

Members' Choice Awards 2023

After reviewing the submissions, [VOTE HERE!](#)

Name of Business/Project	Name of CFDC	Description
<p>Wellington County Keep Well Emergency Sustainability Fund</p> <p><i>Community Economic Development</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	<p>Wellington Waterloo CF/County of Wellington</p>	<p>When the Canadian Government mandated that all businesses remain closed for the foreseeable future due to Covid, the County of Wellington Councillors realized that there were many livelihoods at stake. The County approached the Wellington Waterloo and Saugeen CF offices to see if they would be able to administer an emergency loan program to assist local businesses during the shutdown. The County provided \$1M to the two CF offices which established a program to review the loan applications, disburse the loans and continue to manage repayments on behalf of the County. Sixty-one businesses representing 273 employees in the County of Wellington have benefitted from this project.</p> <p>The Keep Well program provided important early support to many businesses who were put in a very difficult financial position. The program showed that two community organizations (Government and Non-Profit) could quickly come together to provide important resources in the community when needed. County staff and CF offices were able to quickly establish parameters, review the applications, disburse the funds, and continue to collect repayments on behalf of the county.</p>
<p>Udderly Ridiculous Farm Life</p> <p><i>Entrepreneur of the Year</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	<p>Community Futures Oxford</p>	<p>Greg Haskett is a third-generation farmer producing goat dairy milk in Oxford County. He had always dreamed of creating a product that used the goat milk dairy. After researching the market, Cheryl Haskett began to develop goat milk ice cream. Udderly Ridiculous now offers six flavours of ice cream crafted with the "foodie consumer" in mind. Their recipes help local ingredients shine wherever possible: local coffee and craft beer, vanilla and lavender and VQA wine with dark chocolate. Cheryl worked diligently to refine recipes, attended food tradeshow and got their product onto grocery stores shelves just as the pandemic hit.</p> <p>Cheryl and Greg starting planning to turn their family farm into a sustainable tourism destination where visitors could learn about the "udderly ridiculous farm life." While still producing their ice cream, the business now encompasses award winning, on-farm experiences from goat recess and picnics, to their Ontario's Southwest Signature Experience, A Taste of Farm Life. As the company expands, Cheryl is now using her corporate training background to provide unique team building & learning opportunities for larger groups.</p> <p>Udderly Ridiculous is Rainbow Registered (one of only ~154 businesses in Canada and only 89 in Ontario). They demonstrate leadership in sustainability and inclusive business practices, and are a recipient of numerous awards including the Retail Council of Canada, Ontario's Southwest's regional tourism organization, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, Community Futures Oxford and Tourism Oxford.</p>
<p>T3 Accelerator</p>	<p>Community Futures South Georgian Bay</p>	<p>Launched as a partnership between Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) and Community Futures South Georgian Bay, the objective of the T3 Accelerator Program is to help tourism businesses achieve success while increasing their retention and survival, retaining existing jobs and creating new ones, and ultimately, ensuring that</p>

<p><i>Community Economic Development</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>		<p>RTO7 continues to be one of Ontario's premiere four season destinations. The T3 Accelerator Program provides a highly personalized approach to mentoring, matching tourism businesses with experienced coaches who work with them one-on-one to address the very issues, challenges and opportunities they've identified. Businesses can access the program for the life of their business, enabling them to obtain advice from experts across a breadth of subjects over the long-term—from strategy to marketing to HR to finance. After meeting with a coach, businesses are provided with a list of 2 to 3 action items.</p> <p>To date, over 250 action items have been completed as businesses seek to improve their processes and adapt to the recovery phase of the pandemic. T3 has also been successful in reaching businesses across the three counties we serve, Bruce, Grey and Simcoe, despite our expansive geography and rural setting. A wide variety of businesses have utilized the T3 program including accommodations, outdoor adventure, attractions, retail, spa, arts and culture, heritage and historical, food and beverage, golf course and Destination Management Organizations. The program is extremely sustainable to deliver. Ongoing operational costs are minimal as coordinators and coaches volunteer their time. T3 has over 40 program partners and has engaged 38 participating businesses, 17 coaches, 17 coordinators and has provided over 600 hours of support.</p>
