



# ELGIN

BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTRE

A Community Futures Development Corporation

## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Facilitating Prosperity  
Strengthening Communities

## **2019/20 EBRC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Warren Silverthorn (President)

Phil Mauer (Past President)

Hetty Teuber (Vice President)

Scott Birkby (Treasurer)

Bob Ashcroft (Secretary)

John Gurr

Helen Haddow

Jim Hunter

Rob Quai

Karyn Silliker

Mike Streib

Jessica Goodall (Youth)

Lisa Johnston (Youth)

## **2019/20 EBRC STAFF**

Kevin Jackson (General Manager)

Janice Henwood  
(Assistant General Manager)

Lisa King  
(Accounting/Reporting Advisor)

Glenn Thorel (Business Advisor)

Cindy Hertwig (Business Advisor)

Mark Masseo (Business Advisor)

Jeff Sheridan (Business Advisor)

Rebecca Clarke  
(Marketing & Workshop Facilitator)

Blair Lyons (Custodian)



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the EBRC Annual General Meeting. As I prepare this message and take time to reflect on my experiences as a long-time Board member, I realize what a special organization this is. It's not just because we rock and that, year after year, we effectively promote economic development in our community.

The Elgin Business Resource Centre is exceptional because of its sense of team. Our shared commitment to strengthen our community creates a strong connection between staff, the General Manager and Directors of the Board, which results in an atmosphere where anything is possible. Thank you to all Directors and staff for your outstanding dedication.

There were many successes to be proud of in this past year. Some examples include:

- Self Employment Training Program (SET). We initiated a new series of training programs to serve new and existing businesses. For the first time ever, we delivered a SET program to the Oneida First Nations.
- We re-branded our business plan competition and The Pitch 2019 was expanded to include applicants from St. Thomas.
- We are increasing our online presence, thereby sharing our message with a wider base.
- We celebrated International Women's Day again this year at the Public Art Centre with featured guest speaker Reta Ismail of CTV News London. Reta delivered an inspirational speech, describing the many large obstacles she overcame on the way to her present-day success.

Looking ahead to the next year... like everyone else, we will be responding to the COVID-19 pandemic that swept the globe. Under General Manager Kevin Jackson's adept leadership, we responded swiftly to keep our staff safe. Our office was closed to the public on March 17th. I am grateful to the entire office team who quickly adapted to accommodate the new reality. The organization continues to run smoothly and efficiently, meeting and counselling our clients virtually.

Our focus continues to be on helping small business. In response to the financial hardships caused by the pandemic, we suspended loan and interest payments for three months for our loan clients. I am happy to report that we are responsible to distribute funding provided by the federal Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF). We have already helped several local struggling businesses.

## **President's Message (continued)**

The pandemic has created a new challenge that will dominate the coming months and I am confident that EBRC will be instrumental in helping our community not only weather these difficult times, but also find the silver lining in new opportunities that will emerge.

I'd like to close by thanking our two retiring Directors for their outstanding commitment and contributions to the Elgin Business Resource Centre. Both Helen Haddow and Mike Streib served as President and were exceptional leaders. In particular, I appreciate Mike's thought-provoking questions that helped us to fully evaluate proposals. Over the years Helen shared her insight into financial matters, allowing us to make better decisions. The expertise provided by Helen and Mike has been invaluable to the work we do at EBRC.

Thank you all for your interest in the Elgin Business Resource Centre and our community.

Sincerely,

Warren Silverthorn



## GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The Elgin Community Futures Development Corporation operating as the Elgin Business Resource Centre is proud to celebrate another very successful year and looks forward to a challenging but exceptional 2020/21. EBRC continues to be well respected in the CFDC community and remains a “best practices” CFDC.

All program goals and measurables were met or surpassed this past fiscal year. Our key performance indicator (KPI) targets show a very successful 2019/20. This is a direct reflection of a strong staff and an exceptional Board of Directors.

Our fifth annual Biz Pitch (formerly known as Enterprise Elgin Business Plan Competition) was the most successful ever. This year we expanded to include participation of St Thomas businesses. This and a new venue for our “Dragon’s Den” finale (the St Thomas Elgin Public Art Centre) helped provide the impetus to surpass the previous four successful years. The competition level was very impressive. Unfortunately, due to the Covid pandemic we will not be able to hold a Biz Pitch this year. We fully expect to come back with something even more special in 2021/22.

Our annual celebration of International Women’s Day was the last successful event held prior to the Covid shut down. Guest speaker Reta Ismail provided a fantastic inspirational presentation to compliment another splendid event. Attendance was high, and the reviews were again very positive.

Our first year of the REDi program was extremely successful. Our offices in Port Stanley and Aylmer maintained important contact and exposure throughout the entire County of Elgin. Our KPIs in the region continue to be very impressive in the first year of this new Regional Economic Development program.

