



# Committee of the Whole

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**Meeting Date:** June 24, 2025

**Submitted by:** Cara Finn, Director of Economic Development

**Subject:** Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Program

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## **BACKGROUND:**

At the May 27, 2025 meeting of County Council, a staff report was requested regarding the \$21,187.50 payment made to Research Consultants International FDI, Inc. This expense, 50% of which is offset by Federal funds, relates to the County's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) program activities which are outlined in brief below.

Middlesex County continues to advance a strategic, globally competitive Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) program that positions the County to attract high-value investment in key sectors such as agri-tech, food processing, and advanced manufacturing. Through a focused two-phase FDI strategy leveraging federal funding and expanded regional partnerships, Middlesex County is working collaboratively to bring new business opportunities to our communities.

## **ANALYSIS:**

To further support and refine its FDI initiatives, in 2024, Middlesex County partnered with Global Affairs Canada to complete a global market analysis to identify priority markets with high potential for investment attraction. The methodology combined FDI history, industry presence, lead generation success, and proximity to determine the best targets.

Top Target Sectors Identified:

- Agricultural Technology
- Food Processing Supply Chain
- Advanced Manufacturing (including Automotive, EV, and autonomous tech)

Select Tier I global markets were identified based on criteria including industry presence, past FDI activity, lead generation potential, and geographic proximity. These markets demonstrate strong investment potential in all three priority sectors and offer a foundation for proactive outreach and relationship-building.

Community-specific insights were collected to match local assets and economic development strategies with investor needs.

A multi-pronged FDI action plan has been implemented, covering four key areas:

### 1. Lead Generation

- Tradeshow Participation: Engagement at key international events to connect with targeted investors.
- Roadshows: In-market missions to priority regions for face-to-face business development and promotion.

Given current international trade uncertainties and evolving geopolitical dynamics, municipalities across Canada are carefully monitoring key markets. Middlesex County continues to rely on professional FDI consultants to guide outreach, optimize lead generation, and ensure the best return on investment. A formal Request for Quotations for FDI lead generation services is executed annually. The successful proponent of the 2025-2026 service delivery is Canadian-based firm Research Consultants International FDI, Inc.

### 2. Marketing & Digital Strategy

A cohesive and modern Middlesex County marketing presence is a priority. Key initiatives include:

- Enhanced website functionality and investor-friendly content
- Improved visibility on mobile devices
- Addition of regional economic data, real estate availability, and success stories
- SEO and multi-platform promotion to drive international traffic
- Clear and professional sector-directed marketing material identifying key investors and locally available resources to support industry

### 3. Multiplier Strategy

Collaboration with regional and national partners will extend the County's reach and reduce costs through joint promotion and shared representation.

- Middlesex County leverages its FDI efforts through carefully considered multipliers
  - Ontario Food Cluster (OFC): Focused on agri-tech and agri-food sector promotion.
  - Ontario Communities Manufacturing Alliance (OMCA): Supports advanced manufacturing attraction.

- Southern Ontario Marketing Alliance (SOMA): As of 2025, Middlesex County is a member of SOMA, which ensures continued access to both OFC and OMCA programs while further enhancing regional exposure.

These memberships allow Middlesex County to share resources, expand reach, and benefit from co-branded international missions. These multiplier efforts are projected to generate 25-30 qualified leads per show, and results to date are tracking ahead of target.

#### 4. Organizational Optimization

Optimization efforts based on strategic recommendations include Customer Relationship Management (CRM) integration, improved data collection from investor engagement, and expanded services tailored to support international investors.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The 2025 budget includes within its FDI activities, \$24,750 (exclusive of HST) specifically allocated to exclusive lead generation.

The County's 2025 FDI efforts are being strategically leveraged through federal funding and regional partnerships:

- Federal Support:

Middlesex County's successful application to the CanExport Program—in partnership with Global Affairs Canada—offsets 50% of eligible costs associated with FDI efforts. This includes:

- Lead generation
- Travel and tradeshow expenses
- Website and other marketing enhancements
- Funding support for the 2025 Economic Development Intern

- Multiplier Organizations:



Middlesex County's executed multiplier strategy leverages considerable economies of scale in accessing FDI data, training, lead generation and marketing, as well as external funding in excess of what the County or any combination of its member municipalities could secure.


### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC FOCUS:**

Armed with a clear strategy, current market data, regional partnerships, and external funding support that aligns with both the [2021-2025 Middlesex County Economic](#)

[Development Strategic Plan](#) and the [2025-2030 Middlesex County Strategic Plan](#), the County is well-positioned to expand its global footprint by establishing long-term relationships to attract new investment that supports local businesses and job creation. 2025 FDI activities are on track and delivering early results that exceed projections, helping us build a stronger, more connected, and economically vibrant Middlesex.

This report aligns with the following Strategic Focus, Goals, or Objectives:

Strategic Priority	Goal	Objectives
Economic Development  	Enhance overall economic well-being and community prosperity by fostering a sustainable and thriving local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement an Economic Development approach for the County, focusing on key priorities, actions, and areas of growth while providing strong support for small businesses and entrepreneurs, including agriculture-related businesses.</li> <li>• Work towards providing access to ready-to-build land with the infrastructure and services needed to create jobs and grow the local economy.</li> <li>• Advance the County's planning framework that balances diverse land uses while protecting farmland and natural environment.</li> </ul>
Collaboration & Partnerships  	Strengthen collaboration with local municipalities and regional partners to improve economic efficiency, enhance service delivery, and support regional development in alignment with community priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimize service delivery through inter-municipal collaboration and shared services to improve efficiency and seamless operations.</li> <li>• Build and enhance relationships with municipal, regional, First Nations, community, and private sector partners to align priorities, share resources, and implement joint initiatives that improve community well-being and economic growth.</li> <li>• Improve communication and transparency through open engagement, accessible information, and informed decision-making.</li> </ul>

Strategic Priority	Goal	Objectives
<p data-bbox="201 239 373 310">Adaptability and Agility</p> 	<p data-bbox="438 239 685 638">Modernize the County's administrative capabilities to strengthen decision-making, improve service delivery, and achieve better community outcomes</p>	<ul data-bbox="737 239 1442 541" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transform, modernize and continuously improve administrative systems and processes to increase efficiency and enhance the experience of residents and partners.</li> <li>• Strengthen internal administrative capabilities to ensure key support services have the necessary resources to meet community needs and support organizational growth.</li> </ul>

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT** the Report on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Program be received for information.