<p>Spectrum Gymnastics</p> <p><i>Outstanding Youth Entrepreneur</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	<p>Venture Norfolk</p>	<p>Spectrum Gymnastics was registered by Teagan Fitch on September 19, 2019 as a sole proprietorship to create recreational programming and gymnastic classes for all active children but also specializing in programming dedicated to those with special needs. Teagan has a Degree in Recreation and Leisure Studies with a Minor in Child and Youth Studies along with a post-graduate program for Autism and Behavioural Science. She has 8 years of gymnastic coaching experience as well as 4 years of experience working with those with special needs. Teagan decided to start up Spectrum Gymnastics to combine her two passions: gymnastics and working with individuals with special needs. She is proud to be offering inclusive programming for individuals of all abilities!</p> <p>Venture Norfolk worked with Teagan as her business plan created some difficulty in projecting cash flow, especially regarding revenue generation. Due to high rent expenses (necessary due to size and scope of the facilities needed), it was imperative to acquire a sizable number of participants right away. In the first year of operations, Teagan achieved double the number of clients (400) as word of her facility and the unique programming circulated to families with children with disabilities, including from neighbouring, larger communities. She has a staff of over 16, and each is personally trained by Teagan to ensure a quality customer experience that is in alignment with their company's goal of promoting an inclusive place to play and learn. With a small loan from Venture Norfolk and a whole lot of determination and vision, Teagan has excelled at creating a thriving, growing business with franchise potential.</p>
<p>SAB Group of Companies Ltd.</p> <p><i>Innovation</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	<p>Trenval Business Development Corp.</p>	<p>The SAB Group of Companies, consisting of four divisions moved its Brampton Factory, Training Centre, Distribution Facility and HeadOffice to 18 Stockdale Road in Trenton, ON. The SAB Group spans manufacturing, international trade, product distribution and staffing services sectors. SAB Group companies ensures Social Accountability and Ethical Treatment by promoting business practices and policies that show respect for the value of all human beings. It requires that its suppliers do so as well. All Mapco (PVT) LTD. and supplier locations provide a safe working environment to all employees, including proper training, appropriate equipment for safe performance of duties within a clean environment emphasizing safe behavior. Additionally, SAB Group supports the delivery of the goals of a sustainable packaging initiative.</p> <p>Mapco supplies innovative flexible sustainable packaging materials; ethically sourced, environmentally certified that integrates highest quality assurance standards. Mapco (PVT) LTD® Eco-Path™ & OXO-BIO™ Recycled Content Bags contain Oxo-biodegradable additives. Aside from the quality of products at Mapco, their greatest source of pride is the equipment in their manufacturing facility. Truly World-Class, their unique equipment features the latest technology for the thinnest, strongest and highest-quality bags on the market.</p>

		<p>Citipack is a distributor of shipping, industrial, janitorial, restaurant, office, and packaging supplies. Babars is a Special Purpose Entity formed with the intent to engage in the trading of physical commodities in the international marketplace while Jobsters provides a unique service to clients by providing staffing solutions and training staff.</p>
<p>Rising Roots Farm</p> <p><i>Outstanding Youth Entrepreneur</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	Community Futures Oxford	<p>Sophie Foster is a farmer, climate activist and human rights advocate and she brings all of these values to her business. After completing an undergraduate degree focused on Indigenous rights and climate change mitigation, as well as a master's degree in food security and Ecological Farming, Rising Roots is a business endeavor that has allowed Sophie to connect two worlds—ecological farming and academia—to deliver nutritious food to her local community, while building an enterprise founded on human rights values and climate change solutions.</p> <p>She has recently ventured into hosting experiential tourism events that "serve the community by providing a meeting place for local action on global issues." Rising Roots Farm is "an action-oriented farming business that grows nutritious food and builds an informed community." The farm offers farm fresh produce and subscription boxes, an annual seedling sale, on-farm experiences and event space rental. This past summer, she toured the community with the local RogersTV station to visit other small scale, ecological farms in the community with the goal of educating the community about agriculture in your own backyard.</p> <p>Sophie is thoughtful about the impact her business has on people and the planet. She centers climate mitigation into her business and shares her knowledge with residents, consumers, and farm guests. The impact of her business can be seen in her thought leadership, farm practices that support local food security and insistence on businesses building truth and reconciliation into their work (and leading by example).</p>
