



TOWNSHIP OF EDWARDSBURGH CARDINAL ACTION ITEM

Committee: Committee of the Whole - Community Development

Date: April 7, 2025

Department: Community Development

Topic: EC Connects Update

Purpose: Update on initiative status and addition of volunteer recruitment tool

Background:

Following a soft launch in late February, EC Connects officially launched in early March, providing a centralized platform for residents to access local programs and services. A key priority for EC Connects has been ensuring a responsive and user-friendly experience.

We have implemented several enhancements based on feedback from residents and organizations, addressing accessibility, search functionality, and content organization. These ongoing improvements help ensure that EC Connects remains an effective and intuitive resource for the community. EC Connects saw 1,170 visits from 242 unique users in its first month, demonstrating strong community interest in accessing local services and resources. This platform is still new and will need to be given some time to grow in awareness and use.

At the last meeting of this committee, members inquired about the ability to use EC Connects as a volunteer recruitment tool. While this ability does not currently exist with EC Connects, HelpSeeker could help us to develop this tool within the EC Connects platform.

We've reached out to HelpSeeker to explore the best approach:

- A dedicated category could be added to the platform to identify organizations in need of volunteers.
- By filtering their search requirements, residents could easily find and connect with organizations in need.

- Organizations would be able to submit volunteer opportunities but must agree to terms of use outlining their obligations for handling volunteer data responsibly.
- Submissions would be reviewed by TWPEC staff and published to EC Connects by HelpSeeker.
- EC Connects would continue to serve as a directory, directing residents interested in volunteering to contact organizations directly. This removes the Township from acting as an intermediary, eliminating risk and liability related to volunteer screening and private data storage.
- A disclaimer policy may be required to clearly state that EC Connects functions as a listing service only, with no responsibility for vetting volunteers or organizations.

Policy Implications:

The addition of a volunteer recruitment tool to EC Connects aligns with existing Township policies on data privacy, accessibility. To ensure compliance with MFIPPA and PIPEDA, a disclaimer and terms of use should clarify that the Township is not responsible for screening volunteers or managing private information. Overall, this tool complements current policies while supporting safe and inclusive community engagement.

Strategic Plan Implications:

This initiative aligns with the Township's Strategic Plan by enhancing community engagement, supporting local organizations, leveraging technology for improved service delivery, and promoting a healthy and livable community. By providing a centralized and accessible volunteer recruitment system, EC Connects fosters civic engagement, strengthens partnerships, and ensures residents have meaningful opportunities to contribute to community growth.

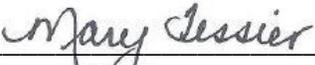
Financial Considerations:

The estimated cost for HelpSeeker to manage the EC Connects Volunteers initiative is \$7,200 per year, based on 4–6 hours of support per month. This includes maintaining the volunteer listing platform, assisting with content updates, and providing technical support to ensure ease of access for residents and community organizations.

Because HelpSeeker offers a range of services through its Karto subscription, any surplus time within the monthly support allocation can be applied to other Township priorities such as trend reports to better understand local gaps and emerging needs.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Council revisit the platform's performance in six months to assess engagement levels and community impact. Should the initiative show positive traction, EC Connects Volunteers could then be considered for inclusion in the 2026 budget planning process.


Community Engagement Coordinator


Community Development Coordinator