

**Municipality Of Chatham-Kent**  
**Community Development**  
**Economic Development Services**  
**Information Report**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**From:** Jamie Rainbird, Manager, Economic Development Services

**Date:** June 22 2021

**Subject:** Starter Company Plus Program Spring Cohort - Successful Applicants

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This report is for the information of Council.

**Background**

The Starter Company Plus Program, fully-funded by the Province of Ontario, is an initiative that provides training and mentorship geared towards assisting those entrepreneurs in need of business knowledge and support as well as providing the opportunity to apply for a business grant of up to \$5,000.

Upon completion of mandatory training via webinar, applicants that pursue the \$5,000 financial grant are required to submit a viable, sales-ready business plan and engage in follow up consultations for a minimum of three months with the Chatham-Kent Small Business Centre Business Consultants. This is a competitive process and a limited number of grants are awarded after each training session held twice yearly. Applicants must be able to contribute cash or in-kind of at least 25% of the grant amount.

**Eligibility**

- 18 years of age or older at the time of application
- Proposing a new company, expansion of an existing company or buying a business in Ontario
- Not attending school full-time or not returning to school
- Be a resident of Ontario
- Be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident
- Have not previously participated in the Starter Company Plus Program
- Not enrolled in other provincially employment or self-employment related programs that include or do not include financial assistance

- Not currently enrolled concurrently in any self-employment or entrepreneurship training/financing programs offered by government funded organizations (some exceptions may apply due to COVID-19)

Business or Proposed Business must:

- Be an independent, for-profit business venture based in Chatham-Kent
- Not be a business that relies on commissioned sales (MLM)
- Be a legal business in Ontario
- Not be a franchise
- Operated at arms-length from family business ventures
- Operate full-time as defined in the business plan
- Have a Master Business License or Articles of Incorporation, or register the business prior to launch
- Maintain a business banking account
- Follow all government rules and regulations and applicable by-laws for the operation of the business
- Demonstrate a viable and sales-ready business plan at the time of funding

### **Comments**

On February 22-26, 2021, a five-day training webinar took place with interested eligible entrepreneurs who were provided a wealth of business advice and knowledge. After the training was completed, those entrepreneurs interested in pursuing the financial grant, completed and submitted their viable business plan to the Small Business Centre. Based on a scoring matrix, the following ten businesses were awarded grants of \$5,000 each:

#### **Maple City Document Shredding**

Maple City Document Shredding is a locally-owned and operated confidential document shredding business that offers easy, safe and secure ways of shredding confidential and unwanted documents.

*“Maple City Document Shredding participated in the Starter Company Plus program in March 2021. After taking the week course, I found myself gaining new knowledge regarding business tips and other information I was not thinking about for my business that I now am. Since receiving the grant, we have purchased a sign that goes along the road, promoting our shredding services. We have had several customers that have come in stating they have seen our sign, which is why they are bringing in their shredding to us.*

*Considering we started our shredding company last summer, purchasing a sign was not in our budget. Also, with the grant money we are building a website so people can view our shredding services online. This grant has allowed us to promote our shredding service in ways we didn't plan possible, and we have had an increase of customers because of this grant."*

Jacklyn Janssen, Maple City Document Shredding

### Kaiya Farms & Market Garden

Kaiya Farms & Market Garden retails fresh, seasonal vegetables, flowers and starter plants grown in North Buxton.

*"The idea for Kaiya Farms & Market Garden started after the stillbirth of our daughter, Kaiya, in 2017. Along with the support of our families and communities, the light that helped us through that dark time was gardening. What began as a memorial garden under a lilac tree where Kaiya's ashes are buried, has grown into bountiful raised beds and straw bale gardens overflowing with fresh produce, smiles, and comfort.*

*Now, 4 years later, we are so excited to be launching our business and sharing our bounty of fresh and local seedlings, produce, and cut flowers grown in North Buxton, Ontario.*

*Thanks to the help and guidance of this Starter Business Plus program we were able to build the fundamentals we needed to launch a viable business providing starter plants, produce, and cut flowers for our local community. The information and guidance I received in the program was instrumental in the development of our business plan and also gave us the confidence to take the leap of faith into entrepreneurship. We are so grateful for the connections we've made with other businesses in Chatham-Kent and we are excited about the future of our business. We highly recommend this program to other aspiring entrepreneurs because it helped prepare us for success by giving me a head start on planning and execution of our business."*

Aimee Johnson, Kaiya Farms & Market Garden

### Marcus & Warren Studios

Marcus & Warren Studios offers memorable, creative, detailed photo and video marketing content. They lend their lens for image stills and video that can be used for commercial and social media campaigns.

