

A dark, teal-tinted photograph of a city street scene with buildings, utility poles, and pedestrians, serving as the background for the central text.

# Digital Main Street

## Digital Service Squad

### 2020 Grant Program FAQs



This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario

# What is a Main Street?

Official Plan's define a Main Street as the following :

A **commercial** street with strong pedestrian orientation, accessible to the adjacent community and containing a mix of uses (stores, community facilities, apartments, etc.).

**Rural** communities who have a commercial crossroads, may not follow the typical 'main street' definition, but they must have a commercially zoned main street area. (Highway Commercial)

Further, they are defined as "streets that offer some of the most significant opportunities in the city for intensification through more compact forms of development, a lively mix of uses and a pedestrian-friendly environment."

# What is a Digital Service Squad (DSS)?

A Digital Service Squads (DSS) is a free resource of trained digital technology specialists situated throughout Ontario who will deliver personalized, one-on-one assistance designed to help main street small businesses navigate new tools and maximize their return on investment. They will:

- Help them complete an online assessment
- Introduce them to online training modules to build their knowledge and skill
- Assist with the development of their Digital Transformation Plan (DTP)
- Help them apply for a \$2,500 grant to implement it
- Provide one-on-one support for **basic** website set-up, Google My Business profiles, 360° photos, digital storefront set-up with e-commerce, creation, or enhancement of social media presence, and much more.

# Who is eligible for the DSSG?

A DSSG is open to applicants that meet the following requirements:

- Is a local BIA located in Ontario and/or;
- Is a municipality, Chamber of Commerce or Small Business Enterprise Centre in an area where there are no BIAs present, and is located in Ontario and/or;
- Is an area where one of the following may apply on behalf of a collaborative partnership that includes: a BIA, a municipality, a Chamber of Commerce and/or a Small Enterprise Centre with multiple BIAs.

# What details need to be included with the DSSG application?

All applicants must complete the DSS application template that provides details of the following:

- The eligible BIA or municipal catchment **area**
- The **number** of eligible businesses to be served
- The number of **potential hires** (FT/PT)
- The project **timeline**
- Full **budget** breakdown

# How will DSSG applications be assessed?

DSSG applications will be assessed based on the following:

- The **strength** of implementation
- The administrative **infrastructure** and ongoing management of the squads
- The financial **controls** to administer the grant funds
- **Preference** will be given to applicants who intend to hire university/college students as their squad members.

# Can prior DSSG recipients apply for this new round of funding?

Yes. Prior DSS grant recipients **may** be eligible to apply provided they meet one of the following requirements:

1. The first DSS grant project is **complete**. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - a) up-to-date and thorough **HubSpot data** entry for all business interactions;
  - b) a **completed** DSS Final Report has been submitted to the OBIAA office along with all supporting expenditure receipts; or
2. The first project is not yet complete, but will be **expanded** to cover additional businesses and **additional** squad members will be hired; or
3. The first project is not yet complete, but the applicant wishes to **continue** the program **beyond** the completion date. They must then submit a timeline for the final reporting of prior grant funds



# Can prior DSSG recipients apply for this new round of funding?

Yes. In addition to completing the DSSG application template, prior DSS grant recipients **must** also include the following with their application:

- Number of business **served** in the prior grant program and indicate the number of **new** businesses estimated to be served under the new project
- The need to purchase new equipment, if required equipment was purchased as part of the prior grant program



# What is available through the DSSG?

Approved DSSG applicants are eligible for the following:

- Exact funding amount per applicant is based on the number of qualified main street small businesses using of a multiplier of \$250 per eligible business.
- Grant minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$150,000 to eligible applicants approved for DSS support.
- Maximum grants as follows (based on eligible main street small businesses in the catchment area):
  - Under 100 businesses      maximum \$25,000
  - 100 – 200 businesses      maximum \$50,000
  - 201 – 300 businesses      maximum \$75,000
  - 301 – 400 businesses      maximum \$100,000
  - 401 – 500 businesses      maximum \$125,000
  - 501 – 600 businesses      maximum \$150,000
- Applicants must include the number of eligible businesses (potential reach) per application
- Flexibility exists for outlier areas that are not accurately represented by the criteria.

