
Made in Georgina Working Centre

2022



Social Planning Council of York Region



Table of Contents

01	<i>Introduction</i>	p 01
02	<i>About the Kitchener Waterloo Working Centre</i>	p 02
03	<i>What are the Opportunities for Georgina</i>	p 05
04	<i>Research on Additional Social Enterprise Models</i>	p 08
05	<i>Consultations with Northern Georgina Communities</i>	p 09
06	<i>Concluding Observations and Remarks</i>	p. 14
07	<i>Appendices</i>	p. 17

Introduction

This report was possible with funding provided by the Georgina Employment/Income Generation Table. This initial grant has provided our working group an opportunity to explore and research social enterprise models, and identify an existing model that could be replicated in a semi-rural community. Based on the primary and secondary research gathered on social enterprise models, we have found a community economic development model that would work extremely well for Northern Georgina and we have developed recommendations on what would be the best way forward.

Our working group consists of individuals, service providers and organizations existing in or serving Georgina. At this time, we have ten members actively involved in the working group (Appendix A) and many more stakeholders have expressed an interest in joining the next phase of this project. Ultimately, we intend to expand our working group to include a broad spectrum of representation from across Georgina: agencies, community services, education and training, government, local business and residents at large.

Our working group has grounded this work in a holistic understanding of, and approach to, the economic well being of the community. We are proposing an approach embedded in the Social/Circular Economy (SE). Circular economy is a different way of doing business as it encourages us to rethink what we understand as progress and, in the process, redesign our economic model. The circular model builds economic, natural and social capital and according to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the principles associated with a transition to a circular economy are:

- 1) Design out waste and pollution
- 2) Keep products and materials in use
- 3) Regenerate natural systems

As our working group embarked on this project, we learned that social enterprises, social financing and social impact could address barriers to employment and income generation, which are priority factors identified in the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for Northern Georgina. Our research led us to consider several models of successful social enterprises (Appendix B) and we believe the model most fitting for Northern Georgina is the Working Centre (WC) model that began in Kitchener Waterloo in 1982.



About the Kitchener Waterloo Working Centre

The WC was established in 1982 as a response to unemployment and poverty in downtown Kitchener. It was a non-profit, community-based, volunteer inspired venture that seeks to give individuals and groups access to tools and opportunities to become involved in the building of community in Kitchener-Waterloo. It continues today to be a successful umbrella organization for several social enterprises and other critical housing/social programs that serve Kitchener residents. We have spoken with the co-founder of the WC on several occasions, have had a virtual meeting and have reviewed their website extensively. We have also had the opportunity for an onsite visit that included a tour of several sites/locations all under the common roof of the Kitchener Waterloo WC.

The WC Model, and the principles that guided its formation, are ecological and informed by a broad

view of community that recognizes the inter-connectedness of issues and social determinants of health.

It is a movement more than an institution and embedded in that movement is a participatory, collective approach, which differs significantly from the traditional top-down approach in other social service systems. By design, the WC model integrates employment and sustainability through each aspect of the project operations.

**"The Working
Centre is a
movement
more than an
institution"**

How does the Kitchener Waterloo Working Centre Operate?

