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## Report 2025-011

**Report Title:** Business and Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland (BECN) 2024 Program Update

**Committee Name:** Economic Development, Tourism and Planning

**Committee Meeting Date:** January 8, 2025

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**Reviewed by:** Dwayne Campbell  
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**Approved by:** Jennifer Moore, CAO

**Council Meeting Date:** January 22, 2025

**Strategic Plan Priorities:**  Innovate for Service Excellence  
 Ignite Economic Opportunity  
 Foster a Thriving Community  
 Propel Sustainable Growth  
 Champion a Vibrant Future

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### Information Report

**That** the Economic Development, Tourism and Land Use Planning Committee receive Report 2025-011 'Business and Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland (BECN) 2024 Program Update' for information; and

**Further That** the Committee recommend that County Council receive this report for information."

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## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary and outline of Business and Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland (BECN) recent program outcomes and key performance indicators.

## Background

The Business and Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland offers business support, programs and resources to entrepreneurs and business owners in Northumberland.

## Consultations

N/A

## Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations

N/A

## Discussion / Options

### 2024 BECN Key Performance Statistics

In the last year, the BECN has seen increase of annual volume in the key performance categories (listed below), compared to the previous year.

Since October 2023, the BECN has collaborated with the Communications Department in a large marketing campaign to promote services, specific programs, and grants.

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>+/-</u>	<u>%</u>
Clients Supported	1056	2100	+1044	66
Consultations	232	178	-54	26
Businesses Started	72	62	-10	15
Businesses Expanded	18	53	+35	98
Jobs Created	66	103	+37	43
Social Media Followers	3,179	3,538	+359	11
Educational Seminars	15	20	+5	28
Seminar Attendees	424	503	+79	17
Grant funds distributed	\$60,000	\$75,000	+\$15,000	22
Number of grants	31	44	+13	35
Youth grant funds distributed	\$24,335	\$27,258	+\$2,923	11
Number of youth supported	17	25	+8	38

### Starter Company Program Intake November 2024

The Starter Company Program intake was launched in November. It is an opportunity for entrepreneurs in Northumberland County looking to start a business or has been in operation for more than 6 months.

The competitive process resulted in 38 total applicants, and limited spaces granted start-up funds to 20 recipients with a total of \$41,750 grant funds distributed. Ongoing training is available to all applicants.

The Starter Company Program offers startup businesses with planning assistance, mentoring and training. Eligible approved applicants could receive a grant of up to \$3,500. Completion of business training is mandatory to receive grant funds. Offering all applicants an opportunity to launch their business with business mentoring, peer to peer networking and education.

The Starter Company Program is supported by the Province of Ontario and started in 2014. Locally, the BECN has assisted a total of over 232 businesses with approximately \$621,750 in grant funds. The BECN typically offers two intake periods per year with differentiating eligibility.

### **She Owns It Women's Entrepreneurship Conference 2024**

On November 7th, the 2nd annual She Owns It Women's Entrepreneurship Conference welcomed 150 participants, supported by Regional Tourism Organization 8 (RTO8) and FedDev Ontario. This event offered valuable opportunities for business growth, featuring four influential keynote speakers.

Attendees came from 16 municipalities, including Northumberland, and areas as far as Scarborough, Pickering, Uxbridge, Young's Point, and Picton. The conference included participants from 11 business sectors; tourism, services, retail, professional services, health, manufacturing, food and beverage, hospitality, arts, and agriculture, also included professional organizations, agencies, and non-profits.

- 98% of attendees say they would attend another She Owns It conference / event.
- 82% of attendees said the pace & length of the agenda was just right (others said they wanted more).
- 95% of attendees said overall the conference was Excellent and Very Good.
- Speakers scored 9/10 Stars overall rating.

Preliminary plans are in progress for 2025 for two smaller scale hands-on workshops at various locations throughout Northumberland with the She Owns It brand and focus, leading into the larger-scale conference in November 2025.

Testimonials from Anonymous Survey:

"I think the team did a fabulous job. It takes a lot of planning to make an event like that work and I am super proud of the BECN staff who worked so hard to execute a fabulous event. So many times women are the forgotten workhorse, the invisible back bone and can challenge their own worth. Events like this empower women and allow them to recognize all they do is not unseen. I think this event could succeed very well as a full day event."

"You have all done a really marvelous job in organizing this event two years in a row! Very, very well done. You've nailed it! People feel supported, we learn, get a chance to meet fellow entrepreneurs and business people as well as catch up with friends and colleagues we've met through other BECN events. Thank you!"

“I loved the conference! Great job, I will definitely be back next year. I love attending the events and finding the inspiration for my business.”

“Overall, I think it was very well planned and executed. From a business perspective I come to these events to learn, yes, but to network my business and meet like-minded women that offers a potential for business growth for all is my main objective. Thanks for creating this fabulous event, I learned pieces from each speaker and appreciate the honesty...loved the stories, I believe this is what keeps it real for everyone. Well done.”

### **Financial Impact**

N/A

### **Member Municipality Impacts**

N/A

### **Conclusion / Outcomes**

The Business and Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland (BECN) had a successful year and plans are underway to implement new and enhanced activities in 2025 to further serve entrepreneurs across Northumberland County. Staff recommend that County Council receive the ‘BECN 2024 Program Update’ report for information.

### **Attachments**

N/A