

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Leeds Grenville receives \$127,345 Digital Main Street Grant

Grant will help main street small businesses use digital tools more effectively

SPENCERVILLE, ON. – Thirteen Leeds Grenville municipalities have collaborated with the leadership of the United Counties to receive a Digital Main Street (DMS) \$127,345 grant to fund Digital Service Squads.

Five squads will help area small downtown businesses across the region improve their online capabilities. Digital Service Squad members will support small businesses through their digital journey. Funding for the grant is provided by FedDev Ontario, a federal program.

The collaboration is between the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, which will coordinate a squad on behalf of Athens, Elizabethtown-Kitley, Front of Yonge, Merrickville-Wolford, Rideau Lakes and Westport; in partnership with Leeds and the Thousand Islands and Gananoque; Prescott, Augusta and Edwardsburch Cardinal; North Grenville; and Brockville. The squads will be visiting the main street small businesses in the towns, villages and hamlets across the region. For details on the Leeds Grenville program, visit [investleedsgrenville.com/digitalmainstreet](http://investleedsgrenville.com/digitalmainstreet).

Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes MP Michael Barrett, MPP Steve Clark, Warden Pat Sayeau, OBIAA Executive Director Kay Matthews, along with staff and community members, gathered in downtown Spencerville for the official launch of the Digital Service Squads.

“Leeds Grenville is excited to have Squads working across the region,” said Pat Sayeau, Warden of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville.

"With the emergency of COVID-19, providing options for our local business community to remain sustainable during this economic crisis is more important than ever. By being able to offer our small main street businesses free one-on-one assistance, we are giving the ability to gain the necessary resources to grow their online presence and stay competitive in today's digital world," the Warden said.

"I'm pleased that our government is helping to fund the Digital Main Street Ontario program as part of our ongoing efforts to support small businesses as the province's economy continues to recover," said MPP Clark. "The collaboration between local municipalities and the federal and provincial governments on projects like this one in Leeds Grenville is critical to helping businesses modernize and reach new markets."

Established in 2018, the Digital Main Street Ontario program was 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 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 for Ontario's main street small business.

"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 all the municipalities in Leeds Grenville for partnering together on this initiative. 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."

Digital Service Squads are fundamental to Digital Main Street's design and success, with trained specialists who meet with small business, at no cost, to help them improve their online presence. The squads assist with a number of activities, including developing a

Google My Business profile, enhancing their social media presence and providing support of 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 across the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville.”

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### **ABOUT Leeds Grenville**

Leeds Grenville is home to the 1000 Islands and Rideau Canal Waterways. The region has 13 municipalities with a diverse economy that is driven by a balance and inter-connectivity between entrepreneurship and strong multi-national companies. Many of the main street businesses enjoy the region’s rich heritage and structures, providing that authentic experience.

### **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

where **lifestyle**  
grows good **business**

synonyme de **qualité de vie**  
et de **réussite en affaires**

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](http://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](http://digitalmainstreet.ca/ontariogrants).

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