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Due to the timing of the funding approval for the ElevateHER event occurring after the event had already taken place, we were unable to fully recognize Elgin County's support through event promotion and partnership visibility.

As a result, we are respectfully requesting approval to redirect these funds toward our upcoming *Social Issues Are Business Issues* event on June 16, 2026.

This event aligns closely with the County's priorities, focusing on key social challenges such as housing, mental health, and workforce development, while engaging a broad cross-section of the community. It also provides enhanced visibility opportunities through both in-person attendance and a livestreamed and recorded format.

We would be proud to recognize Elgin County as a valued partner in this initiative.

The details of this initiative are as follows:

Outline where this project, program/service, or event will take place. If you are applying for event funding, please indicate the anticipated event attendance. If you are applying for program/service funding, please indicate how many people from the County of Elgin use this service.

The *Social Issues Are Business Issues* event will take place at CASO Station in St. Thomas on Tuesday, June 16, 2026. This centrally located venue provides accessible space for attendees from across Elgin County.

We anticipate approximately 120–150 in-person attendees, including business leaders, community organizations, municipal representatives, and residents, many of whom live or work within Elgin County.

In addition to the in-person event, the session will be livestreamed free of charge, allowing for broader participation from across the County and beyond. A recording will also be made publicly available following the event on Rogers TV and YouTube, extending its reach and long-term value.

This hybrid format ensures meaningful local engagement while also amplifying Elgin County's leadership in addressing social and economic challenges to a wider audience.

Please provide a clear description of the project, event, or program/service and detail how the funds will be used. Please include key dates of scheduled activities and the target audience.

This hybrid event will bring together business leaders, non-profits, government representatives, and community members to explore how social challenges such as housing instability, mental health, and workforce shortages directly impact economic growth and business sustainability.

The event will feature an expert panel, facilitated discussion, and opportunities for cross-sector collaboration. It will be a ticketed in-person experience (approximately 120–150 attendees), with a free livestream available to participants across Elgin County, Ontario, and beyond. The session will also be recorded and shared for ongoing public access.

Funding will directly support venue rental, audiovisual production and livestreaming, speaker honorariums, catering, and event materials. These elements ensure both an accessible and high-quality experience, while expanding reach beyond those physically in attendance.

How does your project, event, or program/service fill a need within the community? Please describe how your project, event, or program/service enhances the community to achieve a positive impact.

This forum responds to a critical and growing need within the community: the intersection of social challenges and economic stability. Businesses across Elgin County are increasingly impacted by issues such as housing availability, workforce retention, and mental health, yet there are limited spaces where these conversations happen collaboratively across sectors.

Our region has emerged as a leader in addressing complex social issues through coordinated, community-driven solutions. Building on this momentum, including recognition from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce with the 2025 Outstanding Advocacy Campaign Award, this event creates a platform to share proven strategies, reduce stigma, and align efforts between business and social sectors.

The impact of this initiative is both immediate and long-term: strengthening partnerships, increasing awareness, and equipping attendees with practical, scalable solutions. By making the event accessible through livestream and recorded content, its benefits extend well beyond a single day, supporting continued learning and engagement across the province.

If this is not a new project, event, or program/service, please explain how County support will help enhance your existing initiative to boost participation and/or volunteer involvement.

This event builds on the success of previous forums led by the Chamber, which have demonstrated strong community engagement and measurable impact. County support will allow us to significantly enhance both the reach and quality of the initiative.

Specifically, funding will expand access through professional livestreaming and recorded distribution, ensuring participation from rural and underserved areas across Elgin County. It will also support a more robust event experience, including higher-calibre production, stronger speaker engagement, and improved attendee accessibility.

Additionally, this support will help deepen cross-sector participation by reducing financial barriers and enabling broader outreach. By strengthening the delivery of an already successful model, County investment directly contributes to increased participation, stronger collaboration, and greater overall community impact.

Please describe the financial need of your organization and the reasons for requesting this support. Indicate other forms of sponsorships/funding that have been applied for or received.

As a non-profit organization, the St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce relies on a combination of sponsorships, ticket revenue, and grant funding to deliver high-impact community programming. While this event will generate some revenue through ticket sales (estimated at 50 ticket holders at \$50 each) and confirmed sponsorship support (including \$2,500 from Steelway Building Systems), there remains a significant funding gap.

Total event costs are projected at approximately \$13,500, with major expenses including production (\$2,500), venue rental (\$1,500), and catering and materials. To ensure accessibility – particularly through free livestream access – and maintain the quality and reach of the event, additional funding is essential.

We are actively seeking approximately \$8,500 in additional sponsorships and grant support. We have applied for another funding grant through the Municipality of Central Elgin as well. County funding would play a critical role in closing this gap, enabling us to deliver an inclusive, high-quality event that benefits the broader Elgin County community.