



## 2021 BUDGET – MODERNIZATION FUNDING REQUEST 01

<b>New Initiative:</b>	<b>Feasibility Review of Accounts Payable Digitization Process</b>
<b>Department/Division:</b>	<b>Corporate Services - Clerk</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Focus:</b>	<b>A County that is Well Connected</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Objective:</b>	<i>5. ii. Deliver exceptional services by: Regularly reviewing service level standards to assess potential for improved access to services / amenities</i>

### DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST

In an effort to modernize the current accounts payable paper based process, an independent third party feasibility review will be undertaken to ascertain how digital modernization of the process will gain efficiencies and cost savings for the County and potentially some of its area municipalities.

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

The County of Oxford processes approximately 36,000 invoices per year, primarily by two FTEs.

During the pandemic, invoices have continued to be processed utilizing wet signatures and paper submission to Finance staff. Finance staff currently utilize electronic means for the purpose of posting and paying invoices while the components at the commencement and completion of the workflow rest solely in paper format in order to ensure appropriate financial controls are maintained.

While many employees who are required to review and authorize payment of invoices are primarily working remotely, the coding and approval process of invoices for payment has significantly slowed. Reviewing best practices of other municipalities' digital accounts payable processes will provide an opportunity for the County can improve its efficiency of this process and ensure we can continue to meet required payment timelines.

In an effort to mitigate the need for signatures on invoices for approval, staff have been reminded to process as many purchases as possible through our electronic purchase order system. Nevertheless, there are some instances where this process is not suitable.

## Comments

The County has considered automating the accounts payable process over the course of many years, however have not been able to identify a solution that gains efficiencies due to the large volume of invoices being processed.

The County utilizes Laserfiche, an enterprise content management tool shared with all of the area municipalities except for one, as a means to store other corporate records electronically.

Similarly the County uses Great Plains as its accounting software that is uniformly used by all of the area municipalities with the exception of one. Staff believe these existing applications could form the basis in which invoices and related documentation are recorded and stored– a modernized digital solution that could effectively be replicated by many of the area municipalities.

In order to conduct a thorough analytically supported review, the consultant will:

- review and document current state the accounts payable process, identifying resource costs;
- identify best practices employed by other municipalities for digitizing the process based on proven solutions that will achieve greater efficiency in processing invoices and other accounts payable functions, including implementation costs; and
- identify resource cost savings of the possible modernized solutions.

Centralizing these business records in electronic format pose an opportunity for enhanced internal service delivery. In terms of resource cost savings, the review will itemize cradle to grave accounts payable cycle costs in order to identify where efficiencies and cost savings can be achieved. For instance, there would be resource cost savings with respect to paper, and opportunity cost savings in staff time incurred for invoice retrievals, by both Finance and Clerk's office staff. Currently, two years of paper invoices are kept departmentally with Finance, and the preceding five years of paper records are managed and stored by the Clerk's department. The volume of invoices stored between the two divisions equates to approximately 200 boxes of paper records. Each year, the Clerk's office must inventory documents and prepare for a years' worth of destruction. There would be resource cost savings annually for shredding costs and staff time coordinating destruction.

## Conclusions

County staff have limited capacity and in-house resources to complete a review and fulsome analysis of a modernized accounts payable business process. Use of modernization funding will reduce impact to the County budget with a view to finding efficiencies and cost savings that can be better utilized in serving our community and shared with our area municipalities.

## RISKS/IMPLICATIONS

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An independent review of digital modernization solutions for the accounts payable process will enable staff to make an informed decision and provide insight to proven efficiencies and cost savings.

There is a greater risk to retaining paper records in any operation, in the event of a fire or disaster. Enabling digital retention ensures back-ups are produced of the records. Digitizing records protects data integrity and enhances business continuity planning.

## BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

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	2021 One-time	2021 Base	Total
<b>Funding</b>			
Modernization Grant – Review Stream	\$25,000	\$-	\$25,000
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>25,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Consultant Fees	25,000	-	25,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>25,000</b>
<b>County Levy</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>



## 2021 BUDGET – MODERNIZATION FUNDING REQUEST 02

<b>New Initiative:</b>	<b>Public Websites Modernization</b>
<b>Department/Division:</b>	<b>Corporate Services - Information Services</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Focus:</b>	<b>A County that Informs and Engages</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Objective:</b>	<i>1. ii. Enhance the quality of life for all of our citizens by: Adapting programs, services and facilities to reflect evolving community needs</i>

### DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST

This request for modernization funding is to upgrade our websites to eSolutionsGroup i:Create Content Management System (CMS). i:Create is designed for positive audience experiences and efficient administrative use which combines the best of both worlds, offering time-saving simplicity on both ends of the system.

