

Digital Main Street Backgrounder

Helping Main Street Businesses Grow by Adopting Digital Tools and Technologies

Vibrant main streets help attract visitors, create jobs, and increase the competitiveness of small businesses, which are the backbone of small rural communities.

The world has changed! Main street small businesses across Ontario now must think about how to promote their goods and services online, leverage e-commerce platforms, and streamline their operational processes with digital tools to stay competitive and win.

In 2018, recognizing the need to help main street small businesses be more resilient, the Government of Ontario funded Ontario Digital Main Street, a \$12 million multi-faceted program to help main street small businesses adopt and use digital technologies more effectively. This project was an expansion of the program that was created by the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) three years earlier.

With the unprecedented challenges that businesses are facing, OBIAA, in partnership with TABIA, is thrilled to be working to bring Digital Main Street to small main street businesses across Ontario. Digital Main Street provides:

- **Digital Transformation Program:** Upon completion of their digital assessment and online training, businesses may apply for a grant of up to \$2,500 to offset costs as outlined in their Digital Transformation Plan and budget. These funds are available to help businesses strategically adopt technology and meet their digital goals.
- **Digital Service Squad Program:** Digital Service Squads are digital technology specialists in an area or region of Ontario who deliver one-on-one assistance to main street small businesses. These Digital Service Squads can be set up by BIAs, municipalities, Chambers of Commerce or Small Business Enterprise Centres that may apply for funding based on the number of businesses within their designated commercial downtown area.
- **Access to Support:** Ongoing support including access to basic digital services, a list of vendors that can identify technologies and tools businesses need to be digitally ready, and other resources such as assessments, articles, best practices, etc.
- **Digital Training (online and in-person):** Webinars and workshops focusing on specific digital technologies and strategies, including e-commerce, social media, and website development.

To learn more about Digital Main Street, please visit digitalmainstreet.ca/ontariogrants/