

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, February 14, 2023 **WARD(S):** ALL

TITLE: **ADVANTAGE VAUGHAN: PHASE 3 OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19 FINAL REPORT**

FROM:
Nick Spensieri, City Manager

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

Economic Development is presenting the outcomes of the Advantage Vaughan strategy and is requesting Council endorsement to include Talent City Vaughan and the expanding Starter Company Plus program in Economic Development's suite of programs.

Report Highlights

- Advantage Vaughan is Phase 3 of the City's economic development efforts to respond to COVID-19. Council endorsed a series of programs in Feb. 2022
- Starter Company Plus, an Advantage Vaughan program, disbursed \$245,000 in provincial funding to 49 businesses.
- Talent City Vaughan disbursed \$61,000 in funding to seven not-for-profit community service organizations to deliver training to 142 Vaughan residents.
- Advantage Vaughan supported Recreation Services' Fairs and Festival Program, supporting four events that attracted approximately 3,000 attendees and generated an economic impact of more than \$75,000.
- Based on the high demand for Talent City Vaughan, Economic Development is seeking council endorsement for Talent City Vaughan to become a program offered within Economic Development between 2023-2026.

Recommendations

1. THAT the Director, Economic Development, (or designate) be authorized to execute agreements, as required, between 2023-2026 related to awarding grants and/or sponsorship funding to eligible individuals and organizations through the Talent City Vaughan and Starter Company Plus programs outlined in this report.
2. THAT Council approves Talent City Vaughan as an economic development program subject to operating capacity and budget for 2023-2026.
3. THAT Economic Development has the authority through the annual budget process to supplement additional funding to provincially funded programs led by the Vaughan Business and Entrepreneurship Centre (VBEC) to deliver training, mentorship, and micro-grants for local entrepreneurs.
4. THAT Council approves that past Economic Prosperity Task Force members are asked to establish a subcommittee of three members to adjudicate Talent City Vaughan applications.
5. THAT all agreements shall be in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor (or designate), and the content shall be satisfactory to the Chief, Communications and Economic Development (or designate).

Background

Vaughan is home to nearly 19,000 businesses that employ more than 236,000 people. The economy is driven by developing critical centres like the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) and industries like manufacturing, supply chain and logistics, and professional services.

To support the economy, Council took the next step in helping small businesses and local talent on Feb. 15, 2022, by endorsing Advantage Vaughan, Phase 3 of the City's economic development response to COVID-19.

Advantage Vaughan proposed a series of programs to support the City's next phase of economic recovery.

The four strategic pillars of the economy identified for targeted support in Advantage Vaughan included:

1. Local small business owners and entrepreneurs.
2. Vaughan's residents, who make up the city's talent base.
3. Vaughan's local organizations, which animate the community and foster local destination development opportunities.
4. Community branding and marketing to demonstrate the advantages of doing business in Vaughan.

Advantage Vaughan recognized the need to support Vaughan as a significant regional economic contributor by helping groups most impacted by the pandemic access training and skills development opportunities.

The pandemic intensified the challenges faced by vulnerable groups, including immigrants and racialized communities; women, in particular mothers with young children; workers in low-wage jobs; and youth. To ensure that certain segments of the population were not left behind in the economic recovery from the pandemic, it became vital to look at gaps in Vaughan's workforce and address increasing diversity in the workforce (such as through micro-skilling and up-skilling of marginalized communities), returning women into the workforce, and bringing youth into the workforce.

The ability to hire, train and retain talent is fundamental to local businesses' success and boosts economic growth. Recognizing that the pandemic affected employment as companies had to suspend, adapt, or restructure operations, it became apparent that there was a need for strategies to be put in place to attract, train, re-skill and encourage talent development. The demand continues for labour that meets the condition of the economy of tomorrow. Investing in knowledge infrastructure also provides residents with enhanced opportunities to improve their skillsets and secure or maintain well-paying jobs.

Vaughan is also a hub for entrepreneurship, with small businesses making up more than 85 per cent of firms in the city.

The initiatives and programs proposed in Advantage Vaughan sought to further support small businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as look at the vital role that talent plays in the city's economic vitality.

The Vaughan Business and Entrepreneurship Centre (part of Economic Development) delivers the provincial grant program, Starter Company Plus, on behalf of the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. The Starter Company Plus program provides participants tailored advice, mentoring and training to help launch or expand their businesses. This program was pivoted to support small businesses affected by lockdowns to help them adapt to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The City proposed expanding this program as part of a medium-term economic recovery plan to allow businesses to adjust to a new normal and to cushion the impact of other government supports being withdrawn. Advantage Vaughan provided enhanced small business support through further expansion of the Starter Company Plus program throughout the next phase of economic recovery.