*"Our names are Tishon Jno-Baptiste and Kyle Gardiner we are the co-founders, cinematographers and lead creatives of Marcus & Warren Studios. A cinematography that is dedicated to amplifying the voices of marginalized communities by creating immersive and impactful content. Our team is also well-known for our level of creativity and our personal editorial twist. We take pride in our ability to capture the aesthetic of a brand while producing content that amplifies support beyond policies and procedures. We make sure the community understands your commitment to making Chatham Kent*

*community more inclusive and accepting for all. We also offer tailored session packages for individuals or families looking to capture timeless candid moments. We want everyone who shoots with Marcus & Warren to feel like a star!*

*With that being said, we are so grateful to have been included in the Starter Company Plus Program administrated through the Chatham Kent Small Business Centre. From day one, we gained valued knowledge from the program, along with invaluable personal experiences shared by the presenter. It was amazing to spend time with other Chatham Kent small businesses owners and have the opportunity to learn from different perspective from different fields.*

*Our experience literally changed our lives. By the end of the weeklong program, we had already gained so much information, that we felt like we had already been granted the prize. It was an absolute honor to be chosen as one of the recipients of the grant portion. We are so thankful to the Municipality of Chatham Kent and the Small Business Centre for uplifting our efforts of creating a safer and more inclusive for all who live in this wonderful community.*

*Small business owners or anyone who has a dream and is ready to pursue it, make sure you find out more about this program! Anyone with questions about how we can help your refresh your brands marketing to include bringing awareness to your brand as a community ally or safe spaces. Do you have a special day coming up? Is it something that you want to look back on in the future and be transported back that moment? Feel free to contact us at 226-626-8495 for your free 15 min consultation.”*

Tishon Jno-Baptiste and Kyle Gardiner, Marcus and Warren Studios

### The Mill Co., Dresden

Hi! My name is Justin Gingerich and I am the owner and operator of The Mill Co. We are a local lumber producer operating out of Dresden, Ontario specializing in live edge lumber often used for boardroom tables, dining room tables, bar tops, countertops etc. The Mill Co. sources and salvages all of its logs locally from homeowners, farmers, arborists etc. We not only stop these logs from ending up in the landfill, but we also preserve them and give them a second life in people's homes as works of art that are both functional and beautiful.

All of our products are professionally milled and kiln dried before being sold to our consumers. We are currently growing our inventory at a rapid rate to provide a more consistent source of all domestic hardwoods found in Ontario. We take pride in providing great customer service, high quality products at affordable prices for all makers and DIY'ers. If you haven't checked us out yet you can always see what we are up to via social media on Facebook under 'The Mill Co.' or on Instagram at 'themillcompany'. We would love to hear from you. If you have questions about our offerings, I can be reached at justin@themill.co or at 519-384-3412.

*“The Starter Company program was great! The timing of the classes was perfect, as it was convenient to be able to do the course online as well. This allowed for much more*

*flexibility during the day if I had to step out to take a business call or deal with anything that had come up.*

*The information in the course was invaluable. From the information on marketing and creating a business plan, to the financial side of the business. It showed me and helped me plan for potential obstacles that are likely to come up and how to overcome them. For me, the financial side was so important. I was taught how to calculate and utilize my gross profit margins on all products and how this can or should impact my prices to the consumer. There was a lot of information and all of it relevant to my business and made me re-analyze parts of it. I had been running my business part-time for 5 years before taking the leap into full-time in October of 2020. The timing of this program was ideal for me and has made me even more sure of the decision I made to pursue it full-time!*

*A big thank you to the team at CKSBC and their team. Without them, I would have never known about this program or enrolled in it. It has been such a great experience and I am so thankful I was chosen as one of the participants.*

*Thank you so much for all of your hard work and dedication to helping small businesses grow!"*

Justin Gingerich, The Mill Co.

### Locally Germinated

Locally Germinated is a small-scale, diverse, regenerative farm from Tilbury. We grow a large variety of vegetables, herbs & fruits for our local community through our weekly Fresh & Local veggie basket. We used to run our community supported agriculture program through retail locations in Windsor but decided we wanted to provide our veggies closer to home. We provide home delivery to within 20 kms. of Tilbury and offer no-contact pickup at our farm. All of our produce is harvested within 24 hours of deliveries, to maintain the freshest quality. Our motto is Eat The Rainbow because we grow a lot of uniquely colourful varieties of veggies.