# What can the DSSG be spent on?

Eligible costs include the following and exclude applicable HST discount/rebate:

- Equipment limited to \$1,200 (per squad member)
  - Chromebook or equivalent
  - 360-degree camera kit with accessories
  - Mobile Hot Spot or equivalent up to a maximum of \$200.00 (monthly service costs not included and are not eligible costs)
- Marketing (printing/distributing postcards/flyers promoting the service locally)
- Travel costs based on the posted provincial mileage rate (only applicable to outlier areas and applicants who cover multiple cities)
- Cell phone costs for squad members (\$50/month maximum)
- Zoom charges
- Squad Member Salary/Wages/Contract Fees
  - Preference to graduate or undergraduate students

# What are non-eligible expenses?

Ineligible costs those deemed unnecessary or excessive and include, but are not limited to the following:

- Unnecessary or excessive equipment
- Administrative costs
- Repayment of other loans, past debts, software, repair of existing equipment
- Existing staff salary – i.e., paying a current full-time member of your team to execute the role of a DSS team member.
- Costs of land, building or vehicle purchase
- Costs of intangible assets such a goodwill, whether capitalized or expensed
- Depreciation or amortization expenses
- Interest on invested capital, bonds, or debentures
- Bond discount
- Monthly mortgage, loan and rent payments
- Refinancing of an existing debt

# What are non-eligible expenses?

## Ineligible costs cont'd.

- Losses on investments, bad debts and any other debts
- Fines or penalties
- Costs related to litigation
- Fees for administrators including payments to any member or officer of the Recipient's Board of Directors
- Opportunity costs
- Hospitality and entertainment costs
- Franchise fees and/or franchise license costs
- Lobbyist fees
- New capital expenditures
- 3<sup>rd</sup> party webinar costs
- Video production costs
- Retroactive and in-progress costs
- Any work done on BIA website – no exceptions

# How do we apply for the DSSG?

Applications for DSSG begin on **July 1, 2020** and will continue to be accepted until **October 31, 2020**. For entities applying for a grant, the process is as follows:

1. Go to [www.digitalmainstreet.ca/ontariogrants/](http://www.digitalmainstreet.ca/ontariogrants/) and complete an online profile.
2. Complete an application form to include:
  - Organizational structure and define who will be responsible for the administration of the contribution funds, along with applicable contact info.
    - Include details of any partnership either formal or informal
  - Describe the geographic area including the number of BIAs (if applicable)
  - Number of eligible businesses to be served (**new businesses to be served + previous businesses already served**)

# How do we apply for the DSSG?

## 2. Complete an application form to include (cont'd):

- An action plan to include a timeline for:
  - executing the project within the designated area
  - hiring and training DSS members
  - hosting DSS launch event/informational sessions for promoting DSS members, if applicable
  - issuing press release, if applicable
  - purchasing equipment, if applicable
  - partnership informational sessions for promoting the squad services in the area
- Any academic partnerships who will assist with potential student hires
- A detailed budget to include a narrative on how the funds will be used

# How long does it take for a DSSG application to be reviewed/approved?

Once submitted:

- OBIAA will review the application to ensure all requirements are met.
- The Grants Manager will follow-up with the applicant if there are questions about the application.
- This review process should take approximately five (5) business days.

Once the final review is completed, OBIAA will:

- Contact the applicant by email and inform them they are approved
- Review all conditions of the contribution with the applicant, including **disclosure** of information to the Federal Government
- Issue a DSSG agreement that **must be signed within five (5) business days**



# When will we receive the DSSG funds?

Upon receipt of the signed agreement, OBIAA will:

- Contact the applicant to verify method of payment: EFT, e-Transfer, or cheque.
- Issue payment within one week

# What other responsibilities should we be aware of under the DSSG agreement?

All requirements will be detailed in the DSSG agreement, but approved applicants should pay particular attention to the following reporting requirements:

- All applicants **must use the HubSpot CRM to track all businesses contacted and served** within the project period
- All projects and reporting must be completed no later than **February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021**
- All approved applicants must **submit copies** of all original receipts to support expenditures as outlined in their budget by the due date in their agreement
- All receipts should be **net** of any applicable HST discount or rebate
- A summary sheet detailing the total of all receipts must be included
- Any budget shortfalls **must be returned** to OBIAA upon final reconciliation of the budget
- Keep track of and report the # of businesses that declined DSS services, were not interested, and/or did not return calls

# Is there a job description for a DSS member?

- OBIAA can provide a generic job description for a DSS member that each BIA/municipality is free to modify depending on the responsibilities you want to assign to your squad member(s) and your overall expectations of the role. It can be downloaded from the [Campaign-in-a Box page](#) of the OBIAA website.
- Local health guidelines allowing, the expectation is for squad members to go door-to-door to introduce themselves and to better serve the local businesses one-on-one. The job description does allow for the possibility of working remotely during COVID-19.

# Are there guidelines for hiring a DSS member and will training be provided?

- Yes. Once you are ready to begin the hiring process and to make sure you are on the right track, OBIAA will make a virtual introduction to our DSS team leader/trainer. She can guide you through the DSS hiring and squad member on-boarding.
- There is mandatory DSS training once you have your squad member(s) in place. DSS members have the option of doing the training via a half-day LIVE webinar or travelling to Toronto for an in-person session. Given current COVID-19 restrictions, it is likely that most training will take place remotely via webinar.