As noted in the Advantage Vaughan report, the Economic Development department has undertaken several initiatives to help small businesses since the pandemic's start.

In 2022, Economic Development accomplished the following:

- The use of more than \$300,000 in federal investment to support main street businesses, such as consumer-facing retail, restaurants, and personal services;
- A renewed Small Business Enterprise Centre investment from the Province of Ontario of nearly \$1,000,000 over three years;
- The conclusion of a regional and province-wide program worth more than \$150,000 for small businesses training and micro-grants;
- A renewed mandate, brand and strategic communications campaign for the Vaughan Business and Entrepreneurship Centre (VBEC) – formerly the Vaughan Business Enterprise Centre – to reach and inform local entrepreneurs and residents about the front-line services offered by VBEC staff to support the community more effectively. VBEC will continue its mandate of overseeing small business programs funded by other levels of government and stakeholder groups.

Previous Reports/Authority

[ADVANTAGE VAUGHAN: PHASE 3 OF VAUGHAN'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19](#), Committee of the Whole (Working Session) Report, February 9, 2022

[VAUGHAN BUSINESS RESILIENCE PLAN](#). Ready, Resilient, Resourceful Committee Report, June 23, 2020.

[VAUGHAN BUSINESS RESILIENCE PLAN PROJECT MATRIX](#).

[ECONOMIC PROSPERITY TASK FORCE – APPROVAL OF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS](#), Committee of the Whole (2) Report, May 20, 2020

[Vaughan Business Action Plan](#)

[York Region Business Recovery Support Partnership](#)

[CITY OF VAUGHAN ECONOMIC MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO THE GLOBAL NOVEL CORONA VIRUS \(COVID-19\) PANDEMIC](#), City of Vaughan Special Council Meeting, March 17, 2020

[Economic and Cultural Development Business Plan, 2020-23](#)

[SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SERVICES UPDATE](#), Committee of the Whole Report, April 2, 2019

Analysis and Options

Advantage Vaughan enhanced existing supports and developed new programs to further four strategic pillars of Vaughan's economy.

1. Enhancing support for small business and entrepreneurs

Advantage Vaughan more than doubled the number of provincial grants distributed to local small businesses through VBEC's Starter Company Plus program for the 2022 program year. Since its inception in 2014, Vaughan's Starter Company Plus Program remains one of the largest in Ontario, helping nearly 300 businesses start and/or expand, resulting in 443 newly created jobs as of 2022.

With the support provided through Advantage Vaughan, VBEC Leveraged \$245,000 in direct Provincial contributions to 49 small businesses in 2022. More than three-quarters of the Program's grant-funded recipients were brick-and-mortar businesses.

VBEC's Starter Company Plus program leveraged \$245,000 in direct provincial contributions, providing provincial micro-grants to 49 small businesses. Through Starter Company Plus, participants accessed business training to help them adjust business models to adapt to changes in market conditions because of the pandemic. Entrepreneurs were provided connections to mentorship and networking opportunities.

Program participants included small business owners in the food services and restaurants, professional services, recreation, clothing retail, construction and renovation, personal services, financial services, educational services, arts, transportation and logistics sectors.

2. Empowering local talent and supporting workforce development

Advantage Vaughan allocated funding to the pilot Talent City Vaughan program to directly support community-wide workforce skills development by community and social service organizations. Talent City Vaughan supports workforce development throughout the City of Vaughan. The program prioritized organizations supporting marginalized groups for equitable recovery and offered micro-grants of up to \$10,000 to deliver re-skilling, upskilling and other job training programs for Vaughan residents.

In 2022 Talent City Vaughan disbursed funding to seven social and community service organizations that hosted training programs for more than 140 Vaughan residents.

Key performance indicators from Talent City Vaughan include:

- A total of 35 community and social service organizations expressed interest in Talent City Vaughan resulting in 15 organizations submitting final applications.
- An external adjudication panel comprised of members from the Economic Prosperity Taskforce selected seven organizations to receive Talent City Vaughan funding.
- Talent City Vaughan disbursed \$61,000 in funding to seven community service organizations to host training programs for 142 Vaughan residents.
- This funding represents a spending leverage ratio of approximately 2:1 (for every dollar the City provided, grant recipients spent two dollars to deliver their programs).
- Total funding disbursed also represents a per-participant training cost of nearly \$430 per participant.