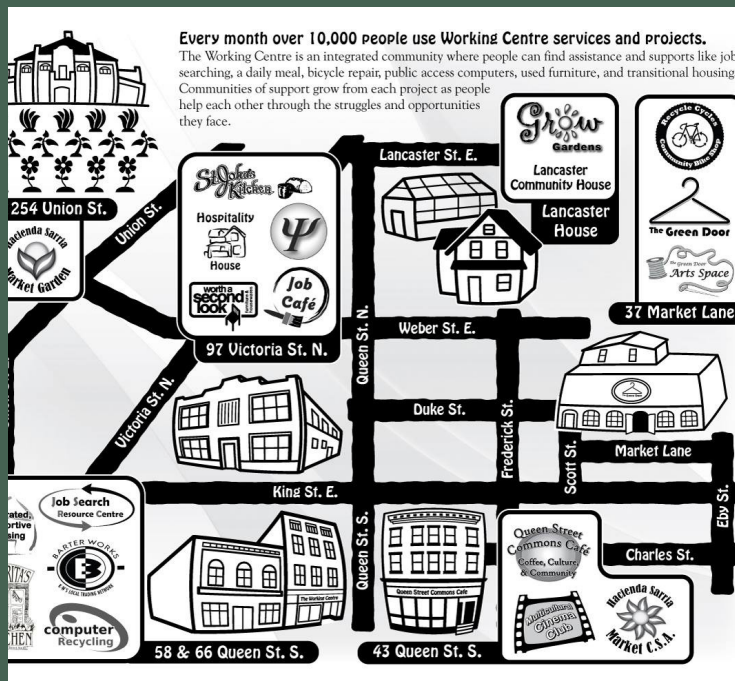
The Working Centre's main projects give people access to tools to create their own work, with continuous ways of learning and co-operating. The Working Centre organizes its projects into six areas:

- 1) Job Search Resource Centre
- 2) St. John's Kitchen
- 3) Community Tools
- 4) Access to Technology
- 5) Affordable Supportive Housing
- 6) Waterloo School for Community Development

The WC's Community Tools Projects have become productive social enterprises. These enterprises are able to provide financial support for The Working Centre's other projects, while fostering inclusion and contributing tools to our communities. The WC has been building a concept of Community Enterprise – combining social enterprise with community service.

What is a Social Enterprise (SE)?

A SE is not an end in itself but an approach utilized to innovate new solutions to needs in a community. It uses a social financing approach to ensure sustainability and allows for a degree of autonomy. Some examples of social enterprises (kitchen-café, repairs shops, publications, etc.) which lend themselves to income and employment generation also serve as outlets to enhance overall project sustainability. SE aims to achieve a triple bottom line as a model of sustainability; this includes financial, social, and environmental sustainability.

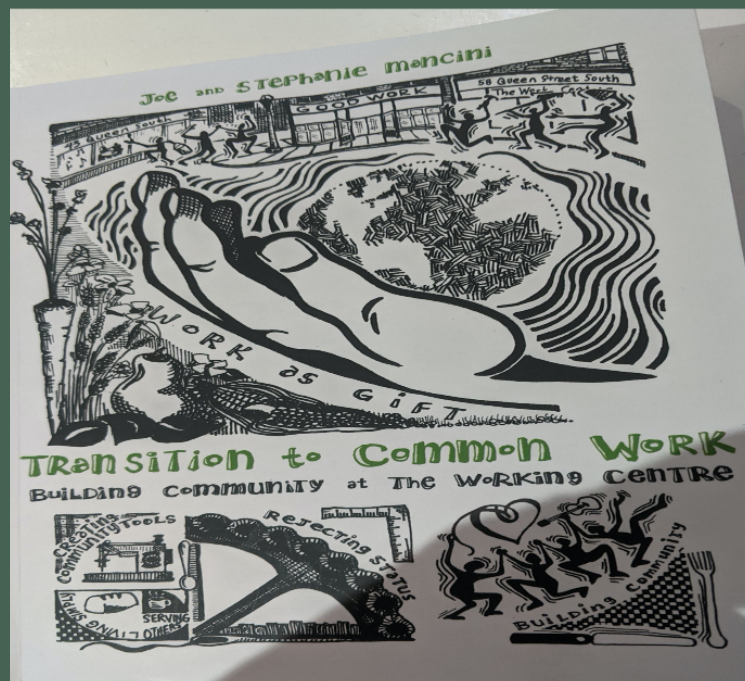


Why does the Working Centre model work?

The 1982 recession led to very high interest rates, high unemployment, and put a lot of people in very precarious positions. The WC was established to respond to these community needs in ways where those most vulnerable were treated with the utmost respect and dignity. The WC in downtown Kitchener initially opened to offer career and job assistance and the St. John's Kitchen followed to ensure community members are fed, as food insecurity is a reality tied to unemployment and income insecurity. Over the years, activities and social enterprises were added to the WC to provide a wholistic approach to addressing poverty and promoting community development.

