

Digital Transformation Grant FAQs and How to Apply

What is a Digital Transformation Grant?

The Digital Main Street Program, funded by the Province of Ontario in partnership with the Ontario BIA Association (OBIAA), seeks to help small main street businesses across Ontario improve their adoption of technologies to better promote themselves online, sell online, and even run back-office processes online. Every business that wants to participate in the grant must first take an online assessment of their current technology use and complete the online training in order to develop a Digital Transformation Plan (DTP) that will detail their goals and review the technologies needed to achieve those goals. To help implement the plan, eligible businesses can apply for a one-time grant of \$2,500 to assist with the costs of adopting the suggested technologies.

Who is eligible for the grant?

A Digital Transformation grant is open to businesses that meet the following requirements:

- Must be a main street business that:
 - **Is** within a BIA, is located within a defined central business district, or is located downtown by a municipality's Official Plan / Zoning By-law (note: a main thoroughfare does not necessarily constitute a main street/downtown/district).
 - **Is** employing 1-99 employees.
 - **Is** paying commercial property tax (commercially assessed), either directly or through commercial rent.
 - **Is** a registered business in Ontario and/or is incorporated.
 - **Is NOT** a business supplying digital services to other businesses (e.g. website design/development, SEO, programming).
 - **Is NOT** a franchise.
 - **Is NOT** a not-for-profit/charitable organization
- Owned by:
 - An **Ontario resident** or operating a business in Ontario
 - An individual of **18 years of age or older** at the time of application.
 - A **Canadian citizen** or **permanent resident**.
- Has completed the Digital Transformation for Main Street program:
 - Has completed the **Digital Main Street Assessment**.
 - Has completed the **online training**.
 - Has developed a **Digital Transformation Plan**.

What can the grant be spent on?

Eligible costs that can be offset by the grant include: digital technology contracts/salaries, website design and development software, hardware and training. More specifically:

- Digital Marketing
 - Hiring a consultant/agency/person to execute digital marketing initiatives
- Website
 - Redesign, improvement of existing website
 - Development of new website
- Software
 - Graphic design software
 - Productivity software (LastPass, Hootsuite, Dropbox, etc.)
 - Social media software (Hootsuite, Buffer, etc.)
 - Security software
 - Other software as evidenced in the DTP
- Digital Training
 - Ongoing digital training courses (in-person and online)
- Hardware
 - Hardware must be deemed necessary

What costs are not eligible?

Costs that are ineligible include:

- Unnecessary or excessive equipment (or equipment you already have and want to upgrade)
- Owners' salaries or salaries of existing employees
- Repayment of other loans or past debts
- Repair of existing equipment

How do I apply?

Applications for Digital Transformation Grants began on October 15, 2018 and will continue to be accepted until March 31, 2020. The process for businesses applying for a Digital Transformation Grant has two main stages. NOTE: businesses **MUST** have completed their assessment, their online training, and their Digital Transformation Plan **BEFORE** applying for a grant.

Stage 1 - Application:

1. Complete a grant application at digitalmainstreet.ca/Ontario that includes detailed information on the DTP, along with a detailed budget.
2. Submit a copy of their articles of incorporation or business registration.

Stage 2 - Review and Granting:

1. OBIAA will review the application and once approved, the business will receive the grant agreement to be executed by both the business owner and OBIAA.
2. Upon receipt of the signed grant agreement, OBIAA will release the \$2,500 grant to the business to begin implementing the DTP.

How can I learn more?

Visit digitalmainstreet.ca/Ontario for more information on timing and instructions for applying for Digital Transformation Grants.

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