



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report To: Council

From: Andy Scott, Director, Strategic Initiatives & Business Development

Date: May 30, 2022

Report No: ES-006-22

Subject: Digital Main Street - 2022 Grant Funding

Recommendation: THAT report ES-006-22 be received for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following on from the Town of Milton's successful 2021 Digital Service Squad program, the Town has applied for a third round of Digital Main Street Ontario funding in the amount of \$85,000. This builds upon the \$18,000 received in 2020 and \$25,000 received in 2021.

- The Town has received confirmation the funding is approved, requiring the return of a signed agreement within five days of initial receipt.
- The agreement has been executed in line with the delegated authority provided in bylaw 071-2016.
- The funding will be utilized to continue to offer Digital Main Street programming, offering direct support to small businesses across Milton to implement e-commerce and digital marketing solutions.
- The program will be administered by the Economic Development Division within the Town, supported by the DBIA and Milton Chamber of Commerce.
- The Town proposed a supplemental commitment of \$6,000 to support program delivery. This funding would be provided from the existing Economic Development budget and would not require additional capital or operating funding.
- The provision of this program supports the achievement of the Town's Economic Development Strategic Plan, and aligns with the general strategies identified within the Council Staff Work plan.



REPORT

Background

In April 2022, the Town of Milton was made aware of the availability of a third round of funding being made available through the Province's Digital Main Street program. Previously the Town has successfully bid for two rounds of funding which has permitted for the provision of Digital Service Squad services to local small business. In 2020 and 2021, the Town secured \$18,000 and \$25,000 respectively. The third round of funding is expected to support the provision of Digital Service Squad services for up to 18 months.

The Digital Main Street program is intended to support eligible businesses through the provision of cost free specialized digital services, supporting them in the implementation and enhancement of e-commerce and digital marketing solutions.

Town staff recently finalized 2021 program evaluation where it was found that 61 Milton businesses received over 500 hours of collective support.

Discussion

Bolstering Milton's startup ecosystem to drive future competitiveness is a strategic goal identified within the Town of Milton's Economic Development Strategic Plan. This is further emphasized as a Town priority through the Council Staff Work plan which supports a strategic approach to growth, development and service provision.

The Town of Milton continues to prioritize economic recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and staff have focused their efforts on delivering programming which support the achievement of the Council Staff Work plan and supports recovery.

In 2020, the Town completed two economic recovery surveys in partnership with Halton Region, which were designed to provide insight into how businesses across various industry sectors have responded to impacts of the pandemic. The survey helped to identify a significant need across small businesses in the community to expand their operations into e-commerce and take advantage of digital marketing opportunities (75% of small business respondents suggested they would welcome support in this regard).

As a response to the needs of the business community, Economic Development collaborated with the DMBIA and the Milton Chamber of Commerce to successfully secure two Digital Main Street Ontario grants to support skill building and the capacity for



Discussion

small businesses to improve their e-commerce and digital marketing activities. The first round of funding was administrated through the DMBIA with the second administrated by the Town's Economic Development Division.

The Town supported 61 businesses with over 500 hours of service delivery. However the Town received over 450 inquiries for support. There remains around 100 businesses who met the eligibility criteria but were unsupported as a result of the limited grant funding available.

The Town of Milton recently applied for, and received confirmation of approved funding in the amount of \$85,000 from Digital Main Street Ontario. This grant is expected to fund the continuation of the Digital Main Street locally for an additional 18 months and will permit Town staff to provide direct support the additional 100 eligible businesses previously identified plus any other local business which meets the eligibility requirements.

The Town was requested to return a signed funding agreement back to Digital Main Street Ontario within a short time frame, this funding agreement has been executed by the Mayor and Chief Clerk in line with the execution authority provided in Town Bylaw 071-2016.

Intended rollout

It is intended that the Town will administer the program through our Economic Development Division in collaboration with the Downtown BIA and the Chamber of Commerce. This will mirror the rollout model used during the second phase.

The grant funding requires the recruitment of a full time employee (40 hours per week) OR two part time employees (20 hours per week) to work directly with eligible small businesses. The Town already has an existing contractual relationship with the current Digital Service Squad member and in conjunction with the Town's HR department staff will explore the ability to extend that contact to minimize any delay to service provision.