The WC continues to adapt to meet the needs of the community, and they respond with service and hospitality to those left out of the most basic human rights such as access to housing, indoor spaces, bathrooms, safety and work.

The Working Centre is not just one service. It's an integration of services that provide community with a sense of belonging, dignity and respect.





What are the Opportunities for Georgina?

Having researched and visited the Kitchener Working Centre, we believe this model could be successfully replicated in Georgina. Although the Kitchener Working Centre started at a different time, the circumstances are very similar to what is being experienced by so many Georgina residents— high cost of living, threat of an interest rate hike and precarious livelihoods. Hence having identified the model, a group of community leaders who have the collective motivation to embark on a pilot project, are poised to pursue this initiative in Georgina. Our next steps will involve conducting asset mapping in Georgina, produce a work plan to identify partners, organizational structure, sustainability plan and deliverables, and establishing a business plan.

A Georgina Working Centre would align with the Georgina Community Action Table (CAT) Action Plan (December 2021), and would create an opportunity for community stakeholders to discover how to work together differently to better support people living in/or at risk of experiencing poverty.

A Working Centre takes a long view, addressing structural issues, underlying factors that create gaps in employment, as well as an asset based and ecological approach, allowing for the identification of opportunities that might otherwise go unnoticed. The WC model prioritizes sustainability: social, financial and environmental, also reflected in the Action Plan. The Kitchener WC model, which we believe can be successfully replicated in Georgina, utilizes a flat/democratic structure of organization and employment, valuing all employees. A living wage is a perfect example of truly valuing the contribution of all employees while providing them with a sustainable income. And committing to the development of a diverse array of local employment opportunities and lessening the need for most workers to travel outside of the area as is now the situation contributes to the sustainability of individuals, families, the local economy and the environment.



The following sections of the Georgina CAT Action Plan directly related to the focus of the working centre model:

Medium Term Action Solutions	Longer Term Action Solutions	Potential Outcomes/Results	Potential Performance Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of natural resources for businesses and revenue generating opportunities • Continue developing local environmentally sustainable jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put people in jobs that pay a living wage, not minimum wage • Work with various stakeholders on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Transportation for employment reasons or incentive for hiring locally ◦ Training and apprenticeship programs for skilled workers in place ◦ Subsidies for working mothers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents obtaining employment • Residents enrolled in training, internships and apprenticeships • Residents engaged in social enterprises or volunteer opportunities • Local businesses hiring/training local residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in residents travelling more than 45 minutes for employment • Increase in percentage of people working locally • Decrease in length and time for travel to work • Increased availability of diverse employment opportunities

Moving Forward with a Made in Georgina Working Centre

Vision

Through our collective energies, Northern Georgina's local economy will thrive with greater accessible services and resources for our residents.

Mission

Through collaborative partnerships and community participation, we will develop a "Made in Georgina" Community Working Centre, that offers accessible, holistic services and creates innovative pathways to education, training, employment and entrepreneurship that will grow our local economy.

Guiding Principles

- 1) We share a concern for our local economy and wellbeing of our community and believe that through collective action we can generate positive change and new opportunities.
 - 2) We are committed to embrace existing models that work and to use innovative approaches to address gaps and develop new initiatives.
 - 3) To be the most effective, we must view our residents and the community holistically with the knowledge that individuals, businesses and initiatives thrive when we understand them as part of the big picture and when we take an asset based approach to planning and idea formation.
 - 4) We believe the economic well being of a community is reflected in the health and wellbeing of its residents and vice versa. It is a reciprocal relationship.
 - 5) We recognize that to have a real impact on the lives of residents, we must address the underlying conditions and root causes of income and health inequities and propose/introduce solutions that can take us forward.
 - 6) It is not our intention to take over or duplicate any existing services in the community; instead, we are committed to support them within our ability.
 - 7) Through collaboration and cooperation, we best serve our community.
-



