

Small Business Incentives Directive

Date Approved: February 23, 2026

Chief Administrative Officer: "Original Signed –
Travis Peter"

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This directive seeks to set out the procedures to review, approve, and administer the Small Business Incentives Program.

2. Revision History

Approval Date	Revision Number	Modification
<i>August 25, 2025</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>New Document</i>
<i>February 23, 2026</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>Various Amendments</i>

3. Persons/Areas Affected

- 3.1. This Directive applies to all eligible Small Businesses that reside in Sturgeon County, the Program Review Officer, the Review Committee - members of the Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB).

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1. The County may, subject to budget approval and available funds, provide reimbursement-based incentives to encourage investment in local small businesses that:
 - a) maintains a permanent physical location within the County;
 - b) creates Community Wealth;
 - c) is in Good Standing with the County; and
 - d) achieves one or more of the following objectives:
 - i. Operational efficiency;
 - ii. New technology adoption;
 - iii. Enhanced marketing; or
 - iv. Crime prevention and/or reduction.
- 4.2. Incentives are funded annually through the County's municipal budget, approved by Council, or from other sources identified by the Chief Administrative Officer.
- 4.3. In no way shall the provision of an incentive from the County be seen as an endorsement of products, services, or ideas of any Business or Applicant.

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- 4.4. Applications are reviewed in an impartial manner by EDAB. External expertise may be sought to evaluate applications and/or review reporting.
 - 4.5. Incentives will be provided as a reimbursement for a portion of Eligible Expenses at the completion of the project, and only if all of the eligibility criteria have been met. In all cases, the maximum amount of Eligible Expenses that will be reimbursed will be the lower of;
 - a) The maximum amount allowed under this Directive; or
 - b) 50% of Eligible Expenses incurred as part of the project.
 - 4.6. Businesses that receive an Incentive will be published on the County's website annually and included in regular reporting to Council.
 - 4.7. Applicants found to have falsified documents and/or reports, or submitted information that is false or misleading, shall immediately reimburse the County any funds received from an incentive, and will be prohibited from applying for any additional incentives for a period of ten (10) years.
 - 4.8. The Chief Administrative Officer may make minor exceptions to the Small Business Incentives Directive in consultation with EDAB, and within the Policy mandated by Council.
 - 4.9. Applicants may appeal a decision of EDAB regarding eligibility of an application directly to Council.
- 5. Definitions**
- 5.1. Applicant – means the individual, organization, or business applying for financial support through a Small Business Incentive Program.
 - 5.2. Application Date – means the date in which the application was acknowledged as received by the Program Review Officer.
 - 5.3. Asset – means:
 - a) A single piece of equipment;
 - b) Components which form a single technology or system;
 - c) Digital or electronic application; or
 - d) Software and/or software licencing.

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5.4. Business – means:

- a) a commercial, merchandising, or industrial activity or undertaking;
- b) a profession, trade, occupation, calling, or employment; or
- c) an activity providing goods or services.

For additional clarity, not-for-profit associations, however organized or formed, including a co-operative or association of persons, are not considered eligible.

5.5. Council – means the municipal Council of Sturgeon County.

5.6. County – means the municipal district of Sturgeon County.

5.7. CAO – means the Chief Administrative Officer for the County.

5.8. Community Wealth – means economic well-being of the community, including adequate opportunities for skilled employment, environmental stewardship, economic stability and growth, expansion of public service by strengthening of the municipal tax-base, and reduction of economic leakage.

5.9. Consumer Grade Computer Technology – means computer technology designed, marketed and sold for use by consumers for their personal or household use without specialized or non-generic components.

5.10. Development Permit – means a document as defined by the Land Use Bylaw.

5.11. Eligibility Criteria – means terms that specify who qualifies to receive support through the Program and/or the actions necessary to qualify for the Incentives prior to receipt of funds.

5.12. Eligible Expenses – means those expenses related to an approved project, exclusive of GST, as outlined in the Program Agreement.

For additional clarity, consumable goods and supplies related to an Asset purchased as part of an application, are not considered Eligible Expenses. Labour costs explicitly related to the installation of an Asset purchased as part of an application are considered Eligible Expenses.

