

**THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE FOOD
AND FARMING ALLIANCE**

2021

ANNUAL REPORT

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WHO WE ARE

THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE FOOD AND FARMING ALLIANCE

The **Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance** (GHFFA) is a partnership between the regional municipalities and Federations of Agriculture in Niagara, Peel, Halton, York, and Durham, and the cities of Hamilton and Toronto, Conservation Authorities, the Greenbelt Fund, the University of Guelph, Durham College and Niagara College, the Holland Marsh Growers and members of the food industry. In 2020, the GHFFA released their 5-year Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan, which identifies pathways for a more integrated and coordinated approach to food and farming viability in the area to ensure that the Golden Horseshoe retains, enhances and expands its role as a leading food and farming cluster.



CHAIRS REPORT

May 24, 2022

I would like to start in giving a highlight of our last years initiatives and work accomplished over the fall of 2021 through to the spring of 2022. Late last fall the Alliance received a position paper presented by Pam Duesling and her team on Event Barns and how they can work as a value added opportunity on farm operations. We endorsed this position paper for municipalities to consider and learn how these uses can be adopted. The alliance were informed by a Food Hall concept by Michael Wolfson, a ALUS update by Peel Region, Mark Eastman and The Hidden Power of Healthy Soil by Tom Bowers of the Greenbelt Foundation. We were excited to complete the Asset mapping for Northern Ontario for our Connect ON program adding 6,000 additional data points. We now over 60 municipalities participating with 250 users and 115,924 assets listed. Great to have a 5 year extension with OMAFRA. I was also excited to see the work done by the Farmers of the Holland Marsh highlighting Always in season. I have seen this as being inspirational to other areas to show case local food and growers. The Alliance had also seen the completion of our Long Term Care pilot project with the University of Guelph and SCC consulting on procurement of local food. We saw this completion in December 2021. Early this year we set out to create a government relations strategy to a stronger voice to Queens Park as we have a provincial election on June 2, 2022, we will hear more about this later on today. As chair working with the team I was very pleased in our progress in the post COVID work environment seeing great things being accomplished by all and look forward in what lies ahead of us this year in our work and relationships that we will developed.

Thank-you for the opportunity to assist in leading the GHFFA.

Albert Witteveen



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

September 8, 2022

It has taken a pandemic to show us the strengths and weaknesses of our Canadian food system. Disruptions in supply and distribution of food have taken the headlines in the last year, illustrating that we have a food system that was able (with a few exceptions) to pivot and get food to the consumer. And while our border did not close to food shipments, it is evident that we must continue to produce our own food and as much as we can in Canada.

To do that requires resolve on many fronts – a resolve politically to protect good agricultural lands for growing food, a resolve by industry to attract investment in a strong food processing sector, a

resolve by entrepreneurs to create food products that meet the needs of an ever-evolving consumer and a resolve to value food for the benefit it brings to good health and a biodiverse environment.

The Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance exists to promote that resolve to Provincial and Municipal governments as they move to house an ever-expanding population. Through partnerships, we bring attention to the need for a strong food processing sector that brings jobs and economic value to the province. Our promotion of local food initiatives help to foster an innovative and creative sector that offers fresh choices to even the most vulnerable in our population.

We bring together a diverse group of people to our table – Municipal politicians, Conservation Authorities, Farmers, Post-Secondary Institutions, Provincial representatives, the Greenbelt Foundation, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and farm businesses. Together we bring ideas and energy to keep the food production and processing sectors strong and thriving in the Golden Horseshoe. The pandemic has shown us some of the weaknesses in the system but it has also more clearly shown our strengths.





It is important that we continue to work together, that no matter what changes politically, economically or even through a worldwide pandemic, we are able to bring together the people who care to make things better – better land use policies for Canada's most productive lands, better care for our environment through practices that reduce long term effects on our soil, water and air, better collaboration throughout the sector so we speak with one voice on issues pertaining to agriculture and food and finally better understanding of the value of a food secure society in Canada where culturally appropriate food is safe, available and affordable.

Our 5 year Action Plan helps to guide our work. This report focuses on some of the things that have been accomplished by the Alliance in 2021 despite a pandemic. Thank you to the Board who make it possible, the ever-present energy from the staff of the Alliance and the Working Group members who keep us real!

