

Digital Service Squad Grant Program FAQs

What is a Digital Service Squad and what do they do?

As part of the Digital Main Street Grant program funded by the Province of Ontario in partnership with the Ontario BIA Association (OBIAA); Digital Service Squads are digital technology specialists in an area or region of Ontario who will deliver one-on-one assistance to small main street businesses.

The squads will provide assessments, consulting and advice to small main street businesses on how they can adopt digital technologies to help them promote, sell and manage their businesses more effectively.

What is the grant for?

Setting up a Digital Service Squad takes time and money. The Province of Ontario has grants available to help cover the costs to develop, train and implement Squads. Each one-time grant is \$10,000 and is available through an application process.

Who is eligible for the Digital Service Squad Grant (DSSG)?

A DSSG grant is open to participants who meet one of the following requirements and are:

- A local BIA located in Ontario and/or,
- A Municipality, Chamber of Commerce or Small Business Enterprise Center in an area where there are no BIAs present and located in Ontario and/or,
- An area with multiple BIA's who partner with the Municipality, Chamber of Commerce or Small Enterprise Centre to create a Centralized Project Partnership (CPP).

What is available through the grant?

- Each BIA is eligible to apply for a single grant of up to \$10,000.
- Each area where there is no BIA present and the local municipality or community group is setting up the Squad is eligible to apply for a single grant of up to \$10,000.
- Each area that creates a CPP is eligible to apply for grants based on the number of BIAs within the area x \$10,000.
- Flexibility exists for outlier area's that are not accurately represented by the criteria.

What can the grant be spent on?

While some of the details are still being finalized, generally the eligible costs that can be offset by the grant are equipment costs, staff costs and print marketing material.

More specifically:

- Equipment limited to \$1,200
 - Chromebook or equivalent to a maximum of \$350.00
 - 360-degree camera kit (approx. \$600.00)
 - Ricoh Theta S 360 Degree Camera or equivalent – up to \$500.00
 - Anker Battery Pack or equivalent – up to \$50.00
 - Tripod or equivalent – up to \$40.00
 - Mobile Hot Spot or equivalent up to a maximum of \$200.00 (monthly service costs not included)

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- Print marketing limited to \$300 (postcards / flyers promoting the service locally)
- Total eligible costs outside of salary/wages of \$1,500
- Salary and wages will be offset by the remainder.

What are non-eligible expenses?

Ineligible costs include unnecessary or excessive equipment, personal salaries, repayment of other loans, past debts, software and repair of existing equipment.

*Note the grant cannot be used to pay a current member of your team to be on the Digital Service Squad.

How do we apply?

Applications for DSSG will be live October 15, 2018 and application criteria has not yet been finalized. For entities applying for a grant, the process has two stages.

1. Describe the applicant and detail any partnership formed for the purposes of this grant application. Include copies of partnership agreements or MOUs.
2. Provide detailed information regarding the intent, plan and players:
 - a. Describe the organizational structure and who will be responsible for the administration of the grant funds.
 - b. Describe the applicant's geographic area including (if applicable) the number of BIAs and the number of main street businesses to be served.
 - c. Describe the applicant's process of acquisition of goods and services for the purposes of satisfying the grant project goals.
 - d. Describe the project action plan to include timelines for hiring staff, purchasing equipment and executing deliverables.
 - e. Include a detailed budget.

Review and Granting:

1. The application will be reviewed by OBIAA and, once approved, the applying entity will receive the grant agreement to be executed by both the entity and the Ontario BIA Association.
2. Upon receipt of the signed grant agreement the grant will be released for the execution of the local DTP

How can I learn more?

Visit www.digitalmainstreet.ca for more information on timing and instructions for applying for Digital Service Squad Grants.