

Report to Council

Report Title:	Municipal Modernization Program Phase II Implementation Funding		
Prepared By:	Fiona Hamilton, Clerk, Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer, and Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer		
Department:	Administration		
Date:	March 9, 2021		
Report Number:	CAO2021-05	File Number:	C11AD, F11
Attachments:	Modernization Project Scope		

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby approves Report Number CAO2021-05 – Municipal Modernization Program Phase II Implementation Funding, prepared by Fiona Hamilton, Clerk, Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer and Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer and in doing so approves applying for funding for a Digital Strategy that would fund various software programs to support digital modernization, service integration and alternative service delivery models.

Report:

Background:

In 2019, the Province introduced the “Municipal Modernization Payment” Program and Brockton received funding for two studies – the Land Use Planning and Development Review and the Purchasing and Procurement Review.

The second phase of funding for the implementation phase of the program is now accepting applications. This phase is for implementation of projects that will increase efficiency and effectiveness and lower long term costs as a result of the reviews or consistent with the reviews. The letter associated with the program suggests the government “is excited to learn about your project applications that support the following priorities:

- Digital modernization
- Service integration
- streamlined development approvals
- Share service/ alternative delivery models.

Analysis:

Staff have reviewed the recommendations made in both of the Reviews which contained recommendations that will improve the process related to Purchasing & procurement, improve Brockton's web presence through the design and implementation of a Development Portal and the use of the Bids and Tenders site for procurement. The Land Use Planning and Development Review also mentioned the need for a method of tracking planning applications to help quantify staff needs and improve process through the ability to accept building permit applications electronically. Further, the council meeting process is central to all municipal services including land use planning as the planning meetings occur at the beginning of the Council meetings. Therefore, use of the e-scribe software also allows developers to easily access how similar application types may have been decided in the past. In addition to these two recent reviews, staff have additional digital strategy improvements that would aid in streamlining internal/external processes to create efficiencies that have been included to provide improved digital services to the residents as well as operational efficiencies.

Budgeting Software: Est. \$60,000

The Municipality would include a Budget software system that would realize extensive savings to the allocation of staff time and create efficiencies and also improved outcomes. These savings would be realized by the decrease in staff time required to input and compile the proposed and final budget documents by the CFO specifically. Resulting in the ability to focus on other aspects of the department that need improvement. Currently, staff are utilizing multiple (100's) of Excel spreadsheets which can lead to human errors. Although, staff do their best to eliminate these errors, there have been occasions where miscalculations have been presented to Council and do not provide efficient information when trying to complete and approve the Municipal Budget. Staff have been looking at the FMW Budgeting software that is currently used by the County and some of the neighbouring municipalities. The software includes:

- Operational Planning – provides the tools required to produce single or multi-year operating budgets and plans
- Capital Planning – supports the planning for capital projects, which may span over multiple years
- Salary Planning – an advanced compensation planning system which facilitates the real time creation of detailed and accurate plans and forecasting
- FIR – a module which provides an easy resource to link our data to the Financial Information Return (FIR) which is a tool the Municipality currently does not have
- Reporting – the software will produce the budget reports in a clean, clear, and time efficient manner

E-Scribe Webcasting: Est. \$24,000.00

As previously discussed, the e-scribe webcasting software allow Council the opportunity to have "hybrid" meetings, whereby some staff or Council members attend the meetings remotely, while other may be present in person. This approach creates efficiencies as staff may only need to attend for their particular item decreasing the amount of staff overtime. The E-scribe software also provides a benefit for developers as identified in the Land Use Planning and Development Review as they could view how similar planning applications were considered by accessing a very specific and accessible aspect of the meeting. While the 2021 Municipal Budget included funding to implement webcasting starting later in the year, staff recommend applying for the full yearly amount (\$24,000.00) as the funding can be spent in 2022 as well.

E-Permitting Software: Est. \$15,000.00

Another component mentioned in the Land Use Planning and Development Review was implementing an e-permitting system where builders, developers and residents could submit building permit applications online, and potentially assist in tracking applications or inquiries. This software would result in greater efficiency for staff and residents, as residents could submit applications at any time convenient for them and staff would have a great ability to respond to work remotely as required. The software may also assist in the streamlining of records management of building permit applications.

Some of the benefits to implementing an E-permitting software program are savings on staff time for inputting building permit data, all applications filtered to ensure completeness, access to building permit information by the owner/applicant/contractor on the issuance of the permit, plans review comments, requesting inspections and scheduling with completed inspection records and onsite inspection notes/records inputting can occur at time of inspection with notice given to applicant/owner/contractor. Further many of the e-permitting software's have value added modules for by-law enforcement, complaint tracking etc.