Given the Town already has an identified inventory of businesses interested and eligible for services, the Digital Service Squad member will be able to forego any initial promotion beyond the utilization of the Towns normal communication channels. The 'Digital Service Squad' member(s) will focus on promoting and supporting businesses to apply for Digital Transformation Grants as well as working with small businesses to develop digital transformation plans. Each Digital Transformation Grant provides a small business with a customized digital assessment, online training and \$2500 to implement a



Discussion

digital transformation plan. For the remainder of the contract, Digital Service Squad members would dedicate their time to skill and capacity building across our small business sector utilizing the Digital Main Street curriculum.

Reporting

The grant is provided subject to performance and evaluation reporting requirements and its intended that this reporting be made available to Council through the Economic Development Divisions annual report update. The most recent program evaluation is attached to this report for information.

Financial Impact

The hiring of the temporary staff outlined would not increase the Town's overall FTE composition. The contracted staff would be temporary in nature and would be paid for through the grant funding.

The Town has proposed supporting this program through the provision of up to \$6,000 which would be allocated from the existing Economic Development budget. This funding would be used to support the project management of the program as well as covering any administrative costs. The Town would also provide in-kind support through oversight of the recruitment process, provision of office space if necessary, as well as the sharing of information and expertise by the Economic Development staff as necessary.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Scott
Director, Strategic Initiatives & Business Development

For questions, please contact: Andy Scott

Phone: Ext. 2103

Attachments

2021 Digital Main Street Report



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report #:
Name:
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Approved by CAO
Andrew M. Siltala
Chief Administrative Officer

Recognition of Traditional Lands

The Town of Milton resides on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee people. The Town of Milton shares this land and the responsibility for the water, food and resources. We stand as allies with the First Nations as stewards of these lands.

Digital Support for Small Businesses



Transforming How Our Boutique Businesses Operate Online

The Town of Milton Economic Development team launched a Digital Service Squad (DSS) in late 2021 to offer support and guidance for local small businesses who were looking for assistance with their digital transformation. This program aids in our current COVID-19 recovery plan. Digital Main Street provides support in three ways, through the [Digital Service Squad \(DSS\)](#) – experts who provide guidance on digital transformations, the [ShopHERE](#) program and the [Digital Transformation Grant](#).

491

of Milton's
Small Businesses

Inquired about some facet of the program

"Main street small businesses are an integral part of our local economy, local identity and heritage of Milton...Milton's DSS ensures business owners continue to have access to free resources and the technical support they need to not only recover through this pandemic, but to continue modernizing services for years to come." Mayor Krantz, 2021



1 Digital Service Squad:

The Digital Service Squad (DSS) helps small businesses receive targeted support to get started or grow their digital presence. Milton's squad launched in November 2021 and by the end of February 2022 provided:



61

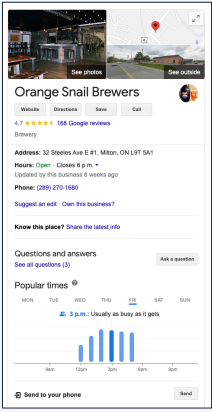
of Milton's small business's
received targeted support to
grow their digital presence

500

hours of support
provided in under 16 weeks
by a team of 308

Avg of 8.3

hours of one-on-one
support provided to each
boutique business



Google My Business Support / 360 Photo Tours

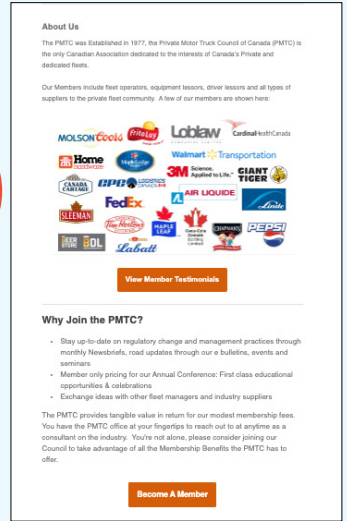


Paid Advertising

Google Adwords / Facebook Ad Manager / Instagram Ads

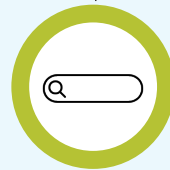
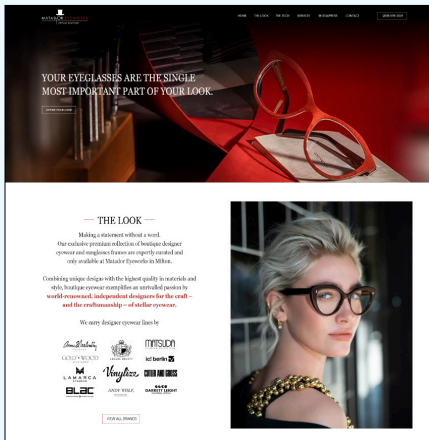