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

Currently all County websites and the majority of Area Municipal websites are hosted on County servers and run on EVOQ. EVOQ is built on an Open Source Content Management System (CMS).

#### Comments

The City of Woodstock and Town of Tillsonburg have already migrated to eSolutionsGroup i:Create and the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock will be moving later this year.

The County, Norwich, SWOX, Zorra and Blandford-Blenheim staff feel that since EZT, Tillsonburg and Woodstock individually undertook a competitive process, and arrived at the same vendor, that we could utilize such relationships to leverage potential savings in time, resources and dollars. So we approached eSolutions with two questions:

1. would there be a price break point if there was a joint architecture each of us managing our own content but sharing some common elements like training, hosting and microsite design, etc.; and
2. would there be more of a price break if the content was migrated to i:Create by County staff and not eSolutions staff.

Based on our enquiry, eSolutions provided a proposal for 5 municipalities plus the Oxford County Library and Information Oxford. This offering is tailored to help smaller municipalities upgrade their online presence to better engage with key audiences — taxpayers, jobseekers, local or new businesses.

This includes a full website redesign that reflects the colours and other brand elements of each municipality but that is built to a standardized grid (template) and sitemap to accelerate delivery and reduce cost to the municipality.

InformationOxford.ca is a custom website in need of an upgrade. eSolutionsGroup offers a business directory that provides updated administration and mobile friendly, accessible front end features. InformationOxford.ca data could be upgraded to populate the eSolutionsGroup business directory. The solution includes; business registration and profile management – business owners can create an account and submit their business listing for inclusion and an approval process to allow the directory admin to review, categorize then approve the listing before being shown online.

Oxford County Library is also in need of an upgrade. eSolutionsGroup has already built integrations with many library catalogue systems. This integration would allow staff to pull information directly from our library catalogue system.

Serving more than 300 Canadian municipalities, eSolutions recognizes that a single approach cannot meet all needs. Therefore, based on their understanding of projects recently completed or under way and the very specific needs and budgets of some municipalities, a joint proposal was presented, with the financials as below.

While this offers a modest cost and shared resource savings to participating municipalities, the benefits are far more than monetary.

Through a unified approach to implementing new web technologies, with simplified site administration, municipalities together build a stronger online presence and open new lines of communication to share best practices.

Also, by implementing accessible, responsive design, we would clearly communicate a strong, progressive message as easily viewed on a smartphone as it is on a tablet or desktop computer.

In addition, having 7 municipalities plus the County using the same website platform allows for joint training opportunities (thereby reducing overall costs \$5,000 per site), user group collaboration, and for those positions that provide services to municipalities, increases the ability to provide a more consistent service through the web channels.

## **Conclusions**

More and more citizens today expect services that they would normally receive over the counter to be delivered online, and in a way that is citizen-centric, and not based on the structure of the organization. Migrating to i:Create allows us to transition to e-government services, allowing us to leverage the technology to modernize our operations and processes all using an easy to use website administration tools.

## **RISKS/IMPLICATIONS**

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Increased nominal yearly fee as we are currently leveraging a CMS based on Open Source solution.

## BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

	2021 One-time	2021 Base	Total
<b>Funding</b>			
Modernization Grant – Implementation Stream	\$117,156	\$-	\$117,156
General Reserve – Reserve contribution from	63,084	19,850	82,934
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>180,240</b>	<b>19,850</b>	<b>200,090</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
oxfordcounty.ca	30,540	-	30,540
Informationoxford.ca	22,000	-	22,000
ocl.net	25,540	-	25,540
norwich.ca	25,540	-	25,540
swox.org	25,540	-	25,540
zorra.ca	25,540	-	25,540
blandfordblenheim.ca	25,540	-	25,540
Annual Fees – Hosting and Licensing (separate VM in MS Azure)	-	19,850	19,850
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>180,240</b>	<b>19,850</b>	<b>200,090</b>
<b>County Levy</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>

Note: The annual base budget impact of \$19,850 will be incorporated into the 2022 budget.