5.13. Franchise – means a Business operating with authorization granted by a government or company to carry out specific commercial activities, or acting as an agent for a company's products and/or services.

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- 5.14. Good Standing – means a Business and/or Applicant that:
- is not in arrears on taxes, utilities, fees, fines, or other amounts owed to the County; and
 - is in compliance with the County’s Land Use Bylaw and has obtained all necessary Development Permits.
 - Is in compliance with all applicable provincial and federal codes, legislation, permits, and regulations, including but not limited to the Safety Codes Act.
 - Is not engaged in active and/or ongoing legal proceedings against the County.
- 5.15. Incentive – means a financial contribution where Eligibility Criteria and/or conditions are compulsory for the recipient, and there is a formal application/selection process, and a future obligation is attached.
- 5.16. Land Use Bylaw – means the Land Use Bylaw of Sturgeon County.
- 5.17. Local Business – means a Business with a physical location within the corporate limits of Sturgeon County. For added clarity, a Franchise that maintains a physical location within the County but has a corporate headquarters or offices outside the County would be considered a Local Business.
- 5.18. Personal Use – means assets, equipment, initiatives, and/or property that is used for a purpose other than to directly benefit the business.
- 5.19. Policy – means the Small Business Incentives Policy as approved by Council.
- 5.20. Program – means the small business incentives, which is a set of incentives that establishes clearly defined objectives, terms, conditions, provisions, and eligibility criteria for a recipient to have access to public funds through an objective assessment and selection process.
- 5.21. Program Agreement – means a legal instrument documenting the terms and conditions under which an applicant receives public funds through the Program.
- 5.22. Program Review Officer – means a staff member appointed by the CAO on the Review Committee.
- 5.23. Property – means a parcel of land described in a Certificate of Title and contained within defined lot lines.

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5.24. Review Committee – The Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) with responsibility for evaluating applications received under this Policy. The Review Committee makes recommendations regarding the Program.

5.25. Safety Codes Act – means the Safety Codes Act of Alberta.

5.26. Small Business – means a business located within the municipal boundaries of Sturgeon County with more than a single employee, but less than 25 employees. For added clarity, this includes both full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees.

6. Responsibilities

6.1. Chief Administrative Officer shall:

- a) Approve, within signing authority, Program Agreements between the County and the Applicant;
- b) Identify sources of funding; and
- c) Where appropriate, make minor exceptions to the Small Business Incentives Directive, in consultation with the Review Committee, and within the Policy mandated by Council.

6.2. Council shall:

- a) Approve the Small Business Incentive Policy, which governs this Directive;
- b) Hear appeals from Applicants on the Review Committee’s interpretation of the Application; and
- c) Review regular reporting on successful Applicants.

6.3. The Economic Development Advisory Board shall:

- a) Act as the Review Committee with responsibility to review and evaluate applications in an objective manner;
- b) Seek additional information when necessary to make an informed decision on an application;
- c) Establish the terms of the Program Agreements, including but not limited to the amount of Eligible Expenses to be reimbursed;
- d) Provide additional definition and interpretation of the boundaries and terms of the Incentives as required;
- e) Recommend changes and amendments to this Directive;
- f) Evaluate the Incentives and make recommendations to the Chief Administrative Officer regarding their continuation, cessation, and/or ongoing implementation.

6.4. The Program Review Officer shall:

- a) Serve as the County’s primary contact for receipt of applications;

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- b) Evaluate applications to ensure all required information is provided by the Applicant;
- c) Acknowledge receipt of complete applications;
- d) Maintain records of decisions and discussions of the Review Committee; and
- e) Prepare appropriate schedules and documentation pursuant to the Directive.

6.5. Applicants for the Program shall:

- a) Provide all documentation required by the application, and requested by the Review Committee;
- b) Adhere to the stipulations and conditions of the Program Agreement;
- c) Obtain and maintain all necessary permits and licenses;
- d) Provide all necessary reports and documentation at the conclusion of the project; and
- e) Not submit documentation that is false, incomplete, incorrect, or misleading.