Research on additional Social Enterprise Models

In our research phase of this project, we also were able to explore SE models to identify components of each that might be replicable in the Georgina context (Appendix C). Several of these were models in higher density urban areas and yet there are facets of those that could be considered in order to build our WC Model in Georgina. Thanks goes out to our two Masters in Leadership and Community Engagement students from York University that completed two placement periods with the Georgina CAT and this working group in particular, from August 2021 to May 2022. Bringing their own experience/understanding to this work, they have been instrumental in helping to envision a holistic approach to addressing employment/income generation for Georgina.



Consultations with North Georgina Community

1) Virtual Consultation with Members of the Employment/Income Generation Working Group including members of the LINC in Sutton on June 16, 2022

a. What are the top 3 priorities among these 7 factors that will support local people and enhance employment opportunities?

- Better community connections and system navigation
- Housing support services and affordable housing
- Public advocacy and research to promote social change

b. What are the two main factors affecting unemployment in Georgina?

- Lack of good and well-paid job
- Lack of local employment opportunities

c. What are the 2 main economic drivers or assets in Georgina?

- Natural environment (lake) and outdoors and vacation destination
- Georgina's history
- Arts and theater
- Become a green and circular economy town
- Sense of community

Discussion:

- Invest in High St and Jacksons Point / Community revitalization
- Sustainable/well-paid jobs require education, employers need wage incentives to hire
- We need opportunities to support local entrepreneurship
- We will need Region and Provincial government partnerships
- Better public transportation (GO train)
- Having quick wins will help project development
- We could make Georgina known for green and sustainable jobs

Consultations with North Georgina Community

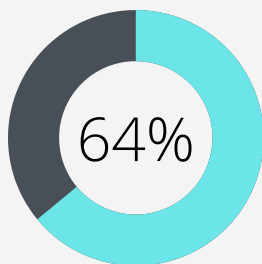
2) In-Person Consultation with Students at Sutton District High School

** Scheduled for June 23rd; last minute cancellation due to school schedule changes

** Teacher Lead requested a rescheduled consultation in the fall

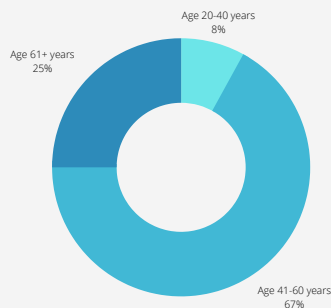
3) Consultation with Visitors at the Georgina Food Pantry on June 30, 2022

These results were obtained based on a simple (one-page) anonymous survey (to avoid bias) that everyone completed in their own. We had 36 responders and 5 that didn't want to participate. Notes in orange are observations of the Food Pantry Executive Director.



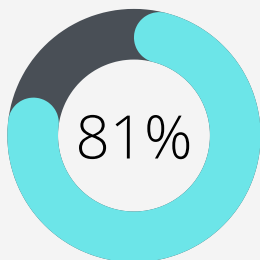
64 percent of respondents are male and 34 percent are female

This was a random sample of those attending this week; in general 55% of pantry clients are female.



8 percent of respondents are between the ages of 20 and 40; 67 percent are between the ages of 41 and 60 and 25 percent are over 61 years of age.

The vast majority of pantry clients are mid-age individuals, in general about 15% are 60 yrs. old and older.