## 2021 BUDGET – MODERNIZATION FUNDING REQUEST 03

<b>New Initiative:</b>	<b>Road and Address GIS Data Transformation</b>
<b>Department/Division:</b>	<b>Corporate Services - Information Services</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Focus:</b>	<b>A County that Performs and Delivers Results</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Objective:</b>	<i>5. ii. Deliver exceptional services by: Identify best practices and appropriate benchmarking</i>

### DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST

This request for modernization funding is to review current business processes around roads and addresses, determine best practices and implement a solution that meets the needs of all.

The County will utilize ESRI Canada's team of GIS, transportation, municipal and public safety subject matter experts to perform data gap analysis, technical compliance assessment, QA/QC and staff training for Oxford County and Area Municipalities as it pertains to Roads and Addresses.

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

Currently Oxford County GIS and Public Works have multiple datasets for roads and address data. Each data set is used for a specific purpose. The data model has not gone through a comprehensive review in several years. With the upcoming decommissioning of existing 911 systems in favour of Next Generation 911 (NG9-1-1) services, the County needs to ensure data is in format and maintained in such a way, that it can be integrated with NG9-1-1 systems as well as be used more effectively within the County and area Municipalities.

Current issues with standalone datasets

- Accessibility of data
- Lag in data availability
- Lack of ability to handle asset management requirements
- Duplication of effort
- Inconsistent data
- Dependent on key staff member

Improving data by consolidating it to one LRS (linear referencing system), so departments don't duplicate effort by managing multiple copies. The consolidated LRS, improved workflows and tools will support address ranges and points, road inventory, projects, signs, events etc. as well as routing and geocoding. Improve decision making by integrating silos of data. Enable other departments and area Municipalities to participate in data creation/maintenance.

## Conclusions

Modernization funding would provide the funds in order to utilize ESRI Canada's team of experts and purchase required software and hardware to develop and implement an enterprise solution for roads and address data management.

## RISKS/IMPLICATIONS

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The major risk to not moving forward with this project is not being prepared for data requirements of NG9-1-1 on March 30, 2024 as well as losing business-critical, experience-based knowledge when key staff members retire.

Creating a well-documented, modern solution will help reduce these risks.

## BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

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	2021 One-time	2021 Base	Total
<b>Funding</b>			
Modernization Grant – Implementation Stream	\$109,070	\$-	\$109,070
General Reserve – Contribution from Reserves	58,730	8,580	67,310
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>167,800</b>	<b>8,580</b>	<b>176,380</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Implementation service (Address and Roads)	125,000	-	125,000
911 Address Management Tool	10,000	-	10,000
Roads Management Tool	32,800	8,580	41,380
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>167,800</b>	<b>8,580</b>	<b>176,380</b>
<b>County Levy</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>

Note: The annual base budget impact of \$8,580 will be incorporated into the 2022 budget.





## 2021 BUDGET – MODERNIZATION FUNDING REQUEST 04

<b>New Initiative:</b>	<b>Water and Wastewater Service Delivery Review</b>
<b>Department/Division:</b>	<b>Public Works – Water &amp; Wastewater Services</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Focus:</b>	<b>A County that Performs and Delivers Results</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Objective:</b>	<i>5. ii. Deliver exceptional services by: Conducting regular service reviews to ensure delivery effectiveness and efficiency</i>

### DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST

Seek external consulting support to perform a critical review of service delivery for water distribution and wastewater collection performed by the County and its contracted service providers (Woodstock, Tillsonburg) to examine effectiveness of existing service delivery models in terms of level of service and financial performance, and identify any alternative organizational approaches to derive improved levels of service and cost savings.

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

When the Municipal Act, 2001 came into force on January 1, 2003, the intention with respect to the County of Oxford was to transfer the legislative authority for all of the County's powers established under the County of Oxford Act to the new Municipal Act. The County of Oxford Act was repealed on January 1, 2003, the same day that the new Municipal Act, 2001 (the "Act") came into force and effect. This is why the definition of "Regional Municipality" in the Act includes all upper tier municipalities that were "a regional or district municipality or the County of Oxford on December 31, 2002" (Section 1(1)). The County had powers that were essentially the equivalent of a Regional or District Municipality pursuant to the County of Oxford Act. Those powers were carried forward into the Municipal Act.

Accordingly, under the Act the County of Oxford holds exclusive municipal authority and responsibility for all water and wastewater services, including water distribution and wastewater collection as per Section 11(11). Previously, under the County of Oxford Act, all powers of Area municipalities to exercise any powers for the water distribution or wastewater collection were also removed; however, the County was entitled under the Municipal Act to consider entering into agreements with any person, area municipality or local board for such services.