Email Marketing



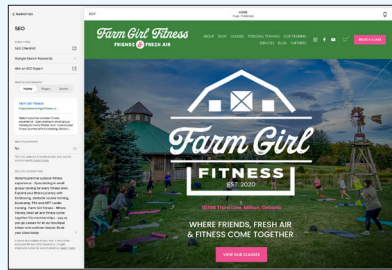
Website Assistance

Increase click through rates and amount of time potential customers spend on your site



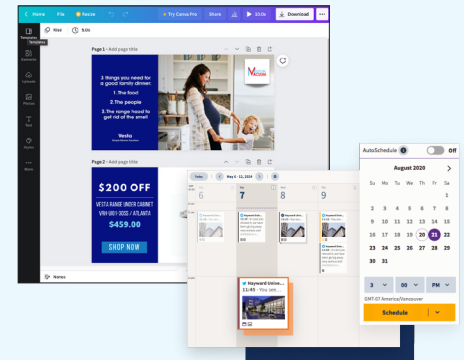
SEO

Increase Ranking in Organic Search



Content Creation

Training on digital tools such as Hootsuite, Canva and Pixel.



The digital service squad has been fantastic! They have helped us to proceed with a large project that would have cost us a lot financially. The Digital Main Street program has been helpful, but the biggest benefit for our business has been the expertise and encouragement that our team member has brought to the table. She was instrumental, enthusiastic & determined to see us continue to succeed as a local business. We appreciate her expertise and the help from the Town of Milton. We hope that the program will continue until businesses get back to some normalcy.

Mark Appleby, Owner, Matador Eyeworks



M 1
 E W 2
 S E O 3
 G O O G L E 4
 A D W O R D S 5



Transforming Online Visibility



Located on Main Street, Matador Eyeworks Optical Boutique brings together unique eyewear designs, cutting edge technology and the finest materials in an optical boutique unlike any other. Their easy going, groovy shop is steeped in soul of the musical variety, great coffee or tea if you fancy, the odd gourmet treat and a complete, unmatched, unabashed passion for customized client service and all things rad eyewear.

With the superior precision, quality and exclusive boutique eyewear selection usually reserved for elite downtown Toronto boutiques, owners Mark and Zeena Appleby offer a warm, friendly atmosphere rooted in catering to your individual style with the personal touches you deserve.

They proudly feature Milton's largest collection of Kate Spade eyeglasses, are an exclusive Anne et Valentin retailer and offer the impeccable designs of ic! berlin, BLAC, Matsuda and Leisure Society and more boutique brands.

To expand their digital marketing efforts Mark and Zeena applied for and received the Digital Transformation Grant. Upon approval,

Matador Eyeworks engaged in Google Ads campaigns with limited knowledge of the platform. In just one visit, the Milton DSS was able to identify with Matador's unique brand offering and provide valuable insights as to keywords to include and exclude, targeting geographics and more to maximize the results of their Google Adwords Campaigns and drive traffic to their shop. Additional support from the Milton DSS has been provided to optimize their website for a more immersive eyewear experience.

Ad · <https://www.matadoreyeworks.com/> · (289) 878-3559

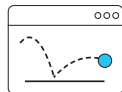


Mens eyeglasses gold & wood - Matador Eyeworks

You aren't "average". Why should your eyewear be? Unique eyewear designs and cutting...
 365 Main Street East, Milton, Ontario - Open today · 10:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

#TheLook
 Expertly curated eyeglasses & suns
 unique designs & quality materials

Eyeglasses for Driving
 Better vision when driving at night
 Reduced glare from car headlights

Results of digital support provided:

		
27% Decrease in bounce rate	11.6% Conversion rate achieved	2x Avg time spent per page

Utopia Spa & Boutique is an elegant, modern, and luxurious day spa nestled in the heart of Milton on Maple Ave. Established in 2009, Utopia Spa was carefully curated with self-care and well-being as a top priority. Guests will find a serene, clean, and relaxing environment, an ideal spot to getaway and embrace a moment to be good to one's self and be pampered. The services and products offered allow for that perfect escape for the mind, body, and soul to recover from the daily stresses of day-to-day living and leave feeling rejuvenated.