7. Procedures

7.1. SMALL BUSINESS EDUCATION INCENTIVE

a) PURPOSE

- i. The purpose of this Incentive is to encourage Small Business owners to develop additional skillsets and knowledge through educational programs, courses, seminars, conferences, or workshops.

b) ELIGIBILITY

- i. The Applicant must meet the following minimum requirements to be eligible to apply for the Small Business Education Incentive:
 - 1. must be a Small Business located within the municipal boundaries of Sturgeon County;
 - 2. must be in Good Standing with the County; and
 - 3. applicant must be the owner of a Small Business.
- ii. Applicants, Property, or businesses that have received funds through the Small Business Education Incentive within the previous 3 years will not be eligible.

c) ELIGIBLE ASSISTANCE

- i. Maximum funding allowed under the Small Business Education Incentive is as follows:
 - 1. not to exceed 50% of eligible costs for goods and services supplied; and
 - 2. not to exceed \$5,000 per application.

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- ii. Amount of funds are allocated at the discretion of the Program Review Officer based on the maximum amount under the program, available funds, and the scope and nature of the project.
 - iii. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, participation in:
 - 1. programs;
 - 2. courses;
 - 3. seminars;
 - 4. webinars;
 - 5. conferences; and/or
 - 6. workshops.
 - iv. Eligible costs include:
 - 1. Registration/tuition fees; and/or
 - 2. Course related textbooks and/or manuals.
 - v. Ineligible costs include but are not limited to:
 - 1. travel and accommodation;
 - 2. salaries;
 - 3. operational costs;
 - 4. hosting and/or hospitality;
 - 5. food and beverage;
 - 6. printing fees;
 - 7. internet fees; and/or
 - 8. personal equipment/materials.
- d) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS
- i. Applications submitted under the Small Business Education Incentive must include the following components:
 - 1. a completed application form;
 - 2. detailed description of the educational activity to be undertaken, including course syllabus (if applicable), educational topic, program duration, completion requirements, diplomas or certificates to be awarded upon completion, etc;
 - 3. detailed program costing; and
 - 4. detailed description of how participation in the educational activity will support the Applicant and their business in achieving the objectives of the Program as outlined in Section 4.1 d) of this Directive.

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e) APPLICATION PROCESS

- i. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Program Review Officer, prior to submitting an application.
- ii. Completed applications will be submitted to the Program Review Officer.
- iii. The Program Review Officer will acknowledge receipt of the application and the Application Date.
- iv. Costs related to an educational program that are incurred prior to the Application Date will not be eligible for the Incentive.
- v. Costs related to an educational program incurred after the Application Date, but before the Program Agreement is executed may be considered eligible at the discretion of the Review Committee.

f) REIMBURSEMENT OF PROJECT COSTS

- i. County funds will only be provided once relevant documentation and reporting are received and approved by the County, and only at the conclusion of the activities identified in the Program Agreement.
- ii. County funds will only be provided for eligible costs/expenses as identified by the Program Agreement and shall be the lesser of:
 1. The allocation approved by the Review Committee; or
 2. The portion of actual costs/expenses as calculated in accordance with the maximum eligible assistance.
- iii. County funds will only be provided for the educational activity identified in the Program Agreement; no other costs/expenses will be eligible.
- iv. Applicants will not be eligible for reimbursement if at the time of completion, they are in arrears for taxes, utilities, fines or other fees owed to the County.
- v. The Applicant is responsible for payment of all invoices, and costs associated with the activity.