The following organizations were selected to receive funding:

Organization Name	Training Program	Program Description
Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women	Business Training for Interpreters	Residents who live and work in the City of Vaughan received 100 hours of training to become freelance interpreters in the business, healthcare, legal, and medical sectors, and gained the necessary knowledge and skills to operate their own small businesses. This program enabled participants to become self-sufficient and contributing members of Vaughan.
Human Endeavour	Job Readiness Program	The job readiness program offers specific training to build the capacity of individuals and enable them to meet the needs of the growing economy. In addition, the program will provide job seekers or existing employees with new skills and training that either help to secure gainful employment or remain employed at their current employer. The program provided weekly training that focused on communication, soft skills, Microsoft Excel, Quick Books accounting software, PowerPoint and Microsoft Excel.

Humanity First	Lend a Hand Learn a Skill	Lend a Hand Learn a Skill offered training to help Vaughan residents develop their capacities and be prepared to meet the demands of the expanding economy. The program provided weekly training that focused on warehouse management, customer/client services, and MS excel.
Kleinburg Nobleton Soccer Club	Youth Coach Development Program	Training to develop and employ youth as coaches for the 2022 outdoor soccer season. Program participants participated in a minimum of 2 Canada Soccer Coach Certification Courses, "Fundamentals" and "Learn to Train".
Memory loss Foundation	Understanding Dementia and Montessori Approach for Dementia Care	Understanding Dementia & Montessori Approach for Dementia is an innovative approach on how to manage a person with dementia and how to guide them into a quality life of care and recreation. This training increased participants' job skills and increased further opportunities in long-term care settings.
The Career Foundation	Furniture Manufacturing Career Discovery	The Jobs in Furniture Manufacturing training program initially involved partnering with Décor-Rest to deliver a training program consisting of 3 components including a) Career Discovery b) Paid Internship and ending in c) Paid Employment and will be delivered over a 4-week duration. Changes to the program were made due to employer withdrawal and low participation.
Vaughan International Film Festival (VFF)	Inspiring Future Film Makers Seminar Series	A Speaker Series was VFF's very first in-person seminar series, focused on inspiring the future generation of filmmakers. Three seminars were presented over two Sundays this Fall, each exploring a range of topics with speakers directly immersed in the industry. The topics covered were directing actors, sound editing, and picture editing. The seminars included guided Q&A's with the speakers. breakout sessions, and networking opportunities.

Organizations were also able to leverage Talent City Vaughan to support additional networking opportunities with the wider business and non-profit community:

- The Vaughan International Film Festival (VFF) was able to leverage support from the Dean of York University's School of the Arts, Media, Performance & Design to moderate the three Inspiring Future Film Makers seminars. The Dean was able to propel conversations and add additional industry expertise and knowledge to the seminar topics for participants.
- Human Endeavour was able to reconnect with the Afghan Community and Hazara Women's Organizations in Vaughan, offering direct access to the Job Readiness training program.
- A further connection was established between Human Endeavour and The Memory Loss Foundation regarding technology adoption for seniors with dementia.
- Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women engaged with Mackenzie Health to facilitate tours of healthcare facilities for participants to understand potential roles for interpreters within the healthcare sector.

All organizations expressed interest in continuing their Talent City Vaughan training programs into the future and identified their intention to apply for Talent City Vaughan funding in 2023.

Of the more than 140 residents that took part in Talent City Vaughan training programs, nearly 100 participants provided feedback and demographic information through program surveys.

Key learnings from the surveys included:

- The average age of participants was 33 years of age with the youngest participant being 15 years of age and the oldest being 82 years of age.
- Two in three participants self-identified as women (66 per cent), and one in four participants self-identified as youth (25 per cent).
- Most participants had some form of higher education with 41 per cent holding a bachelor's degree and 25 per cent holding a college diploma.
- The majority of residents that participated in training programs (52 per cent) did so to advance their careers, and 26 per cent noted their participation was based on learning new skills to gain new employment.

Residents that participated in Talent City Vaughan training programs provided the following comments on the skills they gained and their experience with the program.

- *"The training at Humanity First increased my confidence to work at any place suitable for my experience and skills. I learnt many professional ethics."* – Training Participant Humanity First

- *“This training will help me use the Quick Book tool, which will allow me to manage a firm more efficiently. It enhanced my understanding of running Quick book computer software and collecting vouchers and billing, which helps to develop accounting skills. It is feasible that with further advancement, I may be able to obtain a better job.”* – Training Participant Human Endeavour
- *“I am planning to apply for a PSW job and this workshop has helped me a lot in broadening my knowledge and having a better understanding of how to care for a person with dementia.”* – Training participant Memory Loss Foundation
- *“The training program was in itself an amazing learning experience, very professional, I would love it if we could have more training like this. Very informative and a crucial asset for development in a career as an interpreter”* – Training participant Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women
- *“I am really satisfied. First and foremost, thank you for creating these classes. Second, I propose that you build additional classes. It was excellent “*– Training Participant Human Endeavour

3. Supporting return of events and revival of attractions

Vaughan also recognizes that local cultural and social service organizations are key partners in providing opportunities for residents and businesses to play locally and grow Vaughan as a destination.