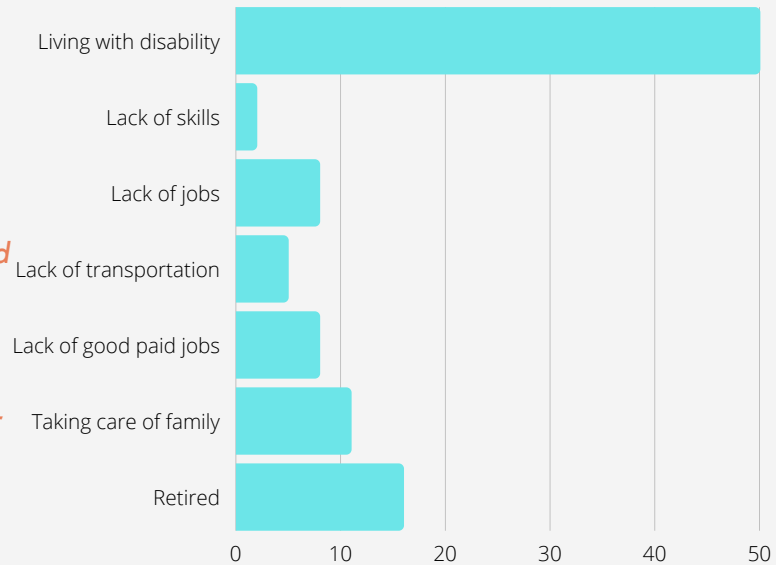
81 percent of respondents are not working and 19 percent are working.

This is a good sample since about 80% of food bank clients are not working.

Consultations with North Georgina Community

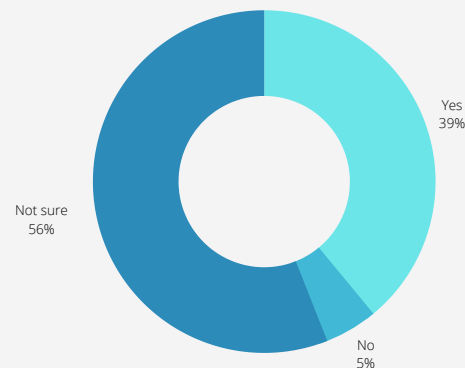
Respondents are not working for a variety of reasons including living with a disability and not having access to appropriate jobs, lack of good paid jobs and caregiving responsibilities.

Clearly, those with a disability are forced to rely on food banks, pointing to the consideration/need for income support advocacy. The number of individuals who must take care of a person (older or not) with a disability, or small child is not insignificant.

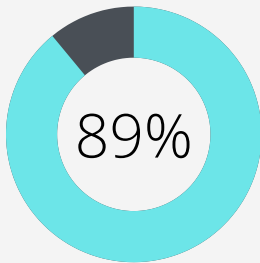


When asked whether Georgina needs better employment support services, 39 percent responded yes and 5 percent responded no.

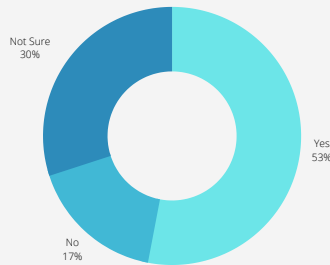
Interesting that most people are not sure if this is needed, maybe what is available is not beneficial (needed) for them (at the very least they are not sure about it). Begs the question of how Employment Services can/must reinvent themselves which open opportunities for the WC Project.



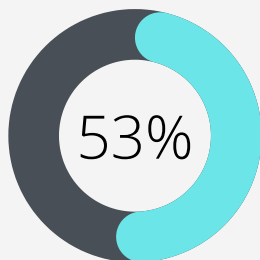
Consultations with North Georgina Community



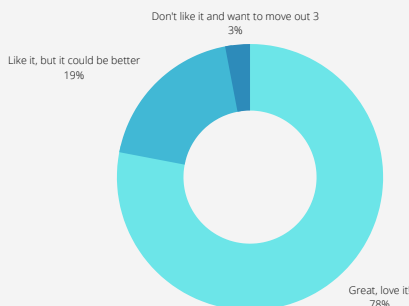
When asked whether Georgina needs better housing support services, overwhelming 89 percent of people responded yes. Three percent responded no and 8 percent responded not sure.



When asked if Georgina needs better public transportation, 53 percent responded yes, 17 percent responded no and 30 percent were not sure.



53 percent of respondents have considered being self-employed or starting their own job compared to 47 percent who responded no.



When asked, how do you feel about living in Georgina? an overwhelming number of respondents (78 percent) responded that they love Georgina.

