



Policy Development Committee Report

To: The Chair and Members of the Policy Development Committee
From: Halie Gilmore, Project Manager Corporate Strategy
Date: November 5, 2024
Report #: RPT-0232-24
Subject: Review of Corporate Data Collection Program
Purpose: For Information

Recommendation

Whereas Council directed staff to assess the value of reporting on two additional data series, ISO 37122 Indicators for Smart Cities and ISO 37123 Indicators for Resilient Cities, with the World Council of City Data (WCCD);

And whereas staff have undertaken a comprehensive review of the County's existing data products and how each is being leveraged;

Therefore, that RPT-0232-24 - Review of Corporate Data Collection Program be received as information;

And that the County continue to undertake the certification process for the WCCD ISO 37120 data stream, and not pursue certification for the ISO 37122 and ISO 37123 series at this time.

Executive Summary

The County of Brant (the County) recognizes the value that quality data brings to the municipality. It is necessary to help us make solid, data driven decisions that meet the needs of the community. Across the organization, staff collect, manage, and use data in different ways. The Corporate Strategy team completed a review of the corporate data collection program to understand how data is currently used throughout the organization and identify opportunities for improvement. From this review, staff determined goals to guide us forward. The Corporate Strategy team may explore and implement different actions to advance the corporate data goals.

As per direction from Council, staff also assessed the value of expanding WCCD reporting to include two new data series (ISO 37122 and ISO 37123). Based on the findings from the review, additional costs, and pressure on data custodians, staff do not recommend expanding reporting at this time.

Strategic Plan Priority

Strategic Priority 6 - Stable and Responsive Governance

Impacts and Mitigation

Social Impacts

Improving data analysis and use will help encourage positive social outcomes.

Environmental Impacts

Enhancing the use of data can support positive environmental impacts and help the County better monitor climate change metrics (like greenhouse gas emission levels).

Economic Impacts

Strengthening how we use data will advance positive economic outcomes and financial decisions.

Report

Background

At its session on November 28, 2023, Council resolved the following:

Whereas the County of Brant has held membership in the World Council on City Data since 2019, including the collection and contribution of a significant amount of data regarding the activities of the County of Brant;

And Whereas the World Council on City Data continues to expand its offerings to provide leading edge comparative data for municipal and other local governments in Ontario, Canada, and the rest of the world;

And Whereas the County of Brant continues to evaluate the means to best leverage the data available to it by the World Council on City Data;

Therefore, be it resolved that Staff be directed to evaluate the data streams the County of Brant currently subscribes to with the World Council on City Data;

And that Staff be directed to evaluate new and unsubscribed data streams from the World Council on City Data throughout 2024, and report back to Council with recommendations regarding the additional data streams available in advance of 2025 Budget deliberations.

Following Council direction, the Corporate Strategy team reviewed the value of the existing ISO 37120 data and evaluated the opportunity to report on new WCCD data series, ISO 37122 and ISO 37123.

In addition, to better understand how data is used across the County, the Corporate Strategy Team completed a review to identify current conditions and opportunities for improvement. The findings from this review and goals for the future are included below.

Analysis

Current Condition of Data Program

Staff collect, manage, analyze, and report on a significant amount of data across the County. Data comes from internal sources (like program registration and financial reporting) and external sources (such as the census and databases). Information is used to guide effective decision-making, deliver services, evaluate adherence to strategic priorities, and proactively respond to community needs. Data across the County is mainly decentralized, with

divisions/departments managing the collection and storage of their respective data in different digital tools and software.

Staff in the Business and Technology division are working on initiatives to enhance use and access to information across the County and community. Notably, the team is developing an open data portal to publish County data in an online, publicly accessible format. They are also piloting the use of a new document management system to improve how staff share and store documents internally in a secure and organized manner.

