



For Immediate Release

Digital Service Squad Will Help Ottawa Small Businesses With Digital Transformation

September 15, 2021: Ottawa, ON. Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA) has announced that it has received a \$33,000 grant from Digital Main Street's Ontario Grants Program (OGP) for a Digital Service Squad (DSS), which will provide trained digital specialists to local small businesses to help them adopt online technologies and digitally transform their sales, marketing and back-office operations. The squad will begin visiting businesses in the 19 Ottawa Business Improvement Areas across the city from September and December 2021.

"During the pandemic, the Digital Main Street program has already made a huge difference to small businesses in Ottawa," said Michelle Groulx, Executive Director, OCOBIA. "With this new round of funding we are poised to serve businesses in ways that were not available for businesses during a lockdown, including an onsite Google360 street view of business interiors. We are also pleased that the Digital Service Squad will support businesses in applying for the new round of Digital Transformation Grants, who now qualify."

Renewed government funding of the OGP -- including investment from the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade -- will provide 3,000 Digital Transformation Grants to qualified brick-and-mortar small businesses as well as Digital Service Squad grants for organizations to provide hands-on assistance to local small businesses. The OGP is administrated by the Ontario BIA Association, in partnership with the Toronto Association of BIAs (TABIA).

"Ontario small businesses are the heart of our neighbourhoods and the economic foundation of our communities," said Nina Tangri, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction for Ontario. "Our government is committed to being there for them as they reopen. This additional support will give these businesses the digital boost they need to raise their profile and rebuild better than ever."

The cornerstone of Digital Main Street, these squads consist of trained specialists who meet with brick-and-mortar small businesses at no cost to help them complete an online assessment and introduce them to online training modules to build their knowledge and skills. These experts can also assist businesses with developing their Digital Transformation Plan (DTP) and applying for a one-time \$2,500 grant to implement it. This one-on-one DSS assistance also includes support for basic website set-up, Google My Business profiles, 360° photos, social media presence, and much more. The DSS can also provide information on the ShopHERE program, if applicable, to assist with digital storefront set-up and e-commerce. Where COVID-19 restrictions are in place, DSS experts can provide support through phone and video tools such as Zoom.

“In the past 17 months, as small businesses across the province fought to stay open and keep customers engaged online, Digital Service Squads were there to help,” said Kay Matthews, Executive Director of OBIAA. “Squads jumped online themselves during lockdowns to help virtually, and businesses have consistently told us how important the DSS were to their success through the pandemic. We are thrilled to support OCOBIA’s squad and help them provide assistance to even more small businesses than ever.”

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ABOUT OCOBIA

OCOBIA is a unified voice of the 19 Business Improvement Areas within urban, suburban and rural Ottawa who, when combined, represent more than 6,400 businesses and their 120,000 employees. OCOBIA advocates on issues that affect BIAs, their members, and their communities and promotes strong, effective and successful Business Improvement Areas in the city of Ottawa.

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 a program that helps main street businesses achieve digital transformation. The program is built around an online learning platform, structured training programs, and our Digital Service Squad, a team of street-level team members who help main street businesses grow and manage their operations through technology.

Digital Main Street was created by the Toronto Association on Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) with direct support from the City of Toronto. DMS is also supported by a group of strategic business partners, including Google, Mastercard, Shopify, Microsoft, Facebook, Intuit QuickBooks, Square, and Yellow Pages. www.digitalmainstreet.ca

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