

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2024, the Economic Development team delivered programmes and initiatives to support local businesses and promote Wellington County as a great place to live, work, and invest. These efforts align with the strategic priorities of the 2023 to 2025 Three-Year Economic Development Action Plan.

### Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E)

A core focus of economic development, BR+E supports local businesses by helping them grow, create jobs, and remain in Wellington County. Our team provides direct support through meetings, communication, and networking to understand challenges and connect businesses with available resources.

**2024 Highlights:** Updated business resource handout and website, enhanced business events calendar, revised business newsletter (44% average open rate), and launched BR+E business interview project.

55

BR+E interviews

completed in Erin, Guelph/  
Eramosa, and Puslinch



\$175,000

Municipal BR+E Implementation Funds

distributed to seven member municipalities, leveraging a total investment of **\$726,274** in municipal economic development initiatives



### Community Improvement Programme (CIP)

In partnership with member municipalities, CIP grants support business projects that enhance the community. Eligible projects include facade improvements, business renovations, housing or rental unit development, tourism-related enhancements, on-farm diversification, manufacturing, and pre-development studies.

**2024 Highlights:** County CIP contributions increased by 98% year-over-year, and the first study grant was approved.



6

Community  
Improvement  
Projects

approved for a total value of

\$64,260

leveraging private investment of

over \$5.9 million

## Workforce, Talent Attraction and Newcomer Support

Attracting, retaining, and developing a skilled workforce is essential to business success. The Economic Development team collaborates with newcomer organizations, workforce agencies, and educational institutions to connect individuals with learning, skill-building, and networking opportunities.

**2024 Highlights:** Supported the CLAC Construction Boot Camp, ESL training, and youth employment/ entrepreneurship programmes, attended newcomer receptions, hosted the annual Multicultural Festival, ran a Welcoming Week campaign, developed employer and job seeker brochures, and facilitated the creation of workforce videos.



**1,500** Attendees  
for the second annual Wellington  
County Multicultural Festival



**32** Newcomers  
participated in the  
Welcoming Week Bus Tour



**30** Businesses  
attended employer  
webinar



**1** EDCO Award  
for Wellington  
Welcomes Campaign

## Rural Transportation

The **Ride Well** Pilot Programme provides a door-to-door ride-sharing service across Wellington County and to/ from the City of Guelph. Originally designed to support workforce transportation, a renewed strategic focus was identified in 2024 to include equitable access for all residents while maintaining financial sustainability.

**2024 Highlights:** Integrated with Uber for overflow and rescue rides, implemented the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) functionality, and introduced a zonal model to enhance service availability in underserved areas.



**9,757**  
rides



**10,218**  
passengers

**26%** of all rides  
were shared



Serviced by Ride Well

### Tourism and Taste Real (Shop Local)

Encouraging shopping local and positioning Wellington County as a visitor destination drive economic activity and community pride.



**2024 Highlights:** Launched a new visitor-focused website, created seasonal marketing campaigns including the "Top Things To Do in Wellington County This Week" initiative promoting the event calendar, refreshed the Food Experience Guide, published the Farmers' Market Trail passport, facilitated the Wellington Farmers' Market group, hosted Rural Romp events, and increased subscriptions for Taste Real and Experience Wellington e-newsletters by 7.77%.



**7** NEW Signature  
Cycling Routes  
developed



**100** Local businesses  
and points of  
interest featured



**58** Participants attended  
the two-day tourism product  
development workshop



**213**  
Taste Real Partners



**34** Farm and Food  
businesses  
participated in the Rural Romp



**539**  
Farmers' Market  
Boxes distributed



**\$35,941**  
generated in revenue  
for local businesses



**10** Online  
Campaigns  
promoting seasonal experiences  
and shopping local



**26** Businesses  
participating  
in the Wellington County  
Tourism Signage Programme

### Tourism and Taste Real (Shop Local) continued



**7** Municipal downtown priority projects supported with a **\$50,000** contribution through the Rural Economic Development Fund



**112** Businesses and Destinations listed as part of the **Date Our Downtowns** campaign

### Smart Cities Office

Born from the Our Food Future project, this office continues to focus on supporting agriculture, internet expansion, food access, and a circular economy. Connecting knowledge, skills and community support systems for businesses and residents, the circular economy approach creates new ways for everyone to thrive.

**2024 Highlights:** The Experimental Acres moved from Pilot to Programme in Wellington, Dufferin and Grey Counties, and was nominated for an EDCO Award of Excellence.