Our successes at EBRC are many, far too many to mention them all here. However, I would like to acknowledge all of our community partners, government partners, associations and the entire business community of Elgin County in helping us to achieve these fantastic results.

As General Manager, I can assure you that even though the next year will be unusual and challenging due to the pandemic crisis, I genuinely look forward to continuing to work with this terrific Board of Directors and awesome staff to generate new ideas, facilitate our core programs and grow sustainable business in all of Elgin County. The future of Elgin County, although somewhat uncertain at this point, is still very promising. I think economic growth will flourish as we recover from this crisis. I am honoured and very excited to continue to serve as the General Manager of this incredible organization.

Thank you,  
Kevin Jackson

# 2019/2020 EBRC HIGHLIGHTS

## **EBRC LAUNCHES REDi (Rural Economic Development Initiative) program**

EBRC is dedicated to understanding the economic needs of rural business and to providing business services to all areas of Elgin County. In response to a loss of funding from the County of Elgin in early 2019, EBRC created the REDi program as a way for all of Elgin County to access business services and for EBRC to maintain relationships with community partners throughout Elgin County. The REDi program launched in April 2019 with the opening of two new office spaces in the downtowns of Port Stanley and Aylmer. The relationships that our Business Advisors have developed in our rural communities are strong, and EBRC is well respected for its commitment to rural economic development. This past year, Mark Masseo has been working closely with Southwold and West Elgin Municipal Economic Development Committees to re-establish connections in their business communities. Mark is also a co-founder of Port Stanley Experience, a committee that aims to improve the Port Stanley business experience. Members include EBRC, PS Festival Theatre, PS BIA, County Economic Dev, Fanshawe College, Employment Services Elgin and private PS individual businesses.

Throughout COVID-19 restrictions, we continue to support our business communities by phone and online.

## **FARM TO TABLE HORTON MARKET DOLLAR PROJECT**

The Farm to Table Market Dollars project was an EBRC initiative to get more fresh, local produce out to our community and to promote Horton Farmer's Market vendors. Without hesitation, local companies Dowler Karn, Forest City Castings and Gorman Rupp stepped up to sponsor the pilot, contributing funds to a total of \$5,000 in this first year. From May through September 2019, the St. Thomas Foodbank distributed one thousand \$5 coupons to be spent at the Horton Farmer's Market. By season's end, nearly one-third of the coupons had been redeemed at the Market, a tremendous success for a first and unpublished attempt. What started as a simple idea attracted corporate sponsors, community collaboration and caught the attention of our Southwestern Public Health Unit, asking us how they could support the program.

Due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the uncertainty of the Horton Farmer's Market 2020 operating season, plans for a second year of the Market Dollars project have been put on hold. With a commitment to our community's needs and with the full support of our three local sponsors, in April 2020, EBRC donated the remaining project funds equally between the St. Thomas Foodbank and Inn Out of the Cold (approximately \$1500. each).

## **SELF EMPLOYMENT TRAINING**

EBRC ran six Self-Employment Training (SET) workshop series over this past fiscal year, as well as a pilot of a new workshop format. Separating out business concept and validation, the new interactive Business Development Series was designed to serve entrepreneurs already in business as well as new startups, and received positive feedback from participants.

New this year, Oneida First Nations Economic Development approached EBRC about contracting employment training. Forging a new partnership, EBRC delivered its SET program to the Oneida First Nations community in February 2020.

Just as our counselling activities have moved to a virtual format, so too will our workshops and training. Stay tuned for upcoming online opportunities as we assess the needs of our business community and develop programming.

## **THE PITCH – EBRC BUSINESS PLAN 2019 COMPETITION**

In 2019, EBRC remodelled its business plan competition, including a new name. For the previous four years, the Enterprise Elgin Business Plan Competition had been exclusive to County applicants only. New this year, the Pitch 2019 opened to applicants from all of Elgin County, including the City of St. Thomas. The competition maintained its very popular dragon's den judging of finalists, as well as an amazing prize package offered up by generous local sponsors. Maria Fiallos Castillo of Streamliners Espresso Bar was selected as winner of the Pitch 2019 at its Grand Finale at the St. Thomas Public Arts Centre on November 20th. Also new this year, a second prize of \$1k cash was awarded to a county business, courtesy of County of Elgin. Winner of the County prize was Jade Rogers of Timbernook Elgin. Thank you to our many amazing sponsors who have supported this great event since the beginning. In only five years, this event has become one of EBRC's anticipated signature events and continues to gather momentum.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, the Pitch will not be held in 2020. Look for us again in 2021. We can't wait!

## **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION**

Another of EBRC's annual signature events is our International Women's Day Celebration. Held for a second year in the beautiful St. Thomas Elgin Public Arts Centre on March 9, this year's event was another sold out success with guest speaker Rita Ismail of CTV News London.