<p>Purvis Fish and Chips</p> <p><i>Outstanding Youth Entrepreneur</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	LAMBAC	<p>Avery Sheppard is a young entrepreneur that opened Purvis Fish and Chips in the Town of Gore Bay at the age of 18 with the assistance of a loan from LAMBAC. This is a seasonal business in a Tourism town, and this young woman has been very successful while attending University in Ottawa in the off season.</p> <p>The coming season will be Avery's third year in operation, growing each year. She started the business with 8 employees and today has 11 employees. Avery is a young woman with a drive for success, quickly responding to challenges with solutions to add revenue to her business, and simultaneously helping the local community and local charities where possible. The introduction of a liquor license was a particular challenge as she struggled to find an insurance company willing to work with a young entrepreneur.</p> <p>Avery operates in a building that the Town of Gore Bay owns and had previously tried to lease out as a restaurant for years, but sadly all of the previous attempts failed. Now this building has been renovated and decorated by Avery and it overlooks beautiful Lake Huron. Tourists will keep coming back to this location for the amazing local fish and atmosphere; visitors may stop at other local stores in the community and spread the word that if you visit Manitoulin Island make sure you go to Gore Bay for the fish and chips. This business brings a lot of people to Gore Bay that may not have visited this location in the past. The area was struggling with a lack of restaurants for the locals as well as visitors for years and Avery has filled that gap.</p>
<p>Oxford County Tourism Innovation Grant</p> <p><i>Community Economic Development</i></p>	Community Futures Oxford	<p>The Oxford County Tourism Innovation grant program began in 2021 as a partnership between CF Oxford, Tourism Oxford (destination marketing organization). With growing interest in domestic travel to small rural communities like Oxford County, partners created the program to support the recovery and growth of tourism by incentivizing the development of new tourism products. Through an application process, three winners are selected to receive a \$3,000 grant and mentorship to hone the product and bring it to market within the calendar year. To address gaps in the local market, applicants are encouraged to consider products that fall within a priority pillar: culture, sustainability/outdoors, experiences, cycling and culinary (in that order). Finally, the grant uses a</p>

Click here for more!		<p>clear equity statement to encourage new voices in tourism. Now in its second year, the program has added another partner, Rural Oxford Economic Development, as a funder, marketing partner and grant review panelist.</p> <p>Three small, family-owned businesses directly benefited from the program as recipients of the grant and mentorship provided to develop their idea. It was estimated that all three tourism products combined would result in the following: creation of 13 jobs, supported 25 local suppliers and invested more than \$1.5 million into the local economy. It was estimated that the new tourism products will collectively welcome ~5000 (and growing) visitors annually.</p>
<p>HCDC Local Initiatives Program</p> <p><i>Community Economic Development</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	<p>Haliburton County Development Corporation</p>	<p>While the CFDCs are mandated by FedDev to support Community Economic Development activities, they are not provided with funding to do so. In 2015 HCDC created the Local Initiatives Program (LIP) when the Eastern Ontario Development Program (EODP) shifted its priorities. HCDC was able to create a program by accessing funds through a Sustainable Investment Fund Transfer and other income generated, to continue supports to Not-for-Profit Organizations in Haliburton County. The purpose of the LIP funding is to strengthen our communities by supporting projects that are incremental (new initiatives or enhancements/additions to existing activities) and strive to enhance the resiliency and vibrancy of the community. Additionally, HCDC is known to create specialized programs to assist Haliburton County Businesses and Organizations at a time when a state of emergency or a natural disaster impacts our community. In 2020 HCDC created the LIP COVID Edition to support Not-for-Profit Organizations adversely affected by the pandemic. The program covered new expenses to respond to COVID-19 protocols or to assist with fixed operating costs. HCDC is pleased to have been able to share our LIP Resources with 4 other CFDCs to help facilitate CED in their respective communities.</p> <p>HCDC has supported 150 community projects involving over 450 partners/organizations. Several organizations have evolved to serve our community with LIP providing seed funding, such as: The Arts Council Haliburton Highlands; The Sculpture Forest; and the Volunteer Dental Outreach Clinic. LIP funds are sometimes used to leverage additional dollars for larger scale projects. For example, the Haliburton Highlands Arts Centre Foundation was able to raise \$90,000 using \$5,000 in LIP funding to get started. LIP funds support important community conversations such as Housing Summits, Local Food Networking, and Environmental Roundtables.</p>