*"The Starter Company Plus program has been an enormous help in many ways. The week-long training helped me put the finishing touches on my business plan while also reassuring me that I did indeed have a good handle on what I needed to do. That reassurance from business professionals, was enough to give me the boost I needed to get started with my business relaunch. The grant money was instrumental in helping me to spread the word for my business. It provided the funds I needed for marketing materials at a time when income was low.*

*A big problem with farming is that all the costs are incurred months before there is any product to sell and that inhibits a lot of young people from getting started. My two advisors have been fantastic to work with. They give me great feedback and ideas, they're available when I need them, and they're always encouraging. Getting ideas from different sources is so valuable to me because I'm working very independently & diverse perspectives are crucial.*

*While my expertise is in growing vegetables, it's been a tremendous boost to my business to get help with the marketing side of things."*

Rashel, Head Grower, Locally Germinated

### VG Plumbing, Blenheim

VG Plumbing is a plumbing company that has been serving Chatham-Kent since 2020. VP Plumbing owner Jarred VanGassen has 9 years' experience with a wide variety of commercial, residential and industrial plumbing knowledge. Demonstrating knowledgeable, professional and reliable service with every job, VG Plumbing is the right choice for any plumbing need.

*The Starter Company Plus Program offered by Small Business Chatham-Kent has been extremely helpful to VG Plumbing. The weeklong webinar from Biz Launch that was provided by the Starter Company Plus Program, provided me with the right tools to be successful, organized and a well-established small business owner. The webinar covered a variety of different topics pertaining to small businesses such as, establishing a suitable business structure and plan, properly advertising your business, establishing a workable budget for your business and so much more.*

*VG Plumbing was also very fortunate to be one of the successful candidates chosen for a grant provided by the Chatham- Kent Small Business Center. This helped VG Plumbing tremendously by helping us to purchase special tools and materials needed in order to obtain a great first start in business. Thanks to Small Business Chatham-Kent, VG Plumbing will continue to serve and help build this community with only exceptional, knowledgeable and reliable service."*

Jarred VanGassen, VP Plumbing

### Rewers' Kitchen

Rewers' Kitchen is a fully certified and licensed home-based commercial kitchen producing mouth-watering flavor combinations in handcrafted pierogi based on only the freshest produce and a healthy helping of tradition.

*"In 2021, I was a successful grant applicant for the Starter Company Plus program administered by the Chatham-Kent Small Business Centre. I was initially introduced to the program when I contacted the local Chatham-Kent Small Business Centre to inquire about the parameters involved in setting up a small business. Exploring my options, I knew I wanted to remain within Chatham-Kent and had several transferable skills acquired over 25 plus years of employment.*

*I was quickly introduced to a representative with the Chatham-Kent Small Business Centre, and I gained valuable advice. Through the advice gained in the Starter Company Plus program, I began networking within our local community. The information provided within the content of the program has been invaluable to the*

*commencement of my small business. The format was well delivered and there was ample opportunity to ask questions and gain feedback.*

*I have established a small commercial kitchen in my home. I offer frozen small batch artisan pierogi both authentic traditional flavours and more. Initially, I planned to only sell my product from my home and eventually perhaps build to supplying wholesale. I quickly realized the benefits of social media advertising and found there was interest in my product via wholesale quicker than I first presumed.*

*It is difficult when you do not have a storefront to grow a business and networking has proved to be essential in doing so. I have made local connections with growers and small businesses and am working to build these relationships. The importance of procurement of goods has been a steep learning curve and has driven me more to source locally for my supplies. Partnering with other local businesses and sharing in their knowledge has been pivotal. The importance of a “Local” “woman owned” business is an aspect I want to grow. Living in Chatham-Kent and providing a unique product helps in serving diverse populations that Chatham-Kent is continually establishing.*

*Without a doubt, I would not have been this far into the next chapter of my life as a new business owner, if it were not for the invaluable information I have gained by participating in the Starter Company Plus program. It is very possible that I may not have been in business. The grant has assisted me with equipment, supplies and marketing to grow my business. I look forward to exploring in the continued supports that our community provides its business owners to continue to grow business within Chatham-Kent.”*

Karen Blain, Founder, Rewers’ Kitchen

#### Domonique Harvieux Nails, Chatham

Dominique Harvieux Nails is a nail salon and boutique located in Chatham-Kent. It is a clean, comfortable, fashionable and minimal in interior design. All of the nail services are completed with attention, care, and patience. Domonique Harvieux Nails is also a location to purchase “in-trend” minimalistic apparel, tote bags, wine tote bags, earrings and other locally made/small business made fashion items.

#### Dana’s Kitchen & Catering, Blenheim

Small diner located in Blenheim serving convenient, healthy, homemade and local fresh food options as well as offering catering services.

#### **Consultation**

No other departments were consulted in the preparation of this information report.

### **Financial Implications**

All grant and training costs associated with this program are covered by funding through the Province of Ontario. Economic Development Services' staff provide mentoring, business plan and business advice assistance to the small business entrepreneurs through their normal job duties.

Prepared by:

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Attachments: None

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