Janet Horner

OUR STAFF

During the pandemic, many people experienced the WFH or “work from home” phenomena. The office of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance has always been a virtual office with the official address residing at Country Heritage Park in Milton. Staff and Board have not had the opportunity to meet in person during 2021 but have continued the work of the Alliance virtually from their home offices in Central Ontario.

Executive Director

Janet Horner – **Dufferin County**

Social Media and Public Relations

Josie Di Felice – **City of Hamilton**

Accounting

Julie Wilson – **Region of Halton**

ConnectON Staff

Project Liaison – Marilyn Bidgood – **Simcoe County**

Project Manager – Nicole Winter – **Wellington County**

Data Specialist – Taylor Black – **Wellington County**

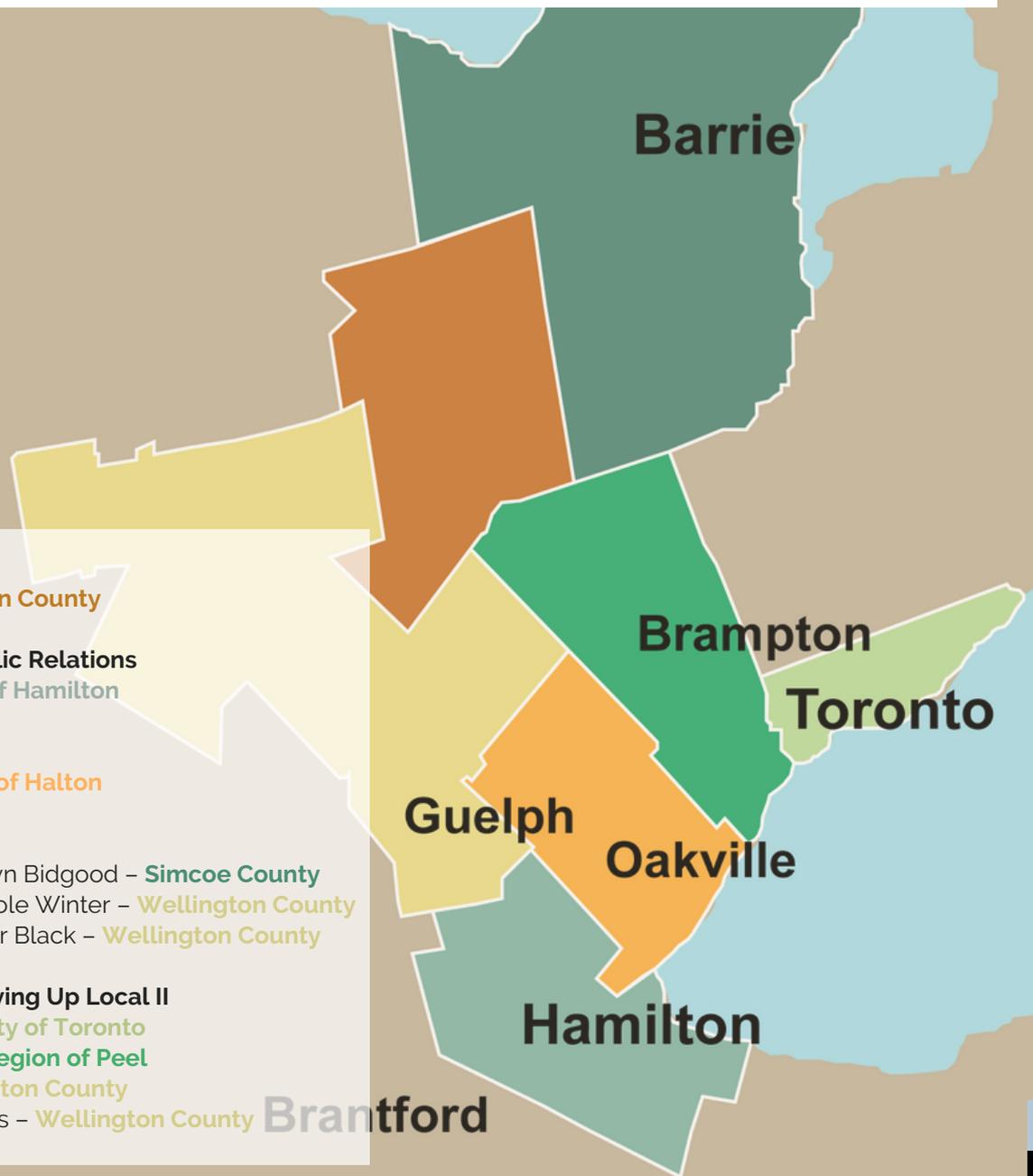
Research Team – Serving Up Local II

Soni Craik Christie – **City of Toronto**

Stephanie Crocker – **Region of Peel**

Dr. Sara Epp – **Wellington County**

Minerva Cancilla-Styles – **Wellington County**



In addition, we would like to thank the following Consultants who helped the Alliance to complete their projects this year:

Pam Duesling – Position Paper – Event Barns

Powerline Films – Always in Season Video

Summit 72 Consulting – Paper – Economic Impact of Agriculture in Greenbelt and Greater Golden Horseshoe

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021 - 2022

Durham Region	Gord Highet, Regional Councillor Ken Lamb, Durham Federation of Agriculture Kelly O'Brien, Durham College
York Region	Avia Eek, Councillor Kim Empringham, York Federation of Agriculture Jody Mott, Holland Marsh Growers
City of Toronto	Michael Wolfson, Economic Development
Region of Peel	Johanna Downey, Councillor Tom Dolson, Peel Federation of Agriculture Mark Eastman, Credit Valley Conservation Authority
Halton Region	Mike Cluett, Councillor Meaghan Richardson, Halton Federation of Agriculture Jamie Reaume, Country Heritage Park Agricultural Society
City of Hamilton	Judy Partridge, Councillor Lucas Catalfamo, Hamilton-Wentworth Federation of Agriculture
Niagara Region	Albert Witteveen, Councillor Cathy Mous, Niagara Federation of Agriculture Patrick Robson, Niagara College
University of Guelph	Wayne Caldwell
Ontario Federation of Agriculture	Mark Reusser
Greenbelt Fund	Thomas Bowers

HIGHLIGHTS!

THE GHFFA'S TOP TEN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 1 Position paper on event barns
- 2 Cannabis land use webinar
- 3 ConnectOn project with western ontario wardens
- 4 ConnectOn project with Northern Ontario policy institute
- 5 New data sharing agreements with OMAFRA and ConnectOn partners
- 6 Always in season video
- 7 Agriculture's economic contribution in the Greenbelt and Greater Golden Horseshoe
- 8 Completed research phase of the local food in long-term care
- 9 New board members
- 10 New partnerships





POSITION PAPER ON EVENT BARNES

Position papers are topics in Economic Development or Planning which require some in-depth research to advance our knowledge and practice on the municipal or provincial level. The topic of Event Barns was chosen in 2021 for the first of what we hope will be an ongoing series of papers. While our original intent with the position paper was to advance our knowledge in a particular topic area, the exercise afforded the Alliance the opportunity to present the draft paper to the Agricultural Advisory Committees and seek input from the local level. Pam Duesling, PhD Candidate at the University of Guelph, and Director of Development for the County of Brant was our first author and guided us through the event Barns project with professionalism and wisdom.

➔ To read the full paper click [here](#).



CANNABIS LAND USE WEBINAR

On April 20, 2021, the Alliance and the University of Guelph were joined by industry experts to examine the best practices for land use planning for licenced cannabis production in Ontario. Approximately 75 business and municipal employees attended the webinar and panelists shared their best practices and recommendations for land use planning for the sector.

- ➔ For more information click [here](#).
- ➔ To watch a recording of the webinar click [here](#).

HOSTED BY THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE
FOOD AND FARMING ALLIANCE

**UP IN SMOKE?
BEST PRACTICES IN PLANNING
FOR LICENSED CANNABIS
PRODUCERS IN ONTARIO**

HIGHLIGHTING RESEARCH FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH AND EXPERIENCES FROM INDUSTRY EXPERTS	APRIL 20, 2021 1:00 - 3:00 PM	A MODERATED DISCUSSION / AUDIENCE Q&A WILL FOLLOW THE PRESENTATIONS
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REGISTER VIA EVENTBRITE BY CLICKING [HERE](#)



CONNECTON PROJECT WITH WESTERN ONTARIO WARDENS

The ultimate goal of the ConnectOn project is to create a provincial database to support the Agri-Food and Manufacturing sectors. As developers of a proven tool providing information to economic developers in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Eastern Ontario municipalities, the Alliance was approached by the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus to collect Agri-food and manufacturing data and mapping for 15 additional counties, members of the WOWC. Over the duration of the project, the Alliance created a skilled Data and GIS staff team. Data was collected and municipal staff were trained to use the ConnectOn database. The project enabled completion of the data for all of Southern Ontario with the exception of a handful of separated cities. Thank you to Project Managers Marilyn Bidgood and Nicole Winter for bringing this project to completion on budget and on time.



