noted totaling \$25,000 in 2022. Any funds not maximized by successful applicants will be re-allocated by Town Staff to eligible 2022 applicants whose total request for funding was not fully realized, due to the limited availability of funds in this budget year. Any unused funds at this time will be recommended to Council during the 2023 budget discussion to be reinvested into a potential Niagara Benchlands Destination Development fund allocation in 2023.

2022 Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund recommendations are as follows:

Business/Organization	2022 Request	2022 Recommended Allocation
Bench Brewing Company	\$14,775.00	\$8,500.00
Creekside Estate Winery-Holiday Market	\$6,000.00	\$3,000.00
Creekside Estate Winery-Creekeasy Fridays	\$5,500.00	\$0
Creekside Estate Winery-Niagara Benchlands Holiday Safari	\$14,500.00	\$8,400.00
House by the Side of the Road Bed & Breakfast	\$6337.50	\$2,100.00
Niagara Nature Tours	\$6,500.00	\$1,000.00
The Restaurant at Pearl Morissette	\$5,000.00	\$2,000.00

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

Public Engagement Matters:

N/A

Conclusion:

Based on the adjudication process and input from the Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Find Committee, Staff recommends that Council support and disburse the total 2022 fund allocation of \$25,000 to the businesses/organizations outlined in this report.

By approving this recommendation, Town Staff can help to leverage the Niagara Benchlands tourist destination's distinct attributes to increase visitation and visitor

spending, setting Lincoln's tourism sector; one of our economy's biggest opportunities for growth, on a trajectory for competitive post-pandemic recovery, investment attraction, job creation, and continued economic prosperity.

Respectfully submitted,

Britnie Bazylewski
Tourism Coordinator
905-563-2799 Ext.218

Appendices:

Appendix A Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund 2022 Application Guide

Appendix B Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund 2022 Application Form

Appendix C Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund Grant, A09 FIN 002 AD

Notification:

Upon Council approval, businesses/organizations that have submitted applications will be notified of the results of their application with accompanying rationale for the allocation if unsuccessful.

Successful applicants will also be required to adhere to the provided fund audit process reporting template supplied by Town Staff and remit this report within 60-days of project completion. This audit will require the successful applicant to remit the required performance documentation and supporting information to receive the full value of their allocation. Failure to adhere to these reporting requirements will result in a reevaluation of funds by the Evaluation Committee and could negate the applicant's ability to receive the allocated funds in 2022, as well as exclude them for further application submissions in the future.

Report Approval:

Report has been reviewed by the Evaluation Committee, and Tourism Coordinator, and approved by the Director of Economic Development and Communication. Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.