

REPORT

Office of the CAO

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: January 8, 2024

From: Lisa Leblanc, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
File:

Item #: 2024-7

Subject: Business Education Series – Q1 Workshops

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive this report for information.

PURPOSE

To provide an update on the Business Education Series offered by the Economic Development division and the workshops that will be offered in the first quarter of 2024.

SUMMARY

The Economic Development division has offered a recurring series of business education workshops for local business and non-profit operators. This report provides a preview of the 2024 Q1 workshops, possible future topics, and discussion of how these workshops are promoted.

BACKGROUND

In January 2021, the Economic Development division launched a program called Virtual Education and Networking Nights, or “VENN”. This program was a peer to peer virtual education workshop designed to help build capacity in the local non-profit sector following the impacts of the pandemic in 2020 while still respecting safety protocols. Topics for these sessions were broad and varied and suitable for non-profits and small businesses alike. The workshops included: goal setting, grant writing, hosting events online, communicating your value, newsletter basics, board recruitment, using plain language, and understanding systems. Two in particular were specifically marketed and promoted to the business community and offered information about vulnerable people/homelessness, de-escalating crisis, and understanding substance use. The last

session took place in 2022 and all of the recordings are available on the City's YouTube channel.

DISCUSSION

After the last session, staff decided to pause the program to allow for new topic ideas to generate from the community as attendance at the sessions had slowly been declining. Throughout the rest of 2022 and 2023, staff continued to gather informal feedback on other education topics that the non-profit and business communities were hoping to have offered.

In October 2023, a community member delegated to Council and requested that the City work to make the community a safer place for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and made several suggestions, including leveraging the economies of scale to offer training to business operators who are often unable to afford consultants for one-on-one training. By coincidence, staff had already made plans to revisit the Business Education Series in anticipation of 2024 work plans, and were able to schedule a consultant to offer training about gender diversity. There are now two workshops scheduled for the first quarter of 2024 with two additional workshops in the planning stages, as well as several topics under consideration to continue to offer workshops throughout 2024 as staff capacity allows and business and non-profit requests are received.

All workshops are promoted through the *Invest New West* newsletter, which currently has approximately 1,400 subscribers, and through targeted outreach to business stakeholders. Additionally, workshops will also be promoted to business stakeholders appointed to the Arts, Culture, and Economic Development Advisory Committee (ACEDAC) once the new committee members are sworn in. If registration numbers are low, the workshops may also be promoted to a general audience via the City's general social media channels, but because of the targeted nature of the topic, promotion is focused on business and non-profit stakeholders.

- 1) Gender Diversity Basics – this workshop will take place virtually on January 17, 2024 from 6:30pm to 7:30pm and features education on gender diversity basics such as pronouns using both customer service and employer lenses. Registration is capped at 50 persons, and the City will be able to share the recording with the participants along with prepared informational materials supplied by the consultant. Promotion has already begun for this training, including sharing information with members of the Economic Development Advisory Committee at the meeting on November 23, 2023.
- 2) Buy Local– this in-person workshop is scheduled for February 27, 2024 from 6:30pm to 8:30pm and is presented together with the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce and features a speaker from the BC Buy Local program. The workshop will provide information about research into the impact of local businesses (economic, social, environmental), guide business operators to assess the impact of their business, provide them with tools to communicate

local attributes to customers who use “local” as a buying decision factor, and give participants an overview of the #BCBuyLocal campaign. In addition to regular marketing channels, this workshop will be promoted with the support of the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce, as well as the BC Buy Local program operators.

- 3) Truth and Reconciliation – this workshop has not yet been finalized, however staff are working with a local Indigenous educator to offer education on how businesses can meaningfully adopt practices that support Truth and Reconciliation. This workshop is planned to take place in March.
- 4) Marketing with Instagram – this workshop has not yet been finalized, however staff are working with a local marketing educator who can offer tips and tricks for businesses on how they may promote their business using Instagram as a platform. This workshop is planned to take place in April.

Other topics, such as worker safety, crime prevention, privacy, leases and contracts, have all been suggested and future workshops will be developed.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to plan workshops in the Business Education Series as capacity and resources allow.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

All workshops are offered virtually and are recorded for future use, with the exception of the Buy Local workshop that is offered in-person at City Hall.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no new financial implications of the Business Education Series. Costs for speaker fees are a component of the Economic Development division’s 2024 operational budget that supports businesses and non-profits.

OPTIONS

There are two options for consideration:

1. THAT Council receive this report for information.
2. THAT Council provide other direction.

Staff recommends option 1.

CONCLUSION

The Business Education Series is refreshed for 2024 based on business topic requests and subject to staff capacity.

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

Jen Arbo, Lead Economic Development Coordinator

This report was reviewed by:

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This report was approved by:

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