Despite poverty and food insecurity (likely housing insecurity too), people love where they live which is great and open opportunities to consider this an asset and reflect that people care about their community. The few who don't like it were younger people.



Next Steps

1) Create an assets inventory and needs analysis

- The assets inventory is a listing of the resources in the community, e.g. service providers, education, business, government sectors and determining what they might bring to the table in developing the working centre. It would assist in helping us to identify potential partners and what they would bring to the Working Centre.
- We would also include outreach to organizations and services that have the capacity to support a made in Georgina model of service.
- Our needs analysis would use existing reports and studies together with our assets inventory to determine gaps in service to help in prioritizing for the Georgina Working Centre.

2) Develop a piece of literature to distribute about the working group

3) Governance

- Make recommendations for the composition of the working committee
- Create a Memorandum of Understanding for the working committee partners to formalize our process.
- To include our vision, mission and guiding principles, and expectations of partners.

4) Work Plan

- Develop a work plan with deliverables for the next 12 months that includes a framework for the organization to move forward.
- Defining partners, accountability and structure (to incorporate separately or under a current partner)

Beyond 2023

- Explore funding opportunities to continue with Georgina WC project development
- Conduct a Business Plan/full Feasibility Study for a made in Georgina WC.
- Formalize partnerships (funders/ partners) to start with Georgina WC project implementation.



Concluding Observations and Remarks

Through our participation on the Georgina CAT and the Income Generation/Employment sub-committee we have learned a great deal about a variety of needs that exist among residents of northern Georgina as well as gaps such as their lack of knowledge about existing employment services and supports.

From our consultation with visitors at the food pantry in Sutton, we got a glimpse into what a sample of folks were experiencing, some of the barriers to employment and income security as well as that several may be interested in entrepreneurship as full-time employment or perhaps part-time employment to supplement their existing sources of income. We also recognize that a significant number of people using the food pantry for example have various abilities challenges which can limit their access to paid employment. This is an important factor that we need to explore further in the evolution of the working centre pilot, as work is a critical aspect of life that dignifies people's lives, provides security and contributes to independence and overall well-being.

We know from our consultations, in addition to past experiences and numerous conversations over the years with folks who call Northern Georgina their home (several whom participate in our working group), that people love this place they call home. They prefer to stay and are eager to have work that doesn't require them to endure long and onerous commutes. This opens up the possibility of intentionally exploring local initiatives, local investments and funding that can build and sustain made in Georgina entrepreneurial ventures, to employ the residents. That and the natural environment that has untapped potential for environmental initiatives, outdoor recreation and expanded tourism ventures. Which can truly benefit those who live here.



There is much more to be learned from individuals with lived experience of precarious income and employment opportunities as well as community partners in general in order to innovate and craft a working centre model that can best meet the needs and aspirations of the residents, young and old. We are excited about the possibilities to engage further with residents and partners to explore and imagine what those new opportunities could be and we are looking forward to building on the initial phase of this work.

Thanks to the Community Action Table, the Coordinator, our working group members and to all who participated in the consultations that helped to shape this report, our vision and the steps ahead.

This project would not have been possible without the contribution of Shavaneil Mclean and Vathanan Jegatheesan, Master of Leadership and Community Engagement students at York University, and Penny Contreras with SERA Community Ventures. Massive thank you for your invaluable contribution to this project.

The WC Model, and the principles that guided its formation, are ecological and informed by a broad view of community that recognizes the inter-connectedness of issues and social determinants of health.