The County has achieved platinum certification from WCCD for reporting data on the ISO 37120 series for five years. Through this program, the County partners with WCCD to assess how we are progressing across 115 indicators spread over 19 themes. Themes range from tracking economic well-being to waste collection levels. The set of indicators and the process helps to standardize reporting and allows benchmarking with other participating municipalities. Through the partnership with WCCD, the County receives access to an online dashboard to view the data, support throughout the reporting process, and certification to recognize our efforts.

Based on conversations with staff, collecting and analyzing data for the ISO 37120 series is time intensive and the final data is infrequently used across the organization. As we continue to collect and report on these indicators, the County is encouraged to expand how we use the information to support planning, decision-making, and evaluation.

Findings from Other Municipalities

To support the County's review of the corporate data program, staff conducted jurisdictional research to learn from other municipalities that are engaging in this work. Approaches from the City of Kitchener, City of Vaughn, Town of Caledon, Town of Oakville, York Region, and the Town of St. Mary's were reviewed. Research illustrates that developing data strategies is a new and growing area of focus. When it comes to using data, common priorities include improving collaboration and information sharing across departments, fostering a data driven culture, and enhancing data literacy and staff capacity.

Goals and Recommendations for the Future

Based on conversations with staff and findings from the jurisdictional review, the Corporate Strategy team identified opportunities to improve how we access and use data at the County:

- *Reducing data siloes:* Departments and divisions track and store information and data pertaining to their operations. Improving how this information is shared internally across the organization would be valuable.
- *Enhancing use of data by removing barriers:* There are opportunities to boost data literacy, increase use of ISO 37120 data and other external data sources, and improve how we visualize data.
- *Leveraging data from smart technologies:* More smart technologies are being incorporated throughout County operations, such as automated speed cameras, building automation systems, and data trackers on fleet. Using the data collected through these new technologies will be important to support smart decision-making for the future.

To advance improvements, the Corporate Strategy team has identified three overarching goals to propel the County forward:

1. Remove barriers to using, analyzing, managing, sharing, and reusing data by enhancing data literacy and collaboration across the organization.
2. Recognize data as a valuable, strategic asset.
3. Leverage how smart, digital technologies can be used to support improved data collection and positive outcomes across the County.

The Corporate Strategy team will partner with relevant departments to explore and deliver different actions to advance these goals. Actions may include resource sharing and education to build staff capacity, lending staff support and expertise, developing a data inventory, advancing data visualization, and incorporating measurable metrics into major strategic planning work.

As mentioned above, the Corporate Strategy team also reviewed the value of reporting on two new data series through WCCD, ISO 37122 Indicators for Smart Cities and ISO 37123 Indicators for Resilient Cities. Based on the review, the Corporate Strategy team does not recommend adding these additional series at this time. Rationale for this approach is provided below:

- As data custodians, staff across the County play a significant role in supporting the annual collection and reporting of data for the ISO 37120 series. Adding two new streams will place additional pressure on County staff.
- The cost of adding the new series is significant. Each new indicator would cost roughly \$25,000-30,000 USD plus tax.
- The current ISO 37120 data is not being widely used across the organization. Increasing use of the current data series is encouraged, before considering expansion.
- Some of the indicators in the new series are quite technical and will not be useful for the County at this time.

Although it is not an ideal time to start reporting on these new sets of indicators, the County's Corporate Strategy team will continue to evaluate this opportunity and explore it in the future.

Summary and Recommendations

As the County continues to grow, it is important to consider how we use and analyze data as a corporation to make smart and informed decisions. Moving forward, the Corporate Strategy team will collaborate with staff across the organization to implement actions to advance our corporate data goals. The review of additional data streams from the WCCD led to important conversations about the use of data throughout the corporation, a better understanding of the data products available, and continued enhancements to leverage data driven decision making where appropriate. The team will continue to provide annual updates to Council on the WCCD reporting and the work being undertaken to advance how we use data across the County.

Attachments

No attachments.

Reviewed By

Adam Crozier, Director of Corporate Strategy
Alison Newton, Chief Administrative Officer

Copied To

Senior Management Team

By-law and/or Agreement

By-law Required No

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and /or Clerk No