# Are there guidelines for hiring a DSS member and will training be provided?

## DSS Mandatory Training:

- DSS training webinars are scheduled every Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Should be scheduled two (2) weeks in advance.
- The “Kick off DSS training” is not based on hard skills. It will provide:
  - Details on best practices and procedures
  - A comprehensive overview of:
    - The Digital Service Squad conduct
    - The Digital Service Squad Toolkit
    - Digital Main Street best practices (including COVID-19 and other safety precautions)
    - Daily HubSpot reporting requirements.
- All DSS Administrators must take the DSS mandatory training alongside their DSS member(s).

# Is there marketing support material available for DSS members?

Yes. To help your DSS member(s) better serve your local businesses and promote the Digital Transformation Grant, OBIAA has developed the Campaign-in-a-Box (CIAB). It includes:

- Digital/downloadable marketing tools and handouts
- Templates that can be customize with your local messaging and contact details.
- A “How to Apply” video (still in development) that can be downloaded and posted to your website.
  - Provides Digital Transformation Grant applicants with the step-by-step process of applying for the grant
- Is available at <https://obiaa.com/projects/digital-main-street-phase-2/campaign-in-a-box/>
- Will be available in French before the end of July

# Additional Q&As

## Can DSS Grant funds be used to build a marketplace website?

- No. Squad members can help the individual businesses develop a better presence on these marketplace sites, but a squad member's time cannot be used to build the marketplace website. The Digital Service Squad's work is to help businesses; this is not a direct to BIA grant.

## Can we re-hire the same DSS member we used last time?

- Yes, provided they are not an existing staff member. DSS members must be **NET NEW HIRES**. Exception: a current part-time staff member may be increased to full-time to take on DSS responsibilities, but wages must be tracked separately.
- If it is not possible to source university/college graduates/undergraduates as DSS members, contracting a third party tech company is allowed.
- All new DSS members must participate in the mandatory DSS training.

## Should the # of businesses to be served include previously served businesses?

- Yes. # of businesses to be served = # of new businesses to be served + # of previously served businesses



# Digital Main Street Grants



## Has the location for main street small businesses changed?

- No. Main street small businesses **must** be located in, or close to, a downtown main street, a Business Improvement Area or has zoning consistent with a municipality's Operating Plan defining a central business district.
- Within a one (1) KM distance of BIA catchment area

## Do they still have to take the eight (8) hours of training?

- No. A new training program has been developed based on current hot topics
- New training session is approximately 2 ½ hours and is required for ALL applicants

## How long is the project period?

- Grantees have three (3) months to complete their project

## Can a business that already received a grant re-apply?

- Yes, however they must have completed all required reporting and have submitted all receipts

## If the business re-applies, are they automatically approved?

- No, they must still complete the 2 ½ hours of online training and submit a new digital transformation plan

# Digital Main Street Grants



## What is the deadline for Digital Transformation Grant applications?

- Applications must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on November 30, 2020
- Note: after an applicant completes the Eligibility Form, this is a two (2) hour wait period while their answers are evaluated. Applicants will be notified whether they are qualified to continue with the grant application process and submit their Digital Transformation Plan.

## Do businesses need to meet the same eligibility requirements?

- Yes, eligibility requirements for qualified businesses remain the same as before.
- Businesses must employ 1-10 employees (or fewer than 25 employees if they are a café, restaurant, or bar)
- Businesses must be operational at the time of application (not a start up)
- Home-based businesses are still NOT eligible

## Can businesses use the grant to cover costs incurred during the COVID shutdown?

- No. Grant funds **cannot be used** for past or in-progress projects/costs. Only costs incurred as of the Grant agreement date are eligible to be covered by the grant.

# What does each DMS program do for small businesses and can they apply for all three?

## Digital Transformation Grants

- A program that provides businesses with grant funding for digital transformation
- Good for any business that meets the eligibility criteria and is looking for financial support to implement transformation.

## ShopHERE powered by Google

- A program that provides independent small businesses and artists with a quick, easy, and no-cost way to get selling online right away.
- If a business is looking for a transactional website and to sell on Shopify, this is a good fit

## Future Proofing

- A program delivered in partnership with Communitech and Invest Ottawa that helps businesses identify new markets, pivot their business model, and develop and implement a deep digital transformation plan. More information to follow in the coming weeks.

**IMPORTANT TO NOTE: All programs are independent of each other, albeit very complementary. There is nothing prohibiting a business from going through all three programs if they qualify and there is no specific order in which a business needs to approach the programs.**

# Contact Us



If you have questions or need help, please email us at:

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