

**Municipality Of Chatham-Kent**  
**Community Development**  
**Economic Development Services**  
**Information Report**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Jamie Rainbird, Manager, Economic Development Services  
**Date:** October 5, 2020  
**Subject:** Digital Main Street Grant and Digital Improvement Grant Programs Update

---

This report is for the information of Council.

**Background**

At the May 25, 2020 Council meeting, information was provided on the success of the Digital Main Street Grant Program (DMSG) administered by the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA). The OBIAA in partnership with the Province of Ontario launched this program to assist main street businesses with the adoption of technologies and provided grant opportunities to enable the digital transformation process.

The objectives of the DMSG are to:

- Provide main street business with resources, training and support for adoption of digital technologies;
- Provide opportunity for a collaborative partnership between existing Business Improvement Area's (BIA's), Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce or Small Business Centre's through the creation of a Centralized Project Partnership to form a citywide Digital Service Squad (DSS) to assist main street businesses within the community in executing their Digital Transformation Plan (DTP).

In the fall of 2019, Chatham-Kent Economic Development Services' was successful in obtaining a grant of \$85,000 from the OBIAA to bring on the Digital Main Street Service Squad 1.0 team. This program generated grants of \$2,500 each to 51 successful Chatham-Kent grant recipients totaling \$127,500 in direct support to local businesses

Chatham-Kent Economic Development Services' has once again been successful in obtaining \$95,000 in funding from the OBIAA to continue with this very effective

program and continue with the Digital Main Street Service Squad 2.0 team of three Digital Main Street Squad members until February 28, 2021.

### **Comments**

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-ups.

Squads 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. Businesses have an opportunity to apply for a Digital Transformation grant of \$2,500 from now until the end of November 2020. The grant is available for businesses located within BIA borders and limited identified regions.

### **Municipal Digital Improvement Grant Program**

Building off the success of Digital Main Street Program 1.0 and while awaiting the approval of Digital Main Street Program 2.0, Economic Development Services re-directed \$60,000 from their 2020 base budget, that due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, they would not be utilizing (business development travel and event hosting) to create a Digital Improvement Grant Program (DIGP). This was approved by Council on May 25, 2020.

As businesses adjust to the new operating conditions due to COVID-19, the need to transition online is crucial to future financial sustainability. With Council's support, the DIGP provided 24 successful Chatham-Kent small businesses with grants of \$2,500 each. (Appendix A)

These grants provided businesses the financial opportunity to improve websites, search engine optimization, digital marketing, creation of video and photography galleries, increase online marketing efforts, upgrade technology and purchase e-commerce solutions.

### **Testimonials**

*"At a time of such uncertainty, the Chatham Kent Economic Development Services provided my business with the motivation, inspiration and ability to pivot in an unexpected way. Their support provided me with much needed advice, mentorship and the freedom to make new choices. I am very thankful to have such an astounding service for business owners in Chatham Kent."*

Angel Bilagot, The Co., Chatham

*“Receiving the Chatham-Kent digital media grant has already opened up a new door into online marketing for Hashtag Fitness. Within a couple days of working with Matt, setting goals and implementing suggestions he had made into our online marketing plan, our social media accounts have significantly increased in activity and in followers resulting in more membership sales. This grant gave us the motivation, support and resources that we did not have to invest in the proper tools that we needed to make our online marketing more professional and promotable. We are extremely grateful for this opportunity.*

Alyssa and Chase, Hashtag Fitness, Tilbury

*“The opportunity that Chatham-Kent Economic Development has given my business is absolutely invaluable. We have injected our grant directly back into our community with supporting a local marketing agency. They are helping me grow and share Rekindle's story with a much larger audience.”*

Devin Schaffner, Founder, Rekindle Your Life

*“I am so incredibly thankful to live in a community that supports small and local businesses.*

*Being able to receive this grant has been able to help me make one of the most important investments into my business and I will forever be thankful.*

*Everyone that helped me, and sat through a meeting with me about everything has been so incredibly helpful and I am beyond thankful.*

*It's just so heartwarming to know that I live within a community of true supporters!”*

Nicole Ostropolec, Nicole Leigh Photography

*“We were absolutely thrilled to receive this Digital Improvement grant for our business. It has helped us improve our content for our website, and on our social media platforms, in what has become a very virtual world since COVID19.*

*For a young business like ours, we could not have completed projects like this without the help of this grant, so we are very thankful! The response to our content has helped us reach a wider audience in Chatham-Kent and we're so pleased with the effort the Chatham-Kent community is putting into buying local and supporting local businesses.”*

Jess Snobelen, Snobelen Farms

## **Consultation**

No others were consulted in the preparation of this report.

**Financial Implications**

The funding of \$60,000 for the Municipal Digital Improvement Grant program was utilized from Economic Development Services' 2020 base budget.

Prepared and Reviewed by:

---

Jamie Rainbird, Manager  
Economic Development Services

---

Stuart McFadden, Director  
Economic Development Services

Reviewed by:

---

Bruce McAllister, Interim General Manager  
Community Development

Attachments: Attachment A – List of Successful Municipal Digital Improvement Grant Recipients

P:\RTC\ECODEV\2020\OCT 17 DIGITAL MAIN STREET AND MUNICIPAL DIGITAL IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM UPDATE.DOCX

## **Municipal Digital Improvement Grant Program Successful Recipients**

<b>Successful Business Recipient</b>	<b>Community</b>
All Canadian Tools	Chatham
2304249 Ontario Ltd.	Wallaceburg
Beyond the Storm	Chatham
Bradley Snobelen Farms	Kent Bridge
Buis Beef	Chatham
Chatham Music Academy	Chatham
Chatham Voice	Chatham
Exordia Creative	Blenheim
Floating Therapy	Chatham
Fuel 4 You	Chatham
Green Rhino Renovations	Chatham
Hashtag Fitness	Tilbury
J&E Meats	Croton
Kevin Vreman Construction	Chatham
Little Britain	Ridgetown
Maple City Mini Storage	Chatham
Nicole Leigh Photography	Chatham
Rekindle Your Life	Chatham
Simpson's Fence	Chatham
Soft Impressions by Lisa	Tilbury
South Kent Studio	Blenheim
Sue Wammes Wellness	Blenheim
Swain Bros.	Chatham
The Co.	Chatham