County water distribution and wastewater collection service contract agreements were established with two Area municipalities (Woodstock; Tillsonburg) around 1999 and have been renewed overtime. The most recent service contract agreements were updated in 2006 (City of Woodstock) and 2012 (Town of Tillsonburg). Though technically expired, these agreements have continued to remain in effect given neither party has terminated their respective agreement. If the current approach to service delivery is recommended, this assignment will, at a minimum, serve to inform the development of new updated service contract agreements.

The effectiveness of service delivery under these agreements has not been historically reviewed in any meaningful level of detail or alternative approaches for the same. As well, water and wastewater systems have evolved considerably since 1999, along with ongoing changes in provincial regulatory compliance and asset management legislation.

## Comments

### Assignment Scope:

The proposed assignment scope is to undertake a critical review of service delivery for water distribution and wastewater collection performed by the County and its contracted service providers (Woodstock, Tillsonburg) to examine effectiveness of existing service delivery models in terms of level of service & financial performance and identify alternative organizational approaches to derive improved levels of service and cost savings.

Key deliverables of the assignment would include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Document applicable required levels of service metrics and best management practices;
- Consider current/future issues and trends that will affect water distribution and wastewater collection systems operational resourcing (i.e. asset management; operator training, growth, regulatory compliance/, etc.)
- Review of current state organizational structure and staffing (County & respective contracted service providers) which provides for water distribution and wastewater collection services;
- Perform comparative overview of existing water distribution and wastewater collection system assets, operational facilities, fleet & equipment, work order management systems, etc.; that could be utilized to maintain the County owned water and wastewater assets in a state of good repair;
- Develop comparative efficiency metrics of staffing relative to system sizes and financial performance, along with annual service outputs;
- Derive alternative organizational structures to deliver water distribution and wastewater collection services and accommodation requirements/options to support the same;
- Provide full lifecycle cost benefit analysis of existing and alternative organizational approaches, which considers staffing levels, organizational structure, stranded fleet/facility/equipment/property assets, any new fleet/facility/equipment asset requirements, financial performance (direct, indirect, tangible costs), etc.
- Assess any additional opportunities/efficiencies for contracted services for specific work tasks and potential service bundling of the same.

The assignment scope would also include dedicated meetings with the project team and the Area Municipalities and delivery of a Final Service Delivery Review Report, complete with recommendations, and associated presentation(s) to County Council.

### Assignment Duration:

Upon potential project approval (May, 2021), the proposed assignment would be undertaken between June and August, 2021. Any recommendations for existing or alternative service delivery organizational approaches to which result in improved levels of service and cost savings would be ideally brought forward through pre-budget Council Reporting which would subsequently inform future County Business Plan & Budgets.

## Conclusions

This assignment will explore whether inherent cost savings (of significance) and improvements to level of service can be responsibly derived in considering existing or alternative water and wastewater service delivery methods. Utilization of an independent consulting firm will ensure the service delivery review is conducted in an objective and transparent manner.

## RISKS/IMPLICATIONS

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Lack of engagement and/or inadequate information disclosure/quality would limit the service delivery review outcome findings to some degree.

## BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

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	2021 One-time	2021 Base	Total
<b>Funding</b>			
Modernization Grant – Review Stream	\$100,000	\$-	\$100,000
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>100,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Consulting services	100,000	-	100,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>100,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100,000</b>
<b>County Levy</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>



## 2021 BUDGET – MODERNIZATION FUNDING REQUEST 05

<b>New Initiative:</b>	<b>RFID Technology Project -- Self-Serve Locker System</b>
<b>Department/Division:</b>	<b>Corporate Services - Library</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Focus:</b>	<b>A County that Works Together</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Objective:</b>	<i>1. ii. Enhance the quality of life for all of our citizens by: Promoting community participation and life-long involvement in recreational and cultural activities</i>

### DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST

Oxford County Library (OCL) wishes to place a Self-Serve Locker System in a community location which does not have easy access to a library branch. Remote Locker tower configurations dispense reserved items/Holds, receive Returned items, and provide browsing capabilities of best-seller/popular titles. A location in an easily-accessible community location allows for self-serve convenience outside of the library's limited open hours. This project is proposed as the first concrete step towards increasing self-serve access through RFID technology, moving beyond the library's walls.

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

In 2021, the Oxford County Library collection is being converted to RFID technology, allowing for self-check service, reducing repetitive motion for staff, and opening the door to potential after-hours use of library spaces and collections.

