



Digital Main Street Background

Helping Small Businesses Grow by Adopting Digital Tools and Technologies

Small businesses form the economic engines and the social backbones of our communities. These small businesses have faced the challenges of the pandemic and are now positioning for an increasingly digital future.

Ontario's small businesses must now 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 succeed.

In 2018, recognizing the need to help main street small businesses be more resilient, the Government of Ontario funded the expansion of Digital Main Street, a multi-faceted program to help main street small businesses adopt and use digital technologies more effectively.

In 2020-21, as small businesses faced unprecedented challenges, the Government of Ontario and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) stepped up with new funding to extend the successful Digital Main Street program to more small businesses across Ontario.

Now, from April 2022 – March 2024, the Government of Ontario has expanded the Digital Main Street Ontario Grants program once more, partnered with the Toronto Association of BIAs and administered by the Ontario BIA Association. This additional \$40 million investment will better position Ontario businesses to compete at home and abroad by providing them with access to training, grants, and Digital Service Squad support.

Digital Main Street provides:

- **Digital Transformation Grant:** Upon completion of their digital assessment, pre-qualification quiz and online training, businesses may apply for a grant of up to \$2,500 to offset costs as outlined in their Digital Transformation Plan. These funds are available to help businesses strategically adopt technology and meet their digital goals.
- **Digital Service Squad Program:** Digital Service Squads (DSS) are digital technology specialists in an area or region of Ontario who deliver one-on-one assistance to brick-and-mortar small businesses. BIAs, municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, Board of Trade or Small Business Enterprise Centres may apply for a grant to set up a DSS, with funding based on the number of eligible businesses within their area.
- **Access to Support:** Brick-and-mortar small business can access ongoing support, including 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:** Small businesses can attend free-of-charge, weekly webinars on topics such as e-commerce, social media and website development.

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