

EDAC AWARD SUBMISSION ABSTRACT

Rural Oxford's Collaborative Marketing & Outreach Initiative (3-Part Video Series)

Category:

Promotional Videos created to promote and/or reinforce business/tourism themes, opportunities, attractions, and/or services.

Purpose of Project:

Rural Oxford EDC is a non-profit economic development organization dedicated to serving the five lower-tier rural Townships in Oxford County. Collaboration is in our DNA. Established in 2014, Rural Oxford EDC by design is a collaborative entity resourced by the Townships of Blandford-Blenheim, East Zorra-Tavistock, Norwich, South-West Oxford, and Zorra.

Our team serves several small towns and business communities across an agriculturally rich geography spanning 2000 sq km's. Take the scenic route that weaves in and around the Town of Ingersoll, Town of Tillsonburg, and the City of Woodstock... you won't be disappointed... there are so many hidden gems in Rural Oxford with incredible places to visit and people to meet.

"Welcome to Rural Oxford" is where the vision began.

During a time of extended business lock-downs and an absolute necessity for timely digital content creation and virtual connection, we set goals to:

- a) create meaningful and practical rural business support programs for community members in some of the hardest-hit sectors,
- b) have an abundant inventory of digital assets showcasing the real people, businesses and rural communities we serve,
- c) promote the "big picture" by extending regional invitations for partner collaboration, leveraging and maximizing resources, and sharing of these high-quality digital deliverables for all community partners,
- d) submit a successful RED grant application for this regional initiative to OMAFRA on behalf of the project partners.

Effectiveness of this 2021/22 Collaborative Marketing & Outreach Initiative:

Overall, we worked with 11 community partners to create 56 high-quality promotional videos that showcase 64 business/industry partners, the eight unique and beautiful Oxford County communities, and the South-Central Ontario Region. We were successful in raising \$20,000 in local partner funding and securing \$30,000 in RED grant funding.

1. The Oxford Shopping Channel – Rural Oxford Series

Collaborators: Rural Oxford EDC, Community Futures Oxford, Tourism Oxford, The Social Factory & Puffin Media

Small Business Features: 29

Videos Created: 29

Key Messaging: Shop Local Oxford County!

Target Audience: proud Oxford County residents and local area tourists

Why Shop Local? Video: <https://tinyurl.com/4my9unjh>

Full YouTube Playlist: <https://tinyurl.com/9vxs95a8>

“We partnered to leverage a community platform that was created as a pandemic response initiative in 2020, called the Oxford Shopping Channel, to roll-out a Rural Oxford Summer Series (which was repurposed and featured again during a “Shop Local this Holiday Season” campaign in the fall of 2021). This Series focused on rural tourism businesses, retailers, and restaurants to showcase the resilience of Oxford County’s back road businesses in some of the hardest-hit sectors. Through sponsorship, this outreach program evolved to engage and support participants by offering independent digital assessments, client-centered training and of course warm referrals to partners and grant programs like Digital Main Street.”

2. We Grow Together 2.0

Collaborators: Rural Oxford EDC, Community Futures Oxford, Tourism Oxford, the Small Business Centre, Future Oxford, Community Employment Services

Industry Partner Features: 20

Videos Created: 16

Key Messaging: What does it take to make a rural community thrive? In Oxford County we've got it down to an art... through a network of humble stewards, we work together to inspire new growth, empower entrepreneurs, and expand enterprise...

Target Audience: local entrepreneurs, expanding enterprise, and investors

We Grow Together Highlight Video: <https://tinyurl.com/38a99ymz>

We Grow Together 2.0 Video Series: <https://ruraloxford.ca/wegrowtogether>

“Early on in the first We Grow Together Series, we recognized there were still so many unique Rural Oxford employers and industry partners that could be featured so we reached out to the community partners who shared in our vision and began mapping out a plan to offer a second round of this value-add business outreach program.”

3. Oxford County Familiarization Tour

Collaborators: Rural Oxford EDC, Town of Ingersoll, Town of Tillsonburg, City of Woodstock (aka Oxford Connection), Future Oxford, SCOR EDC

Industry Partner Features: 15

Videos Created: 11

Key Messaging #1: Welcome to Oxford County... The Greatest Place to Grow.

Key Messaging #2: South Central Ontario Region... Where Local Lives.

Target Audience: investors, site selectors, newcomers, proud Oxford County residents

Welcome to Oxford County Video: <https://tinyurl.com/4848h6vh>

Full YouTube Playlist: <https://tinyurl.com/5xp7bvm8>

“As mentioned above, “Welcome to Rural Oxford” is where the vision began. In 2021, we decided it was time to showcase the uniqueness and beauty of each Rural Oxford Township. At first, the plan was to enhance our website with new site selection information and five individual community profile pages (one for each Township) ... but with the pandemic affecting ‘business-as-usual’ far longer than anyone imagined, and knowing that the Oxford Connection’s in-person FAM Tour plans were still on-pause, we reached out to our area economic development partners to see if they wanted to collaborate with us to create a Virtual FAM Tour for the region. The plan evolved to be a Series promoting all eight lower-tier municipalities in Oxford County, the Future Oxford vision and the South-Central Ontario Region with Oxford County at its heart.”

Challenges & Changes:

The pandemic provided a layer of complexity to this 3-Part Video Series project. There were anticipated and unanticipated timeline delays in receiving some final digital assets. Some of the challenges included illness and recovery, staffing changes, scheduling and rescheduling safe business and industry partner visits to capture and fine-tune Video footage, b-roll, and photographs, to name a few.

Our Rural Oxford team and project partners agreed that a high-quality final project is far better than a sub-par rushed final product so the main change we made was the pace to get across the finish line. This resulted in delaying and reorganizing the roll-out plan for two of the three Video Series.

Project Sustainability:

An inventory of quality digital assets for all to share; business relationships enhanced through practical business support and strategic community partnership.

The Oxford Shopping Channel – Rural Oxford Series has been leveraged in more than one collaborative digital campaign already. Over 30 businesses were supported with digital media training and support, with 29 receiving a quality Video about their business to share on their digital media channels.

The We Grow Together 2.0 Series was shared out directly across our digital channels as well as shared organically by many local businesses on their digital channels. Both of the We Grow Together Series sit as evergreen content on our Rural Oxford website and is repurposed content shared through our digital channels.

The Oxford County FAM Tour Series arrived this summer and the final Videos are stunning! We have issued a media release about the project and will be incorporating the Video Series into the live and in-person Oxford County FAM Tour that is planned for this fall. As a collective, we are thrilled to start rolling out this digital content. You can start by viewing the full FAM Tour Series at: <https://www.oxfordconnection.ca>

The intention is that each economic development partner now has a coordinated and consistent quality Video to promote their community, as well the collective suite to highlight the region at-large. Our hope is that the Series will be shared by all economic development teams, municipal offices and community partners.