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Appendix A

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Appendix B

YORK REGION NORTH WORKING CENTRE

VISIONING

BENEFITS – programs and services offered

- Entrepreneurship program
- Training and apprenticeship
- Housing services
- Community connections and resources
- Food access and community kitchen
- Maker's place and libraries
- Tool and Equipment Lending libraries
- Public advocacy and research

SETTING – location and site for the centre

- Partnership with the Link in Sutton
- Refurnishing of old school fully or partial
- New building on a public/surplus land (Town/Region)
- Partnership w/existing business (sites)

- Truth and reconciliation principles
- Anti-oppressive framework
- Circular economy concept
- Systemic change and transformation theory
- Grassroots democracy and organizing
- Collective or collaborative approach

- CAT funding start-up (feasibility study – strategic planning and work plan)
- York Region (development)
- United Way TEF (business plan)
- South Lake CFDC (development)
- OTF (capital funding)
- York University (research and collaboration)
- Social enterprise model for sustainability

CULTURE – guiding principles and inspiration

SUSTAINABILITY – resources and collaborations

Appendix C

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE Case Studies and Recommendations

Summary

This report sets out to provide an overview of social enterprise models that four organizations have used to create economic sustainability. There were five distinct social enterprise (SE) designs that were utilized to varying degrees: employment model, fee for service model, low-income client Model, the market linkage model and service subsidization model.

The findings are that the community centres provide a wide range of wrap-around services that include housing, newcomer programs, child/youth programs, seniors programs, legal and health services. In addition to these services, they use hybrid social enterprise models in responding to community needs, while building social and economic opportunities. This proved to be advantageous in many ways. The hybrid model better situated the organizations as a social hub that remains agile in its environment in creating new innovative pathways for social impacts, while generating a business ecosystem yielding high social impact return on investment (SROI).

Introduction

This report looks to provide general insights on initiatives that incorporate social enterprise models that are adopted by four agencies in Toronto and Windsor. The report will present SE designs that have worked for these agencies which potentially could be incorporated in the social enterprise visioning work for the Georgina working Centre.

Analysis

The following table summarises our findings based on three community centres that offer similar social enterprise initiatives. They will include the program areas, the respective benefits and applicabilities accordingly. The four community agencies are:

- Scadding Court Community Centre (Toronto)
- John Innes Community Centre (Toronto)
- EPICentre (Windsor)
- Charlie's Freewheels (Toronto)

Agencies Reviewed

Agencies: Scadding Court Community Centre & John Innes CC		
Program Areas	Benefits	Applicability
Economic + Employment	Economic	Demography
Business out of the Box - promoting entrepreneurship and building community capital, provides market space for business startups/incubators, through providing accessible space via shipping containers, as a built in park feature and component of the centre. Animation of public space into income generating market space which brings together local residents who offer good & services, which foster urban food and shopping environment	Entrepreneurship development, creating local economic and income generating opportunities for local residents - Revenue generating, through rental fees of shipping containers used for shops etc investment opportunities and micro grants	low income communities diverse neighbourhood
	Social Impact & Opportunities use of underutilized community spaces to create open market spaces, to build community capital and resources Creates community place making spaces connect people through food and culture	Environmental Factors land use -Through park design, provides park activation and a community market space
Training, Apprenticeship & Community Tools	Economic	Demography
Stitch Lab - women-led, provides adult training and skills development in sewing and fashion design. The program model is community-centred, which equips women with entrepreneurial skills: participants are given practical support through retail store operations, product creation, and sales via a Market 707 kiosk and pop-up market opportunities Commercial Kitchen Space - commercial kitchen designed especially for the needs of food producers, chefs, caterers and other food professionals. Woodworking - at John Innes Community recreational centre equip participants with carpentry skills, folks bring their project to the makerspace and are provided hands on technical support in developing their craft i.e. furniture projects Community Gardening - residents forming food collective to grow produce, expand social network, and food justice advocacy	- Revenue generating, through rental fees of shipping containers used for shops etc -a value added service which helps to create a business ecosystem around the working centre services. -makes use of existing infrastructure of the working centre, i.e. kiosk, shipping containers while creating new revenue streams. -promotes employment and income opportunities	Leverage equity through a gender-based lens, providing entrepreneurial apprenticeship ventures to female identified folks. Creates alternative income opportunities, for seniors, indigenous people, youth, newcomers & people with disabilities.
	Social Impact & Opportunities Community-led services, supports local and social procurement. Services and products are made by residents, to meet community needs who are the primary consumers. -Allows for the redistribution of wealth in the community, through social and economic procurement. I.e. providing textile decor fitting services to hotels/small businesses. promote social connection, both consumers and participants are able to form networks around the development and procurement of these community-based services. Opportunities to engage corporate stewards.	Environmental Factors The program incorporates elements of reducing carbon footprint by providing affordable alteration services as well as a line of handmade products from repurposed and raw materials destined for landfills. Land use - outdoor/indoor public spaces with the working centre to operate kiosk, popup market etc