<p>Governance and Loan Approvals Modernization</p> <p><i>Innovation</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	<p>Muskoka Futures</p> <p><i>(Nominated by Katie Nolan and Anne Prichard of Grenville CFDC and Frontenac Business Services, respectively.)</i></p>	<p>Muskoka Futures has modernized many aspects of its governance practices, resulting in a vibrant, engaged board and a strong succession process. They have also made use of progressive technology to design a secure, responsive, asynchronous loan approval process that allows clients to receive their application result within a few days. All of Muskoka Futures' loan clients have benefited from a more responsive application process. Board and staff members have benefited from streamlined, efficient processes that increase their engagement and job satisfaction. In turn, the community served by Muskoka Futures has benefited. In addition, David Brushey has been generous in sharing the experiences of Muskoka Futures with other CFs and providing assistance as they explore modernization initiatives, which benefits the wider province.</p> <p>The governance recruitment, succession planning and orientation processes that have been put in place ensure that community engagement remains high with the organization, leading to a continual renewal of fresh perspectives and leadership. Rural loan clients get great service. This project demonstrates that the leadership at Muskoka Futures is open to new ideas and is ready to implement projects that will improve their board, staff and client experience. They have demonstrated, with their high level of staff and board engagement, their waiting list of potential board members, and their loan clients who have benefited from rapid service, that they are truly innovative for the good of their organization and community they serve.</p>
<p>Gordon Yacht Harbour Marina</p>	<p>Kawartha Lakes</p>	<p>Gordon Yacht Harbour Marina is a one-of-a-kind marine operation, and the oldest operating marina in Ontario (115 years). They planned, developed and locally built 11 floating vessels/cottages for holiday rentals within the</p>

<p><i>Entrepreneur of the Year</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>		<p>confines of the Marina. As a result, they tripled annual revenues; provided 5 additional seasonal jobs; and provided a local tourist accommodation. Annual increase in wages is approximately \$175,000.</p> <p>Occupants expend an additional \$800 per stay, or \$400,000 over the season in shopping and touring. With 85% occupancy in 2022, the business offers consistent annual accommodation and repeat business, with visitors bringing along friends and family to the community from all parts of Ontario and the U.S.A.</p>
<p>Clippity Clop Ice Cream Shoppe & Evelyn's Sausage Kitchen</p> <p><i>Outstanding Youth Entrepreneur</i></p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/clippityclopicecreamshoppe</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/EvelynsSausageKitchen/</p>	<p>Elgin Business Resource Centre</p>	<p>At age 16, this youth entrepreneur began Clippity Clop Ice Cream Shoppe at the beginning of the pandemic and grew this business well over the first few years. In the spring of 2020, Carson Harris had the idea to open an ice cream truck. He met with the owners of Home Hardware and secured a spot in their parking lot to operate. However, due to issues with proper zoning, the business opening was delayed until May 2021. With this lesson of persevering through business hurdles, Carson began his first business.</p> <p>Carson operated the newly purchased and renovated trailer at Home Hardware and then used the original smaller trailer to attend special and private events in the community. The second full season was a great success and again Carson employed six part time students throughout the summer. This summer season Carson participated in the Canada Summer Jobs program that helped offset the wages of two of his employees.</p> <p>2022 - During Carson's grade eleven high school year, he did a co-op placement at Evelyn's Sausage Kitchen in Shedden. During that placement Carson realized that he would like to become a butcher when he graduates from high school. Over the course of his placement, Carson began to have talks with Evelyn's (who had started the business in 1992) about her wishes to eventually retire. As a result of these conversations, Carson was able to purchase the business officially in January 2023 and will graduate from high school this June. Evelyn agreed to stay on indefinitely at this time to teach Carson all about how to run her business. He has lots of plans for how to keep Evelyn's Sausage Kitchen (one of the only small businesses located in Shedden) successful for another thirty years.</p>
<p>Chilangos Mexican Restaurant Ltd.</p> <p><i>Entrepreneur of the Year</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	<p>Trenval Business Development Corp.</p>	<p>Chilangos Mexican Restaurant Ltd. is co-founded by siblings, Marlem Power and Abraham Ramos-Serratos, in Belleville, ON. Marlem immigrated to Canada in early 2000, followed by her brother, Abraham in 2011. They shared a passion for culinary, dreaming of sharing their taste of Mexican culture with their community. The duo's love for cooking fueled their 5-year side-hustle sharing their authentic Mexican cuisine at local Waterfront and Ethnic festivals. Their growing success is attributable to staying true to their family roots and the strong work ethic, taught from their parents - their father, a minister in Mexico, who worked extra jobs to support the family solidified by the genuine guidance of their mother. Their popularity grew organically from seasonal festivals to local event catering and to their first brick and mortar that was Christened 'Chilangos' meaning 'People from Mexican City', in 2016 in downtown Belleville. Their tenacity, vibrant cuisine and zest for life was contagious with a growing fan base from the Southern Ontario corridor to Montreal, QC.</p> <p>Their recipe for success provided fortitude through the pandemic. Even the catastrophic effects of a devastating storm in 2021 that ripped the roof off the restaurant building was no match for the dynamic duo. Chilangos relocated into an expanded location increasing their capacity from 26 to 160, bringing their loyal staff to celebrate their Grand Re-Opening in October 2022 with local officials and community patrons. Ramos and Power continue to support their parents back in Mexico with the hope to sponsor their immigration to Canada and reunion with their true Chilangos family.</p>