In 2022 the City of Vaughan took several steps to enhance Vaughan as a destination for visitors, tourists, and businesses. These included:

- Completing the Vaughan Destination Master Plan (VDMP) to guide the development of Vaughan as a tourist destination
- Securing key amateur sports events like the Canada Soccer Championships held in October 2022
- Working with stakeholders like Central Counties Tourism to encourage overnight stays in Vaughan
- Launching the [HostinVaughan.ca](https://www.hostinvaughan.ca) site to provide a resource for event planners hosting in Vaughan at non-City-owned venues
- Providing resources on [Hosting An Event in Vaughan](#) for event organizers wishing to host on City-owned venues
- Sharing the Safe Travels and Post Promise Accreditations and Toolkits with local businesses to boost consumer confidence
- Supporting the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce’s SupportVaughanLocal program alongside City campaigns like #ShopVaughanLocal, #DineVaughanLocal and #PlayVaughanLocal

With support from Advantage Vaughan, Recreation Services' Fairs and Festivals program provided support to four events that attracted approximately 3,000 attendees and generated more than \$75,000 of total economic impact.

4. Enhanced marketing to highlight the advantages of doing business in Vaughan

In 2022, a new Economic Development-Communications Business Unit was formed in the Corporate and Strategic Communications department. The mandate of this group accelerated strategic communications, marketing and promotional efforts to Economic Development department clients about the advantages of doing business in Vaughan, fulfilling the objective set out as part of *Advantage Vaughan*.

Advantage Vaughan will empower our stakeholders with the resources they need to be the champions of our economy through the distribution of refreshed communications toolkits.

Economic Development and Corporate and Strategic Communications worked in partnership to inform small and medium-sized enterprises, local talent, the business community, members of council, and other stakeholders. In 2022:

Communication	Impact
Newsletters	82+ newsletters sent to 10,657 subscribers
Website views	110,738
Council Memos	44
PSAs, Economic Development Council Communication Packages, and News Releases	207

Financial Impact

The proposed programming is funded through the council-approved 2023 - 2026 budget's Economic Prosperity Fund. There is no new budget impact for the continuation of support to Talent City Vaughan and Starter Company Plus. For 2023 and beyond, the fund will be used for:

- Continued support of Advantage Vaughan Programming

- International Economic Relations including attraction of foreign direct investment, promotion of trade opportunities for local businesses, and review of international best practices and centres of excellence
- Ongoing research and studies to advance economic opportunities in emerging sectors like healthcare and the creative industries

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Similar grant programs within the Greater Toronto Area municipalities offer similar projects outlined in the Vaughan Advantage plan. The programs outlined in this report continue to position Vaughan as a leader region-wide, allowing economic opportunities. Advantage Vaughan aligns the community with its peers to promote innovation and opportunity.

Similar programs operate in other municipalities, such as the BIA Innovation Fund (City of Toronto), Entrepreneurship and Innovation Fund (Regional Municipality of York), or Advance Brampton Fund (City of Brampton).

Talent City Vaughan is a first-of-its-kind workforce development initiative to be implemented by a municipality. The program has the ability to provide tangible workforce development opportunities for residents and employees of Vaughan-based businesses, while also strengthening the collaborative relationship between the City, local community and social service organizations, and Vaughan-based businesses.

Vaughan's businesses employ more workers than the resident labour force, making the City a net importer of jobs. To fill these positions, companies pull from the surrounding labour pools within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Talent City Vaughan provided additional support, through the granted organizations, to bolster regional workforce development with an additional 54 participants in training programs who resided outside of Vaughan, training a cumulative total of 196 participants that businesses can draw from to meet labour needs.

Conclusion

Upon approval of this report, Economic Development will finalize program marketing collateral and program launch dates. Key dates include:

- Talent City Vaughan program will open for Applications in Q2 2023
- Continuation of Starter Company Plus programming into 2023

Council and stakeholders can expect to receive communications packages on an ongoing basis.

For more information, please contact:

Raphael Costa, Director, Economic Development, ext. 8891

Michael Genova, Chief, Communications and Economic Development, ext. 8027

Attachment

1. Advantage Vaughan: Talent City Vaughan Results, Economic Development, January 2023

Prepared by

Christian Zavarella, Economic Development Coordinator, ext. 8095

Lindsay Davidson, Economic Development Officer, ext. 8892

Don De Los Santos, Manager, Economic Services, ext. 8874

Raphael Costa, Director, Economic Development, ext. 8891

Michael Genova, Chief, Communications and Economic Development, ext. 8027

Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Spensieri', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nick Spensieri, City Manager