7.2. SMALL BUSINESS EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY INCENTIVE

a) PURPOSE

- i. The purpose of this Incentive is to encourage Small Business owners to invest in equipment and technology that will significantly increase the efficiency, productivity, security, and competitiveness of their business.

b) ELIGIBILITY

- i. The Applicant must meet the following minimum requirements to be eligible to apply for the Equipment and Technology Incentive:

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1. Must be a Small Business within the municipal borders of Sturgeon County;
 2. Must maintain a valid Development Permit issued pursuant to the County's Land Use Bylaw;
 3. must be in Good Standing with the County; and
 4. applicant must be the owner of a Small Business.
 - ii. Applicants, Property, and businesses that have received funds through the Program within the previous 3 years will not be eligible.
- c) ELIGIBLE ASSISTANCE
 - i. Maximum funding allowed under the Equipment and technology Incentive is as follows:
 1. not to exceed 50% of eligible costs for goods and services; and
 2. not to exceed \$5,000 per application for a single Asset.
 - ii. Funds are allocated at the discretion of the Review Committee, based on the maximum amount under the Incentive, available funds, as well as the scope and nature of the project.
 - iii. Eligible Assets that can be funded include, but are not limited to:
 1. Automation software or equipment;
 2. Existing equipment replacement (where replacement creates efficiencies and/or improves productivity);
 3. Computer hardware;
 4. Smart inventory control systems;
 5. Security enhancements such as exterior security lighting, fencing, shutters, shatter-proof glass, bars, gates or security cameras, GPS tracking equipment, and other loss-prevention technology and/or equipment;
 6. Computer software; and/or
 7. Electronic payment and Point-of-Sale systems.
 - iv. Ineligible costs include but are not limited to:
 1. Lease or rental costs;
 2. Vehicles;
 3. Cellular phones;
 4. Consumable equipment and supplies related to an eligible Asset;
 5. Consumer Grade Computer Technology which includes but is not limited to most laptops, tablets and other mobile devices, standard bookkeeping and/or word processing software unless the aforementioned is part of an overall technology package;

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6. Computers that are not exclusively dedicated to operating a business system;
7. Assets that may be for personal use; and/or
8. Assets that were utilized prior to the Application Date.

d) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- i. Applications submitted under the Equipment and Technology Incentive must include the following component:
 1. A completed application form;
 2. Detailed description of the Asset to be acquired;
 3. Detailed costing including documentation verifying costs/expenses; and
 4. Detailed description of how the Asset will improve efficiency, productivity, and/or competitiveness.
 5. Detailed description of how the asset will support the Applicant and their business in achieving the objectives of the Program as outlined in Section 4.1 d) of this Directive.

e) APPLICATION PROCESS

- i. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Program Review Officer, prior to submitting an application.
- ii. Completed applications will be submitted to the Program Review Officer.
- iii. The Program Review Officer will acknowledge receipt of the application and the Application Date.
- iv. Costs related to the purchase, licensing, or installation of the Asset incurred prior to the Application Date will not be eligible for the Incentive.
- v. Costs related to the purchase, licensing, or installation of the Asset, incurred after the Application Date, but before the Program Agreement is executed may be considered eligible at the discretion of the Review Committee.

f) REIMBURSEMENT OF PROJECT COSTS

- i. County funds will only be provided once relevant documentation and reporting are received and approved by the County.
- ii. County funds will only be provided for eligible costs/expenses as identified by the Program Agreement and shall be the lesser of:
 1. the allocation approved by the Review Committee; or
 2. the portion of actual costs/expenses as calculated in accordance with the maximum eligible assistance.
- iii. County funds will only be provided for the purpose identified in the Program Agreement, no other costs/expenses will be eligible.

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- iv. Applicants will not be eligible for reimbursement if at the time of completion, they are in arrears for taxes, utilities, fines, or other fees owed to the County.
- v. The Applicant is responsible for payment of all invoices, and costs.
- vi. Should the eligible Asset be sold, returned, or otherwise disposed within 3 years of the Application Date, the Applicant may be required to repay the funding provided.
- vii. Periodic Program inspections may be conducted by the County for 3 years following the application date to verify that the eligible Asset has not been sold, returned, or disposed of.