Agency: Charlies free wheels		
Program Areas	Benefits	Applicability
Training, Apprenticeship & Community Tools	Economic	Demography
<p>Bike repair - Uses Bicycles to support the development of empowered youth and cyclist.</p> <p>Improving access for youth to bicycles, and through facilitating bicycle related skill development allowing youth to ride with confidence</p>	<p>Uses bicycle program to connect youth to bikes, cycling safety and education as well. They have also created a mobile repair shop to provide youth with the tools to repair their own bicycles and pursue their own social enterprise initiatives. These repair shops are designed to be mobile to expand reach and impact.</p> <p>Youth even participate in building bicycle from frame up</p>	<p>Youth, adults, seniors</p> <p>as well as: women, trans, femme, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and people of marginalized genders, and have been since 2014, led by female, trans and/or non-binary staff and volunteers.</p>
	Social Impact & Opportunities	Environmental Factors
	<p>This program provide youth with 30 hours of training as well as repair kit and their own bicycle, including helmet, bell and lock.</p> <p>Youth have reported being enthusiastic about commuting using bicycles which have improved overall health and exposure to fresh air, and increased accessibility to areas of their community that were too far to commute by walking.</p>	<p>Ensure that youth are kept occupied with tangible life-skills and equipped to be safe while riding and with the knowledge to repair accordingly.</p>

Agency: EPIC Centre:		
Program Areas	Benefits	Applicability
Musical Opportunities	Economic	Demography
<p>Windsor Based initiative looking to extend cultural, artistic and educational opportunities through school programs designed to rent musical equipment as well as use existing resources to. From fair trade record labels to creative confidence workshops for young people, these music-related social enterprises know the power of a good song.</p>	<p>Created a music equipment rental program, and also generated musical classes that rotate on instruments and culture regularly to ensure that new voices are being heard and represented.</p>	<p>General population, diverse backgrounds</p>
	Social Impact & Opportunities	Environmental Factors
	<p>Generating funds for music education programs, with a specific focus on cultural diversity and introduction to new methods of teaching, learning and enjoying music</p>	<p>Utilization of community spaces to store and administer equipment.</p>



Recommendations

Economic sustainability can be achieved by empowering non profit community centres to be self sufficient through innovative financial support mechanisms.

Out of this analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

- ❖ Create a Vision and Mission to narrow down the specifics of the Georgina Working Centre

- ❖ The findings suggest that the use of hybrid SE models yield significant benefits from both an organizational and economic standpoint, through creating new revenue generating streams and helping to shape an organizational structure that's agile to emergent community needs and change processes. The employment model, fee for service model, low-income client Model, the market linkage model and service subsidization model fits directly with the community economic development ideas raised at the Georgina Community Action Table (GCAT) and Linking Georgina Steering Committee. Some of the ways in which these designs line up with the steering groups' objectives are: prepare people to be job ready, promote local entrepreneurship and build out a business ecosystem around the social and economic procurement of goods.

- ❖ Scadding Court and John Innes Community Centre provide holistic wrap-around services, such as access to technology, housing support etc. In addition to providing traditional social service support, these centres have utilized a combination of social enterprise models in their service delivery and organizational strategic priorities.
- ❖ Other value added services that could be developed into social enterprises are: (1) media and community journalism for research and advocacy purposes. (2) Shoe making (3) computer coding and (4) entry & intermediary level mechanical engineering workshops

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