## **ELGIN BUSINESS WOMEN'S NETWORK (EBWN) MOVES IN**

When a premium office space became available in our Innovation Centre for Entrepreneurs (ICE) incubator last Spring, EBRC saw an opportunity in its ongoing initiative to promote women in business. We reached out to EBWN, and in June 2019, the EBWN hosted an Open House, showcasing their new professional space in ICE. We are so happy to collaborate with this great organization supporting women in business.

## **EBRC STEPS UP ITS ONLINE PRESENCE**

The more people who know about us, the more businesses we can help. The more people who know about our local businesses, the more successful our communities will be. With that in mind, EBRC has made marketing ourselves and our clients a priority. Within the last few years, we have created a new and clean website, updated our newsletter format, worked with our Western Ontario Community Futures organization to share local client success stories, and facilitated numerous workshops related to online marketing. All this in addition to the many clients we continue to counsel on this topic. Together with other regional Community Futures offices, we are working with a communications firm to expand our digital footprint and increase our search engine optimization. In January, EBRC hosted a filming crew and starred in a promotional video for the Community Futures program. Also in January, we created a new staff position dedicated to coordinating marketing and workshops. Our social media has never looked better and we have never been more connected.

## **EBRC RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

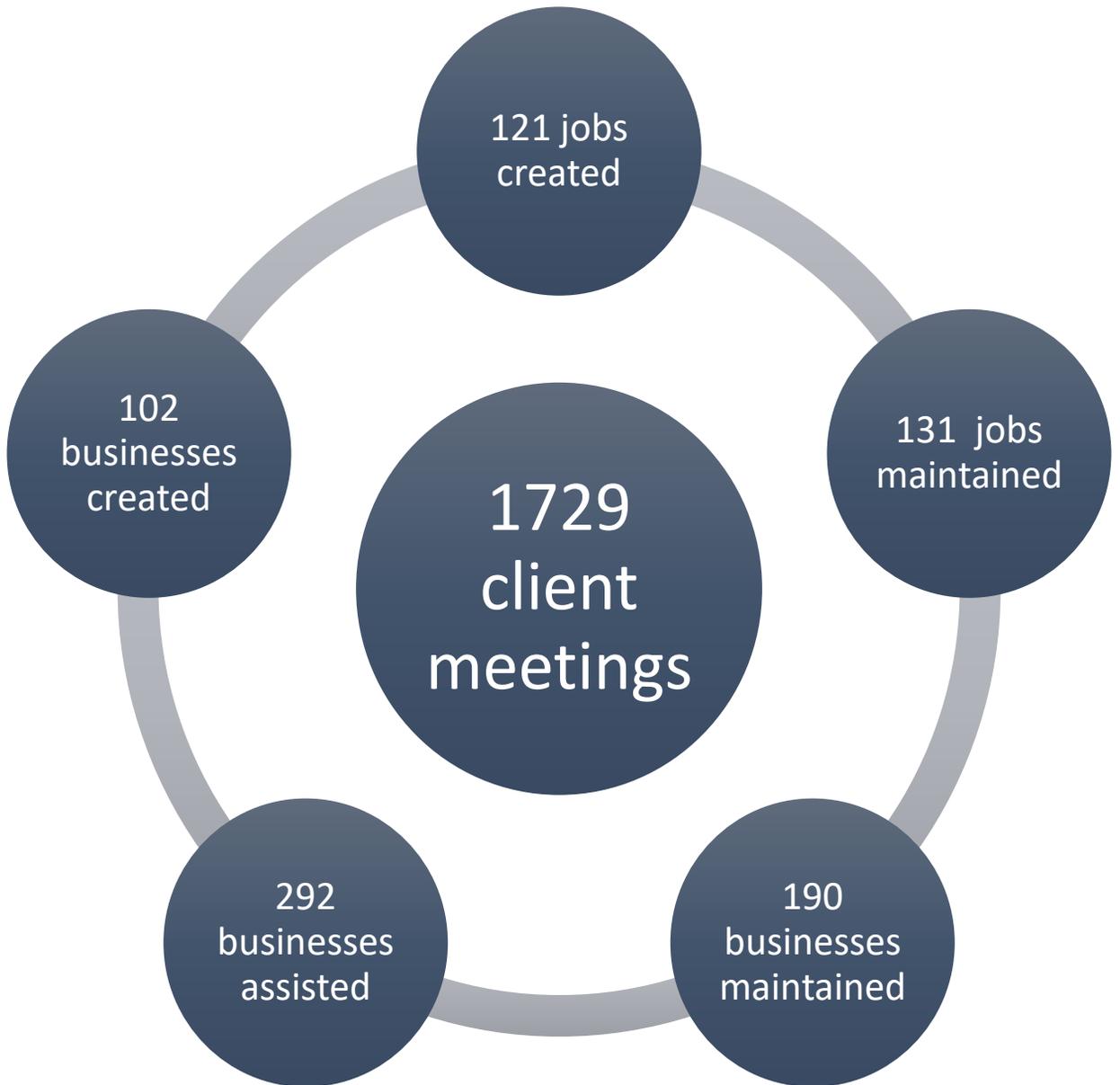
Since March when the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic took Ontario by storm, EBRC and the entire Community Futures program have been dedicated to assisting local business through significant challenges. One of our first actions was to suspend all loan payments, including interest, for our loan clients across the board for three months. Next, we created a new loan product with a low interest rate, the EBRC Emergency Business Support loan, to assist local businesses in need. To protect the safety of our staff and public, our office shut its doors to the public when the province declared a state of emergency on March 17, and all staff have continued to work remotely. We are reaching out to our clients and our communities, with personal calls and messages, business counselling, attendance at virtual meetings, collaborations with local community partners and government, and with each other. We are highly responsive on all platforms of social media, and we have added a COVID-19 resource page to our website. Our General Manager meets regularly with all levels of the Community Futures program, with FedDev, our Board and staff.