Municipal App: Est. \$24,000.00

Staff are proposing the creation of a municipal app that residents can download to view various updates, options and services that can be offered through the app. Brockton is always looking for developing new creative ways to engage residents through timely, effective communications and to respond to the broad community needs. This app is intended to touch on more than one department, with information on billing, communications, roads, by-law enforcement, payment applications, tourism and more being provided through the app.

The purpose of this project is to reach a more diverse demographic of residents with timely, effective communication, including emergency notifications and respond to the broader community needs. As this app is intended to touch on more than one department, residents will be able to find almost everything they will need on this application, including: instructions on paying bills- the potential of paying bills, municipal news, by-law complaint forms, hazardous waste days, watch Council and more. With website integration, the app will be able to pull information from the website, centralize it and be assessable from anywhere.

Online Form/E-Commerce Platform: Est. \$9,000.00

The Municipality currently creates fillable forms internally through Adobe PDF's, which does not allow for any tracking mechanisms to provide better accountability and efficiencies. The Municipality also currently requires transactions to be processed via telephone or in-person services - The only online billing Brockton currently offers is restricted to tax, utility, and child care billing, and occasional invoicing, which is onerous on all parties and increases staff time which could be better used elsewhere. The Municipality has received increased requests for online payment services over the past few years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Brockton has a strong relationship with our website provider, eSolutions Group, who manage the FormBuilder platform which can assist the Municipality in creating accessible, online forms, and associated e-Commerce online payments. FormBuilder ensures compliance with the accessibility legislation by offering user-friendly, accessible forms and further incorporating e-Commerce capabilities. FormBuilder would assist all departments, having the ability to collect online payments/donations, collect applications or registration

information, and making it easier for residents to complete information and pay for services online, such as applying for building permits, open-air burns, licences, Council delegations, or registering for programs. The Clerk’s Department would oversee the implementation of FormBuilder, and train other departments throughout the implementation process.

Rather than submitting various applications for each potential software type, staff sought advice from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the representative recommended submitting one application for a Digital Strategy that could potentially fund various software programs. We see this is a unique opportunity to digitize municipal services to bring the Municipality to new heights in customer service while reducing the time associated with many core functions and processes that staff are currently conducting.

Further to the above and for Council’s information through the Municipal Innovation Council (MIC) there is an application lead by the Municipal Innovation Council (MIC) and Bruce County’s Information Technology Services Division, this project is a three-way partnership application to the Modernization Funding between the MIC, Bruce County and the Town of Saugeen Shores with a lens on how to support all nine MIC members with regards to IT infrastructure and servicing. In order to advance strategic IT modernization and digital transformation in government, it is essential to build a solid foundation. To that end, staff and the MIC members believe it is necessary to undertake an analysis/audit to include:

- 1) Current consultancy spends and opportunities for consolidation/coordination
- 2) Current hardware/software spends and opportunities for coordination/bulk purchasing/economies of scale
- 3) Review of local upgrading needs to support Future State
- 4) Gap Analysis of Current State – example Disaster Recovery/Cyber Security

This project would include the development of a Shared Services Model/Agreement that would see a regional approach to IT Service Delivery and Support coordinated by the County. Saugeen Shores will act as the pilot organization for this project. The MIC will learn from this pilot and this project has a potential outcome of a Shared Services Model/Agreement between Bruce County and lower-tier municipalities. IT services is an area of cost savings Brockton staff have identified and investigated partnerships on before. This review will be valuable to analyze and investigate the potential for improved services and a reduction in IT hardware and servicing costs. This application would be 100% funded by the provincial funding if successful.

Sustainability Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity? | Yes |

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

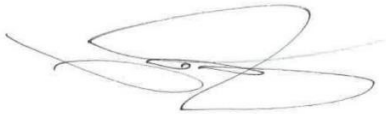
- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

The Municipal Modernization Implementation Funding Steam is cost shared between the Province (75%) and the Municipality (25%). Based on the estimated total project costs listed, this would be equal to a \$33,000 Municipal contribution. There would be sufficient funds already included in the 2021 Municipal Budget to cover this contribution, as well as incorporating any funding within the 2022 Budget with the required completion date being September 30, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Hamilton'.

Fiona Hamilton, Clerk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trish Serratore'.

Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sonya Watson'.

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer