

# Bernia Wheaton

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## PROFESSIONAL OBJECTIVE

Define long-term organizational strategic goals, build key community relationships, and identify growth opportunities.

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Rural economic development, management, strategic planning, branding, business development, marketing strategy development and implementation, solution design, government relations & grant writing, public speaker.

## EDUCATION

University of Waterloo, 1993

### Honours Bachelor of Arts

Areas of study included Community and Cultural Development, Community Preservation, Professional and Business Ethics, Statistics, Speech Communication, and Resource Management

University of Waterloo, 2011

### Economic Development

Areas of study include Models for Economic Development, the Canadian Economy, Labour and Skill Development, Marketing Strategies, Analytic Techniques, Planning Techniques, Business Development Issues, and Evaluation Techniques

## AWARDS

- 2012 Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs: Ontario Food Export Award Finalist [Erie Meat Products]
- 2010 Business Retention Expansion International: Business Impact Award
- 2011 Economic Development Council of Ontario: Business Development -Marketing with Social Media

## BOARD AND COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

- Board Secretary – Stratford Perth County Community Foundation – 2009-2012
- Gala Event Chair – Stratford Perth County Community Foundation - 2011

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Achieve Consulting Group**, Wellesley, Ontario

**Lead Consultant**

1998 – present

Freelance consultant specializing in rural economic development, media relations, government relations, strategic planning, marketing, communications, and grant writing.

### Economic Development

- 6+ years experience leading rural economic development initiatives
- Past experience working with Council and Member Municipalities to implement strategies for mitigating economic barriers.
- Experience establishing an economic development office
- Extensive experience leading BR+E programs to identify gaps and design program solutions to support existing business
- Knowledgeable in the development and creation of Community Improvement Plans
- Experienced in Agri-food production, processing, and distribution
- Local food champion with 7 years experience supporting the development of farm gate sales, farm markets, food hubs, and food distribution solutions
- Skilled in creating linkages between business, service clubs, educators, business associations, and government
- Secured grants exceeding **\$8 million** by preparing and submitting funding applications for economic development programs and job creation
- Utilized analytical and research skills during Retail Gap Analysis study, a regional Labour Market Analysis, and a 3-year Economic Development Strategic Plan
- Proven project management skills in coordinating multiple BR+E studies whose outcomes were influential in securing **\$2.3 Million** in funding over 3 years for economic development programs
- International acclaim with the Business Retention Expansion International [BREI] **Award of Excellence** for Program Impact
- Winning the Economic Development Council of Ontario [EDCO] **Social Media** marketing award for the innovative use of Facebook to reduce unemployment.
- Engagement by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, who have used success stories as examples of Best Practices in rural economic development.

### Government Relations

- Frequent engagement by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, who showcase work and client success stories as examples of Best Practices
- Secured grants exceeding **\$8 million** by preparing and submitting funding applications

- Delivery of 40+ keynote presentations on the topics of workforce development, economic development, and social media.
- An invitation to speak at the Ontario Legislature in support of **Bill 11**, a Bill to provide financial support for Economic Development Programs.

### **Marketing**

- More than 5 years of experience marketing industrial land opportunities, rural events, programs, and business opportunities
- Document and implement creative resulting from planning sessions and committee meetings
- Business plan and marketing plan development and execution
- Participate in creative process for new branding and packaging
- E-marketing strategy development and execution
- Communicate with the media representative for buying advertising space for clients in print, broadcast and online advertising
- Negotiate advertising costs and schedules with media

### **Digital Marketing**

- Design and implement social media strategies adhering to best practices, trends, and online opportunity for Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, and Google+
- Develop and post engaging web and blog content with optimized SEO to increase pageviews by 179% and increased average time on page by 52.6%
- Produce, analyze, and measure online insights and analytics and report data to executive team with recommendations for ongoing improvement

### **Media Relations**

- Develop and foster a contact list with more than 120 key media contacts
- Create and manage editorial calendars to optimize media opportunities
- Position earned media placements in local, regional, and national outlets including Stratford Beacon Herald, The Record, Toronto Star, London Free Press, MetroNews, Globe and Mail, CanadianUnderwriter.ca, Canadian Insurance Top Broker, and CBC News
- Write and distribute press releases, media advisories, backgrounders, and by-lined articles and blogs
- Write and place editorial content in newsprint outlets and numerous blogs

## CONFERENCE + MUNICIPAL PRESENTATIONS

- @Midwest – A holistic approach to online marketing, Bloomington, IL
- Beyond the City Lights – Marketing on a Shoestring, Belleville, ON
- eMKTG Conference – Pay Per Click Marketing, London, ON
- CANNEXUS'13 – Jobs, Workforce, and the Economy, Ottawa, ON
- iCANny – Grow your Online Audience, New York, NY
- @Midwest – What would you do with 1,000 NEW Customers, Bloomington, IL
- @MS2Conf – Social Media: THE Tool in your Toolbox, Hockley Valley Resort
- #140cuse – Revitalizing Communities with Social Media, Syracuse, NY
- Ontario Municipal Cultural Planning – *Social Media as a Mapping tool*, Ottawa
- OACA – *Social Media and Rural Economies*; Stratford
- OSUM - *Social Media...the Perth County Experience*, Niagara on the Lake
- SouthWest LHIN - Social Media for Health Care Recruitment, Seaforth
- OMAFRA - Municipal Economic Development: Social Media for Municipalities
- Four County Labour Market Planning Board: Workforce Development, Walkerton
- Ontario East Municipal Conference: Social Media for Municipalities, Kingston
- Business Retention Expansion International: Perth County Community Impact Award presentation, New Orleans
- Business Retention Expansion International: Community Economic Development (on behalf of the OMAFRA), New Orleans
- Oxford County Council: Keynote Speaker on the OMAFRA programs
- EDCO Annual Conference: Social Media in Economic Development, Toronto
- Perth County Municipal Day: Regional Economic Development, Atwood
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs: BR+E Trainer, Orangeville
- North Perth Chamber of Commerce 2008 Business Gala: Keynote Speaker, Listowel
- West Perth Industry Breakfast: BR+E Results, Mitchell
- Perth County Council: BR+E Final Report, Stratford
- OMAFRA – Principles of Successful Project Management, Woodstock
- OMCSS - Taking Charge: Marketing Maturity and Employment Strategies, Kitchener
- University of Waterloo: Communication in Business, Waterloo

## GRANTS & FUNDING APPROVAL

- \$30,000 Funding from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs: Business Retention & Expansion Program
- \$100,000 grant from the Ontario Market Investment Fund: OMAFRA
- \$210,000 grant from the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade: Communities in Transition Fund
- \$80,000 grant from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities: Labour Market Analysis
- \$3,000,000 grant from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: Rural Economic Development Fund
- \$3,000,000 interest-free loan from the Community Adjustment Fund: Southern Ontario Development Program
- \$20,000 grant from the Community Adjustment Fund: FedDev Ontario
- \$6,000 grant from Farm Credit Canada: AgriSpirit Fund
- \$89,000 grant from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs: Ontario Market Investment Fund Program
- \$39,500 grant from the Agricultural Adaptation Council: Food and Beverage Industry Innovation Fund
- \$9,920 Grant from the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Community Investment Support Program
- \$1,152,000 Grant from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs: Rural Economic Development Program
- \$13,000 Funding from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities: Job Creation Partnership Program
- \$13,000 Funding from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities: Job Creation Partnership Program
- \$16,000 Funding from the Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Affairs (formerly MEDT): Summer Company Program
- \$62,000 Funding from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs: Business Retention & Expansion Program