In May, the federal government announced release of the Regional Relief & Recovery Fund (RRRF) to provide financial assistance to small and medium-sized businesses affected by COVID-19 crisis. One stream of this fund is being administered through the Community Futures program. Within one week of receiving our funding, EBRC had started issuing loans. As new challenges arise, we are committed to finding new solutions to assist our local economy.

## **EBRC STAFF NEWS**

- Congratulations to Loans Manager Glenn Thorel on celebrating 20 years with EBRC on April 19, 2019.
- On May 29, 2019 EBRC staff participated in the Big Bike ride for Heart and Stroke, helping to raise over \$32k in St. Thomas in just two days.
- On September 25, 2019, EBRC hosted a “Renewing Partnerships in Lending” luncheon with a presentation and networking for about a dozen local financiers. Maintaining connection with the local banking and real estate community ensures we all understand how we can work together to best serve our local entrepreneurs.
- Jeff Sheridan’s last day as business advisor with EBRC was November 15, 2019. While we do miss Jeff, Mark Maseo and Glenn Thorel continue to serve clients throughout the County.
- On January 13, 2020 Rebecca Clarke joined the EBRC team as our Marketing / Workshop Facilitator. In addition to leading our social media, marketing and workshop delivery, Rebecca will be triaging clients.
- Cindy Hertwig, Business Advisor and SET Coordinator, retired at the end of March, 2020. We look forward to celebrating Cindy’s retirement with her when we are able to be together again.

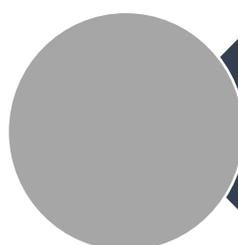
# 2019/20 IMPACT ON LOCAL BUSINESS



# 2019/20 LOANS PORTFOLIO



22 New Loans  
Added



\$683,414  
Annual Loans Total



\$1,160,088  
Annual Leverages



\$3,257,929  
Loan Portfolio Total

# LOANS BY SECTOR

Accommodation  
& Food Service  
(7)

Agriculture, Forestry,  
Fishing & Hunting  
(8)

Arts, Entertainment &  
Recreation  
(3)

Construction  
(5)

Educational Services  
(1)

Manufacturing  
(12)

Other Services  
(4)

Professional &  
Technical Services (4)

Retail Trade  
(7)

Transportation &  
Warehousing  
(4)

Wholesale Trade (2)

# Community Economic Development (CED)

Farm to Table Market Dollars Project • Port Stanley Experience  
• St. Joseph's Secondary School • Parkside Collegiate Institute  
Thunderstamps Robotics • Spellbound • St. Thomas Elgin Local  
Immigration Partnership • Elgin-St. Thomas Community  
Foundation • Elgin St. Thomas Workforce Development •  
Helen LeFrank Scholarship Award • Small Business Enterprise  
Centre St. Thomas • Plus Business Plan • Business  
Plan • Economic  
Dev. • Elgin St. Thomas Golf  
Township •  
Dowling • St.  
Thomas Chamber of Commerce •  
• Community • Ontario • Western Ontario CFDC  
Association Marketing & Advertising • Healthy Workplace  
Awards • Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus Economic  
Development Initiative • Business/HR Mentorship with  
Fanshawe College • Elgin St. Thomas Workforce Development  
Committee • Southwold Economic Development Committee •  
St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce Impact Awards •  
Kettle Creek Environmental Trust • Aylmer and Area Chamber  
of Commerce • Southwestern Public Health

123  
partners

23 projects