The 2019 Service Delivery Review identified opportunities for modernizing library services, including:

- Explore opportunities to provide library services outside of dedicated facilities and to accommodate after-hours use of program rooms for community use.
- Explore cost-benefit of utilizing technology such as RFID or self-serve kiosks/non-staffed libraries.

Once the Oxford County Library collections have been RFID-enabled, additional self-serve technologies can be explored and implemented.

## Comments

RFID is a strategic investment in a public library's future, given that an increasing number of access technologies require it, such as kiosks that dispense books and other library materials and book lockers for Holds pickup in community spaces such as Community Centres, [Fire Halls](#) (Niagara-on-the-Lake) and Arenas. The Bibliotecha RFID system is the only self-serve technology compatible with the after-hours entry system, Open+, which is in use at a growing number of North American libraries, including [Hamilton Public Library](#).

In library systems that have implemented Self-Serve Lockers, the units are ideally placed in high-traffic indoor areas such as Community Centres and Arenas. They have also been placed in smaller rural communities which do not have a physical branch, often in municipally-owned facilities such as fire halls.

## Expanding the reach and use of library service

OCL has been investigating the potential uses of select branch locations as community spaces outside of library open hours, made available to community partners such as Rural Oxford Economic Development Corporation's Oxford Rural Entrepreneurs. Prior to the pandemic, the library had hosted networking events for rural entrepreneurs and was considering the possibility of using branches as "hot desk" locations to allow entrepreneurs a networking space and access to superior Internet service and printing capabilities. RFID technology allows for self-serve circulation of library materials thus extending the library's relevance and effectiveness. The limited hours that a branch can be open and staffed are not always convenient and our facilities are sitting empty and unused for much of the week.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the possible impact of subsequent waves or future pandemics, has accelerated the need to introduce self-serve technologies at libraries and other places of business. Should subsequent waves materialize, necessitating further reductions in services, the availability of Self-Serve Lockers in readily accessible locations in our communities would accommodate an audience that for whatever reason is unable to access a branch facility.

## Opportunities for municipal partnerships

Self-Serve Lockers need not be restricted to the delivery of library materials alone. Documents and packages can also be delivered through the lockers. The Library could make use of the lockers available to municipal and community partners, allowing access beyond their business hours, and making documents and other resources more readily accessible to county residents who experience transportation issues. The security of the locker system could be a safer and more cost-effective alternative to mailing sensitive or bulky documents.

## Self-Serve Locker and Browse & Go components

Self-Serve Lockers are an easy-to-use and convenient way for patrons to access library materials outside of library hours (particularly during reduced hours necessitated by COVID-19) while also having the flexibility to readapt to community needs and interests as they evolve. Different mix-and-match component "towers" offer different functionality, and can be added to as needs evolve. The proposed Remote Locker unit would include:

23 Holds locker bins; 10 Browse and Borrow transparent bins stocked with best sellers; a return bin so that area residents could conveniently return their library materials, and the touch screen remoteLocker interface which is fully-integrated with the library Integrated Library Software. Each unit communicates directly with the Library ILS at the point of collection and return.

The image below is an example of a unit with both Holds lockers and Browse & Go lockers. The central tower is the Touchscreen interface. Units can be custom-wrapped with the library's branding.



### Possible locations

OCL would want to work with the local municipalities to determine optimal locations for a Self-Serve Locker system. For the initial foray into remote Lockers, we could choose to place a system in an Oxford community which does not have a library branch but has an expanding resident population, such as Drumbo. Alternatively, vulnerable neighbourhoods have been identified in both Ingersoll and Tillsonburg, where a higher concentration of low-income families reside, and where the library is not within a reasonable walking distance. Optimally, a municipally-run space such as a community centre, fire hall or arena would allow extended hours of access, but there may be alternative locations worthy of consideration, as each community is unique.



## Conclusion

A Self-Serve Locker system would provide OCL with the ability to service areas of Oxford County that experience challenges in accessing library service. It would provide a means of moving beyond the library walls and reaching underserved communities or neighbourhoods. It is a logical next step in the RFID/self-serve technology process.

## RISKS/IMPLICATIONS

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The choice of location(s) for Self-Serve Lockers would require careful consideration so as to realize good usage and serve a neighbourhood or rural community which does not have easy access to an OCL branch. However, as a 3-or-more tower configuration does not need to be anchored to the floor, the units could be relocated if the initial placement proved ineffective.

