

# Digital Main Street Background

## 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 is changing. Small main street businesses across Ontario must think about how to promote online, use e-commerce, and streamline their processes with digital tools to stay competitive and win.

To help Ontario's main street small businesses enhance their digital capabilities and online presence, the Ontario BIA Association and Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs have partnered on a \$12 million initiative over three years.

Part of the province's Main Street Enhancement Fund, the Digital Main Street Initiative was first launched by the Toronto Association of BIA (TABIA) and the City of Toronto in June 2016.

*"OBIAA is thrilled to be working to bring Digital Main Street to small main street businesses across Ontario"*

*— Kay Matthews, Executive Director, Ontario BIA Association*

### Digital Main Street provides:

- **Digital Transformation Training and Grants Program:** grants of up to \$2,500 to help businesses strategically adopt technology and meet their digital goals.
- **Digital Service Squad Program:** one-on-one assistance and digital assessments by highly trained teams that can come on-site to offer services and recommendations, including activating free and easy-to-use tools.
- **Access to Support:** access to basic digital services, including lists of vendors that can identify technologies and tools businesses need to be digitally ready, including assessments, articles, best practices, etc.
- **Digital Training (online and in-person):** specific digital technologies or strategies, including e-commerce, social media, and website development.

Learn more at [digitalmainstreet.ca/Ontario](https://digitalmainstreet.ca/Ontario)

## Digital Main Street Grants Program

Thanks to the Province of Ontario and the Ontario BIA Association, Digital Main Street is offering two types of grants to help small main street businesses across Ontario strengthen their digital capabilities:

- 1. Digital Transformation Grant:** Every business that wants to participate in the grant must first take an online assessment of their current technology use. Based on the assessment, the business will then develop their Digital Transformation Plan. This plan will identify their goals and which technologies need to be implemented to achieve those goals. To help put the plan into action, the business can then apply for a one-time grant to help with the costs of adopting the required technologies. There are 2,000 available grants of \$2,500 per business.
- 2. Digital Service Squad Grant:** Digital Service Squads are digital technology specialists in an area or region of Ontario who will deliver one-on-one assistance to small main street businesses. Digital Service Squads can be set up by BIAs, Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce or Small Business Enterprise Centres, or these groups can come together to form partnerships. There are 300 available Digital Service Squad Grants of \$10,000 each.

To learn more, please visit:

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