CONNECTON PROJECT WITH NORTHERN ONTARIO POLICY INSTITUTE

Following on the heels of the data collection in Western Ontario, we began working in the North to complete the provincial mapping. The Northern Policy Institute provided facilitation and access to data and their partners in Northern Ontario. In addition to agri-food and manufacturing data, for 10 Districts and 7 Cities, tourism data was added to the Northern Database. While much of the work was done in 2021, work continued and the project officially launched in May 2022.



To access the ConnectOn website click [here](#).



NEW DATA SHARING AGREEMENTS WITH OMAFRA AND CONNECTON PARTNERS

Prior to formation of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance as a not-for-profit entity in December 2018, OMAFRA had signed a data sharing agreement with the Toronto Region Conservation Authority who entered into contracts and agreements behalf of the Alliance. While an extension to that agreement had been developed with TRCA and OMAFRA, it was important to transfer that responsibility to the Alliance prior to its expiry on December 31, 2021.

Our work with ConnectOn had significant importance to OMAFRA as it forms the basis for their public facing Agricultural Systems portal. Any refinement to the Farm Business Registrations will further refine the data contained in the OMAFRA Portal

Increased scrutiny ensures with the Ministry lawyers as the agreement was modernized and updated finally on the 20th of December in 2021, after a year of effort, we received the final signed agreement, 10 days before the expiry of the old agreement. Subsequently, data sharing agreements have been updated with all partners and users of the ConnectOn database.

Many thanks to Carolyn Puterbough, OMAFRA Regional Economic Specialist for her perseverance which led to the renewed agreement.



ALWAYS IN SEASON VIDEO

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture initiated the Always in Season Toolkit to support communities and municipalities engaging in agriculture awareness activities to grow the Local Food Sector. As part of the project in 2021, the Alliance chose York Region to support the development of a video focusing on the Holland Marsh farmers. Coordinated in conjunction with the Region of York and the Holland Marsh Growers, a 7-minute video was produced by Powerline Films and features the carrot value chain, young farmers, women in agriculture, farm labour, and the production of safe local foods. The video may be viewed at [Yorklink.ca](https://yorklink.ca)

The Alliance owes our thanks to York Region staff member Meena Hassalini and Jody Mott, Executive Director, Holland Marsh Growers for shepherding this project.



AGRICULTURE'S ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION IN THE GREENBELT AND GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE

The Greenbelt Foundation funded with additional funds from the Alliance a study to examine the economic contributions of agriculture to Ontario's economy. To quote the study authors:

"Population growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it presents opportunities for the agriculture sector to grow and thrive in response to positive demand shocks. On the other hand, to the extent it threatens the Greenbelt, it represents a risk to agribusiness in the areas as suitable land becomes increasingly rare. Governments must therefore carefully balance competing priorities when implementing development policies."

The study seeks to show the tremendous economic value of the agri-food system to the region and the value of the secondary industries that support agri-food and use the products of agriculture to produce further processed goods. The Alliance contributed additional funds to the project to help determine what economic indicators could be compiled on a municipal basis to provide accurate and significant data to decision makers.



COMPLETE RESEARCH PHASE OF THE LOCAL FOOD IN LONG-TERM CARE

After three years, the research phase of the project entitles Serving Up Local 2 – An Economic Analysis was completed, and a draft report was submitted. Using data from 14 Golden Horseshoe municipally managed Long Term Care Homes, the report recommended the following:

- Actualize Ontario's Local Food Act by mandating food purchase reporting and local food purchase tracking for broader public sector institutions
- Create a cross-ministerial working group between the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ontario Ministry of Long-Term Care
- Align local food definitions through a Local food purchase and reporting mandate
- Mandate food purchase tracking and reporting by food category for long-term care

- Collect baseline local and food category purchasing data from across the province
- Release long term care food category purchasing as a percent of budget as public information

Ultimately, the research team has determined that setting a local food purchasing goal is possible, results in positive outcomes regarding resident satisfaction, does not require increased food budget and is the ideal sector to begin tracking food purchases.

While the report is still being reviewed by the Advisory Committee, it is expected to be released for public information in Summer 2022. Dr. Sara Epp, of the University of Guelph will be leading the Knowledge Transfer of the Study. Results will be used in follow-up presentations to OMAFRA and OMLTC.





NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Keeping a Board renewed is always a big job and this year we were pleased to have new Board members join where there has not been a member before.

Peel Federation of Agriculture – **Tom Dolson**

Hamilton Wentworth Federation of Agriculture – **Lucas Catalfamo**

Credit Valley Conservation Authority – **Mark Eastman**

Durham College – **Kelly O'brien**

With municipal elections in October 2022, we anticipate some new members will be joining us in late fall and we will be saying goodbye to other long term supporters.



NEW PARTNERSHIPS

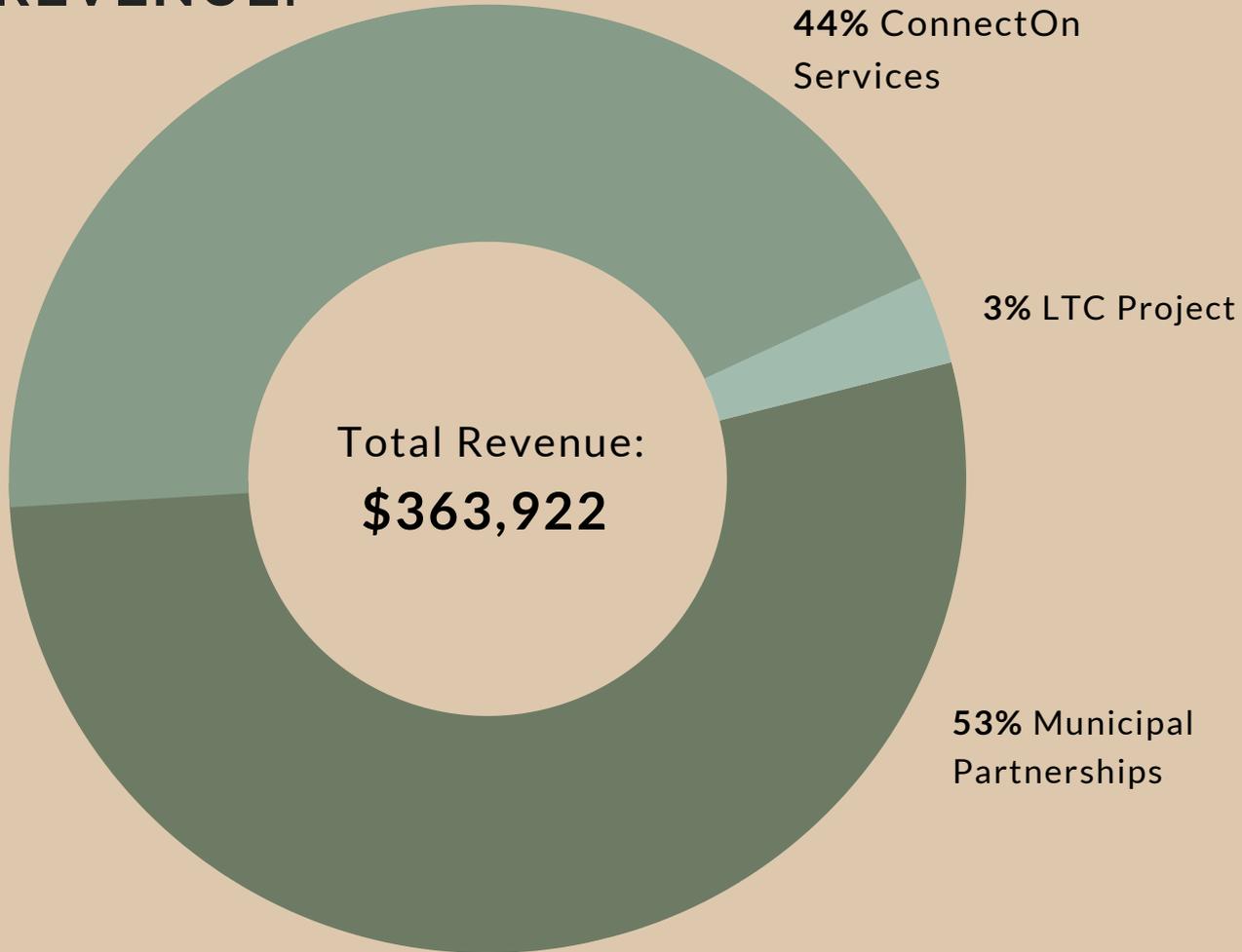
We have to work hard at keeping our networks and supporters strong and supportive. In 2021, we increased our support to the ConnectOn program by securing projects to collect data for Western Ontario and Northern Ontario and update data from Eastern Ontario. At the same time, we secured 3-year funding of \$75,000 per year to support the staffing and upgrading of the database from our new partners.

Stronger partnerships with the University of Guelph and the student pool of researchers and designers.

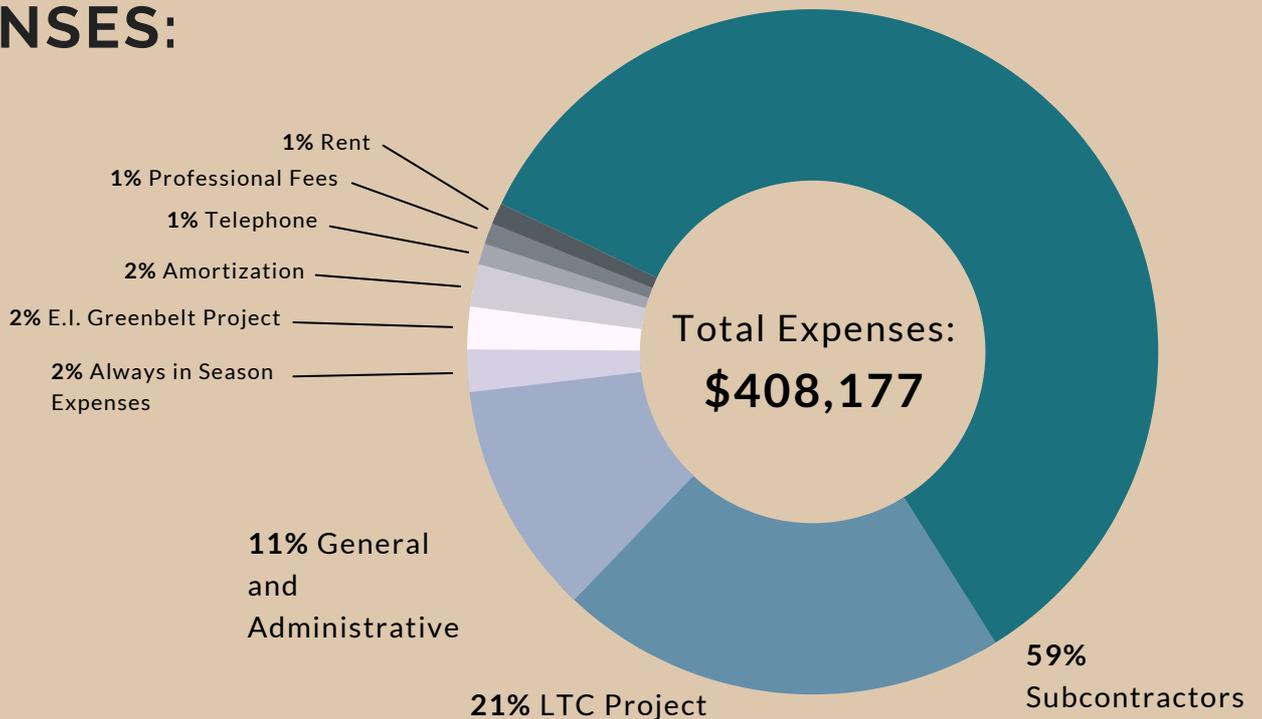
Partnerships with the Staff working groups – sometimes it astounds me that for the past 10 years, planning and economic development staff from the Golden Horseshoe meet monthly to share and discuss their challenges and successes in the work they do. While they do not directly report to the Golden Horseshoe, the working group is a significant influence on the policy and work that is done. Hat's off to the hard-working staff who work tirelessly with the Agri-food sector top of mine in their work. I am in awe of the passion and creativity shown in the work that they do.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

REVENUE:



EXPENSES:



OUR PARTNERS





**Discover more from the Golden Horseshoe Food
and Farming Alliance on our website**

<https://foodandfarming.ca>

CONTACT US

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