The units are theft-proof, as the lockers open automatically when activated through full integration with the Library's Symphony Software, using the patron's library card and PIN.

## BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

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	2021 One-time	2021 Base	Total
<b>Funding</b>			
Modernization Grant – Implementation Stream	\$35,100	\$-	\$35,100
Library General Reserve – Contribution from Reserves	18,900	7,000	25,900
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>54,000</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>61,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
4-Tower configuration	54,000	-	54,000
Staff Training	-	-	-
Annual support and maintenance	-	7,000	7,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>54,000</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>61,000</b>
<b>Library Levy</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>

Note: The annual base budget impact of \$7,000 will be incorporated into the 2022 budget. The selection of display items, gathering of Holds, and stocking of the Self-Serve Lockers would form part of the regular duties of existing library staff.

## 2021 BUDGET – MODERNIZATION FUNDING REQUEST 06

<b>New Initiative:</b>	<b>Road Operations &amp; Maintenance Service Delivery Review</b>
<b>Department/Division:</b>	<b>Public Works – Transportation and Waste Management Services</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Focus:</b>	<b>A County that Performs and Delivers Results</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Objective:</b>	<i>5. ii. Deliver exceptional services by: Conducting regular service reviews to ensure delivery effectiveness and efficiency</i>

### DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST

Seek external consulting support to perform a critical review of service delivery for road operations and maintenance performed by the County and its contracted service providers (Woodstock, Ingersoll, Tillsonburg) to examine effectiveness of existing service delivery models in terms of level of service and financial performance and identify alternative organizational approaches to achieve efficiencies and cost savings.

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

Under the Municipal Act, 2001, the County of Oxford holds non-exclusive municipal authority over “Highways, including parking and traffic on highways” where both upper and lower tier municipalities have the power to pass by-laws under this sphere. Accordingly, the Municipal Act also affords the County with the ability to delegate its powers and duties pertaining to the same through agreements with Area Municipalities on behalf of the County.

County urban road maintenance service contract agreements were established with three Area municipalities (Woodstock; Tillsonburg, Ingersoll) around 1999, when many of the provincial highways were downloaded to regional municipalities. The most recent service contract agreements were updated in 2010 (City of Woodstock), 2008 (Town of Ingersoll, Town of Tillsonburg) for provision of winter control, pavement marking, road signage and bridge/culvert, roadside and asphalt/shoulder maintenance activities. Though technically expired, these agreements have continued to remain in effect given neither party has terminated their respective agreement. If the current approach to service delivery is recommended, this assignment will, at a minimum, serve to inform the development of new updated service contract agreements.

In 2000, KPMG conducted a review of the service delivery model for roads and concluded that a shared service model remain between the County and its member Area Municipalities. The shared service delivery model was subsequently supported by a triple majority process in 2000 and several initiatives were positioned for implementation in 2003 including joint purchasing and tendering, collaborative capital planning, fleet/equipment sharing and winter control/road patrol route optimization.



Since that time, a joint purchasing group for common procurement items like culverts, road signs, fuel, line paint/glass beads, fleet rentals, etc., has been made available through Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford (including all eight area municipalities) and Perth Counties (EMOP). However, the individual municipalities noted above may not always necessarily participate in joint procurement for such items. As an example, some non-EMOP procurements (i.e. signs/sign posts, gravel, culverts, shoulder spreader machine rental, etc.) continue to be undertaken individually by the County or any of its eight area municipalities.

Further, Oxford County and some (but not all) of its Area Municipalities have also undertaken joint tenders where possible for salt, sand, chemicals (brine, anti-icing), storm sewer CCTV, etc. as well as service sharing arrangements for weed spraying, crack sealing, street sweeping, storm sewer flushing, etc. on both County and local roads. As well, the County also utilizes its specialized equipment (i.e. line painter, line strippers, asphalt roller, asphalt spreader) to perform services for Area Municipalities on an as needed basis.

However, it is also recognized that there are numerous County and local road maintenance activities (line painting, asphalt patching/padding, road shouldering, ditch cleaning, tree trimming/brush removal, traffic signal/street light maintenance, etc.) which continue to be undertaken individually by the County or any of its eight area municipalities.

With respect to winter control/road patrol optimization, a winter control route optimization study was carried out prior the 2002/2003 winter season which indicated minimal overlap of County and Area Municipality snow plow routes – of which most of the overlap was associated with travel to and from operations yards for materials and dispatch. At that time, some service sharing to improve efficiencies was instituted over approximately 7% of all roads within the County (both Area Municipality roads and County roads).

