

For Immediate Release

Guelph and Wellington County Launch Digital Service Squad to Help Small Businesses Adopt Online Technologies

Receives \$115,000 Digital Main Street Grant from FedDev Ontario.

August 18, 2020: Guelph, ON. Business Centre Guelph-Wellington, in partnership with the Downtown Guelph Business Association, Wellington County, Township of Centre Wellington and the BIAs of Elora, Fergus and Erin/Hillsburg, has received a \$115,000 grant from Digital Main Street Ontario for a six-member Digital Service Squad (DSS) to help small downtown businesses across Wellington County use digital technologies to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. Funding for the grant is provided by FedDev Ontario.

“This is great news for Guelph and Wellington County,” said Marty Williams, Executive Director of the Downtown Guelph BIA. “The Digital Main Street program has already made a huge difference to small businesses in Downtown Guelph during COVID and with this new round of funding we are poised to triple the initial impact. Thanks to the Business Centre for their leadership; it’s very much appreciated.”

Established in 2018, Digital Main Street Ontario was recently extended thanks to an [investment of \\$42.5 million](#) from the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario \(FedDev Ontario\)](#) and \$7.45 million from the Ministry for Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT). The almost \$50-million investment will help small businesses across Ontario to pivot their operations to include online business models, regain lost revenue and become more resilient and competitive as the economy recovers. The Ontario BIA Association administers the DMS grant program to Ontario’s main street small businesses.

“Ontario’s small businesses are the backbone of our economy and the keystone of our economic recovery,” said Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. “That is why we have invested in Digital Main Street to help these enterprises adapt to doing business in a digital world and take advantage of the record number of people shopping online. Congratulations to Guelph and Wellington County on the launch of your Digital Service Squad. The work you’re doing with small businesses in your community will help keep our main streets vibrant, support good local jobs and help our economy come back strong.”

Fundamental to DMS’s design are Digital Service Squads, trained specialists who meet with small businesses, at no cost, to help them improve their online presence. The squads assist with several activities, including developing a Google My Business profile, enhancing their social media presence and providing support for basic website and e-commerce set-up. Squads will also assist qualified

small businesses through the application process for a \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant, which includes an online assessment, online training modules and the development of a Digital Transformation Plan (DTP).

“The COVID-19 pandemic hit Ontario’s main streets hard, so Digital Main Street is needed more than ever,” said Kay Matthews, Executive Director of OBIAA. “We know that businesses that participated in Digital Main Street last year were better able to cope when the pandemic hit, and we’re excited that FedDev Ontario and MEDJCT are providing the funding to extend this important program to help businesses in communities like Guelph and Wellington County.

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Additional Quotes

*“I am thrilled that the Federal Government and OBIAA are investing \$115,000 to help our local main street businesses use digital technologies to re-emerge from COVID-19 more successful and resilient than ever. Our downtowns businesses attract visitors, create jobs, support families and make life better for everyone who calls Wellington County home. Thanks to the Federal Government and OBIAA for recognizing the importance of our main street businesses”. **Kelly Linton, Mayor of Centre Wellington & Warden of Wellington County***

*“Entrepreneurship can do a lot of great things when leaders are focused on meeting challenges with new ways of approaching the market, introducing new products or services, or solving day to day challenges through collaborations. The Digital Main Street program provides basic support to enhance online presence, allowing entrepreneurs to find new ways of connecting with their customers in these challenging times, and position them for growth going forward. Organizations like the Business Centre of Guelph Wellington provides the additional supports to allow local businesses to connect strategy with implementation.” **Lloyd Longfield, Member of Parliament for Guelph.***

ABOUT Business Centre Guelph-Wellington

Business Centre Guelph-Wellington is a not for profit organization that has been helping entrepreneurs, business owners, professionals and students achieve business success since 1999. For nearly 20 years, we have added to the wealth and the diversity of our business community, one entrepreneur at a time.

ABOUT OBIAA

OBIAA is the network that represents unique and vibrant BIAs across Ontario. The Association supports and advocates on behalf of its members through the building and nurturing of strong

relationships and partnerships. OBIAA is a leader in the development and sharing of information, tools, resources and best practices, and is the ONE voice on common issues.

ABOUT Digital Main Street

Digital Main Street is an innovative program designed to help main street small businesses achieve digital transformation. The program is built around an online learning platform, structured training programs, grants and Digital Service Squads teams of street-level experts that help main street small businesses manage and grow their operations through technology adoption. The program was originally created in 2016 by the Toronto Association of BIAs (TABIA) and a group of strategic partners including Google, MasterCard, Microsoft, and Shopify. For more information, please visit digitalmainstreet.ca

ABOUT Digital Main Street Ontario

Digital Main Street was expanded across all of Ontario in 2018 with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs through the \$38 million Main Street Revitalization Initiative. It has been further extended through a funding from FedDev Ontario and MEDJCT. The new round of funding includes \$42.5 million from the Government of Canada's [Regional Relief and Recovery Fund](#), a national recovery initiative delivered by Canada's regional development agencies. With \$7.45 million from MEDJCT, this combined federal and provincial project will strengthen Ontario's economic capacity for innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration, and will promote the development of a strong and diversified Ontario economy. For more information, please visit digitalmainstreet.ca/ontariogrants

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