<p>BizLink – Buyers. Sellers. Connected.</p>	<p>Orillia Area Community Development Corp. (CDC),</p>	<p>The projected increase in business transitions is well documented. Without training new entrepreneurs to transition into these businesses, rural communities could face company closures, unemployment, and empty store-fronts. Connecting new entrepreneurs with retiring business owners and supporting them through successful business transitions develops successful entrepreneurs, who create employment, maintain valuable goods & service</p>

<p><i>Community Economic Development</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	<p>Nottawasaga Futures, Community Futures South Georgian Bay, and North Simcoe Community Futures Development Corporation</p>	<p>offerings, and contribute to our local, rural and national economy. BizLink, a regional CFDC program, seeks to address the challenges and opportunities that this economic trend creates. BizLink connects business buyers and sellers, to help entrepreneurs confidently move forward in the transition process. We have a proven program and tools that offer confidentiality and anonymity in buying or selling a local business. Our extensive local knowledge and connections make us a great choice to guide entrepreneurs through the full transition process and provide wrap around support for the entire life cycle of a business. We have the expertise to set business buyers and sellers up for success. Participating CFDC's are the Orillia Area CDC, Nottawasaga Futures, Community Futures South Georgian Bay and North Simcoe Community Futures Development Corporation /Société d'aide au développement des collectivités Simcoe Nord.</p> <p>To date, the program has assisted with 79 successful business transitions, and trained and developed 1,187 people (through coaching and workshop attendance). Post-pandemic, these activities and resulting impact will significantly increase.</p>
<p>Back Forty Artisan Cheese</p> <p><i>Entrepreneur of the Year</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	<p>Frontenac Business Services</p>	<p>Jeff and Jenna Fenwick purchased Back Forty Artisan Cheese in 2012. At that time, the farmstead dairy was a very small seasonal part-time business. Jeff began to learn the craft of cheese making from the existing owner. In 2015, they relocated their business from Lanark County to Mississippi Station in North Frontenac. They began by making cheese and offering a cheese shop at the new location and wholesaling their product to fine food retailers and quality restaurants. In July 2016 they hosted their grand opening and were able to attract 1,500 people to their remote location. Annually held, this event attracts well over 3,000 tourists. Over time they have worked extremely hard to develop their working farm into a sought-after tourist destination. Jeff and Jenna made their business into a new marketing channel for other producers, creating opportunities to access markets that didn't exist before they started their location.</p> <p>Over time, they developed and opened a licensed riverside bistro with a menu focused on showcasing their own cheese, meats and garden produce and also feature a unique selection of Ontario craft beer, wine, and cider. They built an outdoor live fire kitchen and wood fired pizza oven, brought in a chef, cut trails on the property that connect to the County's trail system, feature a high-density heritage apple cider orchard, and host a variety of successful events such as Winterland, Holiday Open House, and Curds and Cooks hosted on Canada Day.</p>
<p>Angels Childcare</p> <p><i>Entrepreneur of the Year</i></p> <p>Click here for more!</p>	<p>Community Futures Middlesex, Sarnia-Lambton Business Development Corporation</p>	<p>Mostafa Heikal and Noura Elbeialy immigrated from Israel to Canada in 2015 and are now proud Canadian citizens. After spending time in the GTA and London, Mostafa and Noura returned to London to raise their family in early 2019. Securing childcare for their son was a challenge, and they learned London had one of the highest numbers of childcare centres maintaining internal wait lists across Canada. With a passion for entrepreneurship and a desire to have a local impact, they made the decision to lease, renovate and open up their first childcare centre in a community north of London. Their first licensed childcare centre in Arva offered 60 childcare spots and employed 20 employees, opening in December of 2019.</p> <p>When the pandemic hit in March 2020, the centre closed for three months, then reopened and scaled up to address childcare needs of essential workers, then non-essential workers when they returned to work. Soon, additional centres opened across Middlesex County: Angels Daycares Komoka in August of 2020, Angels Daycares Thorndale in February of 2021, and Angels Daycares Sarnia in March of 2022. This network of childcare centres now operates as Angels Childcare. Angels Childcare offers 248 childcare spots, employs 60 full time and 15 part-time staff to address the needs of more than 400 families (800 people). The annual payroll for this business has grown to \$2.5 million per year and it maintains a waitlist of 1000 families looking for solutions to their childcare needs.</p>