In the 2019/2020 winter season, the County optimized its winter road maintenance routes by equalizing snow plow route distances amongst the four road patrol areas and adjusting the limits of patrol area coverage where required. The optimization also afforded a more consistent supervision of winter road maintenance activities both during the day and afternoon shifts, while maintaining effective service delivery that meets or exceeds the requirements in Regulation 239/02 Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS) for Municipal Highways. This resulted in winter control operational savings of over \$310,000 annually as well as capital cost avoidance of \$990,000 associated with replacement for 3 snow plows that were no longer required following route optimization.

In June, 2020, the findings of a Service Delivery Review undertaken by Watson & Associates Economists (Ltd.), Dillon Consulting Ltd., and Monteith Brown Planning Consultants were made available to Oxford County and its member municipalities. One area noted pertained to further review of potential delivery of summer and winter road operations and maintenance services by Area Municipalities on all County roads within their lower tier boundaries. Collective municipal interest was additionally received through the subsequent Joint Service Delivery Review carried out by StrategyCorp.

## Comments

### Assignment Scope:

Based on the above, a comprehensive review of various service delivery approaches to County (and local) road maintenance and procurement activities should be undertaken in order to leverage greater efficiencies and cost savings.

Part of the overall assignment scope would seek to undertake a critical review of service delivery for summer and winter road operations and maintenance performed by both the County and the urban area municipalities (Woodstock, Tillsonburg, Ingersoll) through contract service agreements, as well as review of alternative service delivery approaches, such as provision of operations and maintenance services by the other remaining five Area Municipalities on all County roads within their lower tier boundaries.

The various service delivery concepts will examine the effectiveness of existing service delivery models in terms of level of service & financial performance and identify alternative organizational approaches to derive efficiencies and cost savings.

Key deliverables of the assignment would include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Document applicable required levels of service metrics and best management practices;
- Consider current/future issues and trends that will affect County road network operational resourcing (i.e. asset management; operator training, growth, regulatory compliance, etc.)
- Review of current state organizational structure and staffing (County & respective contracted service providers) which provides for summer and winter maintenance and operations, including road patrol, of the County road network;
- Perform comparative overview of County and Area Municipality operational facilities, fleet & equipment, work order management systems, etc. that could be utilized to maintain the County owned road and bridge assets in a state of good repair;
- Develop comparative efficiency metrics of staffing relative to system sizes and financial performance, along with annual service outputs;
- Derive alternative organizational structures to deliver summer and winter maintenance and operations on County roads and accommodation requirements/options to support the same;
- Provide full lifecycle cost benefit analysis of alternative organizational approaches, which considers staffing levels, organizational structure, stranded fleet/facility/equipment/property assets, any new fleet/facility/equipment asset requirements, yard rationalization opportunities, financial performance (direct, indirect, tangible costs), etc.
- Identify opportunities/efficiencies for contracted services for specific work tasks and potential service bundling of the same
- Identify additional opportunities for joint procurement (i.e. aggregate, road signs, line paint/glass beads, culverts, equipment rental, etc.).
- Undertake an independent review of current service contract funding arrangement and assess cost efficiency considerations employing a fixed price cost model for potential contracted summer maintenance activities (based on a lane/km basis) and allocation of contracted winter maintenance costs between Area Municipality and County roads based on a lane/km that incorporates weight to reflect effort required for road class (i.e. arterial vs collector vs local roads).

The assignment scope would also include dedicated meetings with the project team and the Area Municipalities and delivery of a Final Service Delivery Review Report (complete with recommendations) and associated presentation(s) to County Council.

#### Assignment Duration:

Upon potential project approval (May, 2021), the proposed assignment would be undertaken between June and October, 2021. Any recommendations for existing or alternative service delivery organizational approaches to which result in improved levels of service and cost savings would be ideally brought forward through pre-budget Council Reporting which would subsequently inform future County Business Plan & Budgets.

### Conclusions

This assignment will explore whether inherent cost savings (of significance) and improvements to level of service can be responsibly derived in considering existing or alternative road operations and maintenance service delivery methods. Utilization of an independent consulting firm will ensure the service delivery review is conducted in an objective and transparent manner.

### RISKS/IMPLICATIONS

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Lack of engagement and/or inadequate information disclosure/quality would limit the service delivery review outcome findings to some degree.

### BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

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	2021 One-time	2021 Base	Total
<b>Funding</b>			
Modernization Grant – Review Stream	\$125,000	\$-	\$125,000
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>125,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>125,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Consultant	125,000	-	125,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>125,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>125,000</b>
<b>County Levy</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>

## 2021 BUDGET – MODERNIZATION FUNDING REQUEST 07

<b>New Initiative:</b>	<b>Joint Municipal Paramedic Service Deployment Review</b>
<b>Department/Division:</b>	<b>Paramedic Services Deployment Review</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Focus:</b>	<b>A County that Performs and Delivers Results</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Objective:</b>	<i>5. ii. Deliver exceptional services by: Regularly reviewing service level standards to assess potential for improved access to services / amenities</i>

### DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST

Oxford County Paramedic Services in partnership with neighbouring Counties of Elgin and Perth whom share municipal borders with Oxford, are proposing to engage an external consultant to perform a comprehensive response analysis to optimize ambulance deployment and coverage in and across municipalities to derive improved levels of service and potential cost savings.

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

Under the Ambulance Act R.S.O. 1990, every upper-tier municipality (UTM) is responsible for ensuring the proper provision of land ambulance service in the municipality. In order to fulfill their obligations for the delivery service, each paramedic service must create deployment plans to direct the dispatch centre on how to utilize their ambulance resources in responding to requests for service. Traditionally, these deployment plan strategies are written with a single UTM focus and with exception of the most emergent call types, lack coordination between neighboring UTM plans for lower priority call responses, balanced/priority coverage areas, inter-facility transfers, major incident responses or other operational deployments.

Further, if an ambulance is dispatched from a paramedic service situated in an UTM to an area situated in another upper-tier municipality or local municipality, municipalities may enter into an agreement with respect to the costs associated with the provision of land ambulance services in both municipalities. The County of Oxford has such agreements with both the Counties of Elgin and Perth to provide for payment of these cross border calls that expire on December 31, 2021. Approximately 8% of all calls for service associated to Oxford County in 2020 involved cross border responses.

In 2019, the Government of Ontario indicated a desire to explore Emergency Health Service modernization in keeping with transforming the whole health care system to improve patient experience and strengthen local services. The areas of focus for consultations were on challenges affecting service delivery including:

- Outdated dispatch technologies;
- Lengthy ambulance offload times and delays in transporting medically-stable patients;
- Lack of coordination among EHS (paramedic services) system partners;
- Need for innovative models that improve care; and
- Health equity, or access to services across regions and communities.

## Comments

### Project Scope:

The proposed scope is to undertake a critical review of existing paramedic service deployment plans and operational strategies for each of the partnering UTM's and to examine effectiveness in terms of level of service and performance, and identify alternative approaches to derive improved levels of service and possible cost savings.

Key deliverables of the consultant would include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Conduct a review and analysis of all existing call volume data to determine optimal ambulance deployment locations and priority posting algorithms for each UTM and in relation to each neighboring UTM boarder
- Provide recommendations related to each UTM's deployment plans to maximize resource deployment for response time performance in each UTM and in coordination with each neighboring UTM
- Conduct a review and analysis of each partnering UTM's deployment plan strategies in relation to UTM's border emergency coverage, major incident response and cross border call assignment, including inter-facility transports, and to provide recommendations for improved inter-municipal coordination and efficiencies
- Identify and recommend broader paramedic service considerations for overall service efficiencies such as; cooperative procurement of vehicles, equipment, operational software, maintenance/service agreements, etc.

### Timeframe of the Project:

Following project approval, it is anticipated that an award for this project will be made in May 2021 and that the project undertaking should be approximately eight to ten weeks from date of award to project completion.

## Conclusions

The completion of this multi-municipal review to identify deployment plan and operational strategy efficiencies of current paramedic service resources is consistent with the Government of Ontario's desire to modernize Paramedic Services as part of the overall health care reform. Specifically in the objectives of improving coordination among EHS (paramedic services) system partners; innovative models that improve care; and Health equity or access to services across regions and communities.

## RISKS/IMPLICATIONS

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There are no risks associated with this proposal.

## BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

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	2021 One-time	2021 Base	Total
<b>Funding</b>			
Modernization Grant – Review Stream	\$150,000	\$-	\$150,000
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>150,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>150,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Consulting Fees	150,000	-	150,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>150,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>150,000</b>
<b>County Levy</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>	<b>\$-</b>