7.3. SMALL BUSINESS MARKETING INCENTIVE

a) PURPOSE

- i. The purpose of this Incentive is to assist Small Businesses improve the quality and effectiveness of their marketing efforts, and to help them reach a broader market.

b) ELIGIBILITY

- i. The Applicant must meet the following minimum requirements to be eligible to apply for the Small Business Marketing Incentive:
 - 1. Must be a Small Business within the municipal borders of Sturgeon County;
 - 2. Must maintain a valid Development Permit issued pursuant to the County's Land Use Bylaw;
 - 3. must be in Good Standing with the County; and
 - 4. applicant must be the owner of a Small Business or their legal representative; and
- ii. Applicants, Property and businesses that have received funding through the Program within the previous 3 years will not be eligible.

c) ELIGIBLE ASSISTANCE

- i. Maximum funding allowed under the Small Business Marketing Incentive is as follows:
 - 1. Not to exceed 50% of eligible costs for goods and services; and
 - 2. Not to exceed \$5,000 per application for an eligible project
- ii. Funds are allocated at the discretion of the Review Committee based on the maximum amount under the program, available funds, as well as the scope and nature of the project.
- iii. Eligible projects and their related costs that can be funded include, but are not limited to:

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1. Development of a marketing plan;
 2. Development of marketing materials and/or advertising for the implementation of a marketing plan or strategic marketing project;
 3. Marketing and promotion of online presence;
 4. E-commerce and web development (specific to e-commerce) including:
 - a. Establishing logistics & shipping processes (for additional clarity, direct shipping and postage are not considered eligible costs)=
 - b. Supply chain management
 - c. Cyber-security
- iv. Eligible costs include:
1. Professional fees related to the development of a marketing plan;
 2. Website/mobile site design and development;
 3. Setup fees and subscriptions (not to exceed 1-year) to e-commerce service providers;
 4. Setup fees and hosting costs (not to exceed 1-year) for websites designed to facilitate e-commerce activities;
 5. Setup costs associated with supply chain and shipping/logistics;
 6. Graphic design;
 7. Filming and film production;
 8. Brand development;
 9. Manufacturing/production costs associated with marketing materials;
 10. Sign production and installation;
 11. Advertising costs as part of a marketing plan; and/or
 12. Translation of marketing materials.
- v. Ineligible costs include but are not limited to:
1. Advertising fees not part of a marketing plan;
 2. Sponsorship fees;
 3. Website hosting/maintenance fees;
 4. Staff salaries;
 5. Conference/tradeshows/industry event registrations or related fees;
 6. Hospitality, food and/or beverage;
 7. Travel and accommodations;
 8. Uniforms and corporate apparel/clothing;
 9. Postage, telecommunications, and other related office costs including rent/lease expenses; and/or
 10. In-kind labour or materials.

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d) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- i. Applications submitted under the Small Business Marketing Incentive must include the following components:
 1. A completed application form;
 2. Detailed description of the project;
 3. For projects related to the development of marketing/advertising materials a detailed marketing plan is required;
 4. Detailed costing including documentation verifying costs and expenses; and
 5. Detailed description of how the project will be utilized by the Applicant and how it will help them reach a broader market.
 6. Detailed description of how the project will support the Applicant and their business in achieving the objectives of the Program as outlined in Section 4.1 d) of this Directive.

e) APPLICATION PROCESS

- i. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Program Review Officer, prior to submitting an application.
- ii. Completed applications will be submitted to the Program Review Officer.
- iii. The Program Review Officer will acknowledge receipt of the application and the Application Date.
- iv. Costs related to the project incurred prior to the Application Date will not be eligible for the Incentive.
- v. Costs related to the project incurred after the Application Date, but before the Program Agreement is executed may be considered eligible at the discretion of the Review Committee.

f) REIMBURSEMENT OF PROJECT COSTS

- i. County funds will only be provided once relevant documentation and reporting are received and approved by the County.
- ii. County funds will only be provided for eligible costs/expenses as identified by the Program Agreement and shall be the lesser of:
 1. The allocation approved by the Review Committee; or
 2. The portion of actual costs/expenses as calculated in accordance with the maximum eligible assistance
- iii. County funds will only be provided for the purpose identified in the Program Agreement, no other costs/expenses will be eligible.
- iv. Applicants will not be eligible for reimbursement if at the time of completion, they are in arrears for taxes, utilities, fines, or other fees owed to the County

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- v. The Applicant is responsible for payment of all invoices, and costs associated with the Asset.

8. Cross Review