**70** Attendees of two workshops supporting agri-food businesses



**10** Experimental Acres farms



**14** University students mentored for work experience

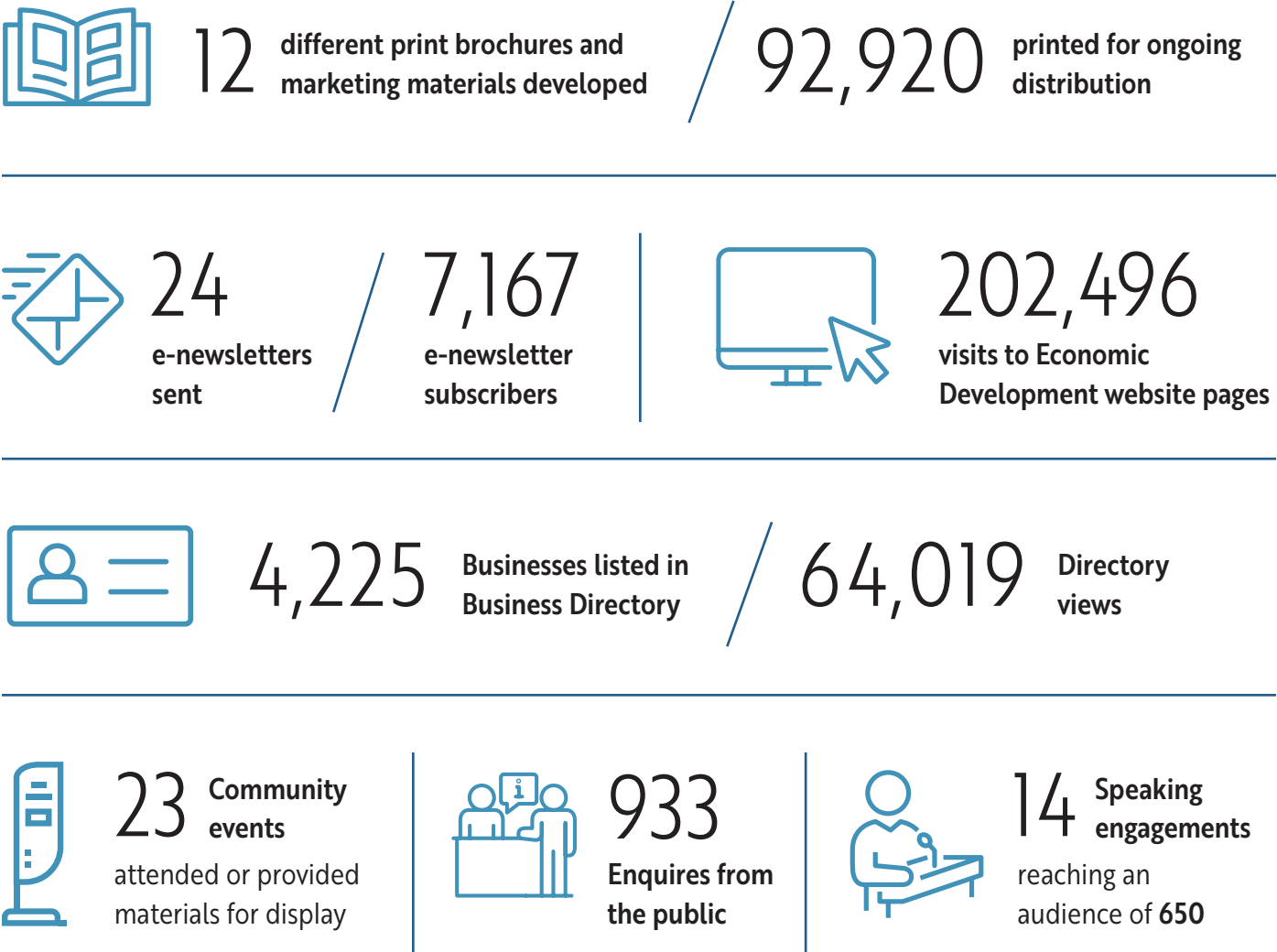


**1** International Conference hosted  
Circular Economy Hotspot

Communications and Outreach

The Economic Development Division connects businesses, stakeholders, and the public with resources, programmes, and information while promoting Wellington County's economic and community assets. The team responds to daily enquiries about County programmes, investment opportunities, and tourism and actively engages in events and meetings to share information.

**2024 Highlights:** Redeveloped the Economic Development, Community, and Visitor pages on the County website, actively promoted Wellington County and its businesses and assets through social media channels, brochures, radio, print, and online advertising and e-newsletters.



### Additional Initiatives

Beyond core programmes, the Economic Development team provides insights and data through the Data Dashboard, supports the County Housing Taskforce, Credit Rating Review process and collaborates with municipalities and stakeholders on local priorities.

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**2024 Highlights:** Hosted municipal housing meetings with the Town of Minto, Townships of Mapleton, and Centre Wellington; supported the Guelph Wellington Seniors Association's Age-Friendly Community Assessment Project, collecting 659 surveys across the County.