From the moment you walk through the front doors, Owner, Cathy Dmytryszyn and her staff go above and beyond to make sure your stay is exceptional.

Utopia offers more than just luxury manicures, pedicures, and massages. They offer the most advanced non-invasive laser skin treatments with the highest degree of precision. Their team of expertly trained Medical Estheticians and Laser Technicians perform miracles with the Fotona 4D laser. These treatments provide no downtime, no medication and immediate results.

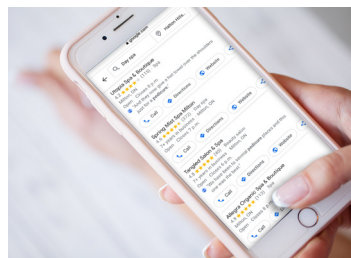


"The number of inquiries we have received since installing the TV in our lobby has been remarkable! Clients coming in for spa services are amazed at the before and after photos and book medical consultations right away." Cathy Dmytryszyn, Owner

Digital Rejuvenation

Educating potential clients on the variety of laser treatments offered has its challenges. Our Milton DSS team was able to create a video reel for the manicure station which provided easy to follow videos on over a dozen treatments available at Utopia. In just a few days, clients were booking one-on-one consultations and appointments.

Cathy has also benefited from the SEO efforts put forth by our DSS team. From keyword optimization to crafting meta tag descriptions, Utopia is poised to rank higher in organic search than in the 13 years they have been in business.



Benefits of Effective SEO

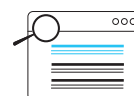
With some adjustments to their meta tag page descriptions, Utopia Spa & Boutique jumped from 2nd page listings to ranking top 3 in most services offered!

Results of digital support provided:



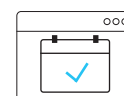
15%

Increase in traffic on Google My Business



Top of page

Higher ranking in organic search



25%

Increase in bookings for laser treatments



Fit for Digital Strategy



Nestled in Milton's escarpment, Farm Girl Fitness specializes in indoor and outdoor small group training for every fitness level. With the core belief that exercise is beyond the outward aesthetic. Clients thrive on positive coaching language and the power of group support, so you're never alone in your fitness journey. Farm Girl Fitness provides a high end boutique experience with the comfort and tranquility of a relaxed country setting. #FriendsAndFreshAir

Owner, Jessie Thomas started this business in the spring of 2020 when she saw a need for outdoor fitness classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She realized that people needed a place where they could feel safe, meet with friends, and work on their health, not only physically but mentally as well.

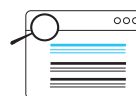
Farm Girl Fitness has an outstanding social media presence. With daily posts and reels on Facebook and Instagram, Jessie keeps her clients informed and up-to-date on the latest happenings at the studio. The Milton DSS team was able to provide SEO support in the form of meta tags, favicon creation, keyword implementation, image alt tags and more. These efforts boosted Farm Girl Fitness to the top of organic search results.

Additional assistance was provided to help segment their client list and provide targeted email campaigns to increase class pass sales. Since the incorporation of these digital tools Farm Girl Fitness regularly sells out of their drop in classes as well as courses. Additional class offerings are being created to shorten wait-lists.

"I'm so grateful that I found Milton DSS! The help they were able to provide me as a new entrepreneur has been extremely valuable. As a business owner I'm learning that I can't do everything or be good at every role my business needs. They were able to help me with things I didn't even know I needed help with! Easy to work with, kind and creative!"

Starting a new business during a pandemic has not been easy at times. Knowing I have the support of someone locally who understands the needs of the community has been very helpful and comforting. I would highly recommend their services to anyone looking to take their business to the next level."
Jessie Thomas, Owner

Results of digital support provided:



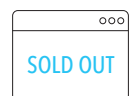
Top of Page

Higher ranking in organic search



60%

Email send conversion rate



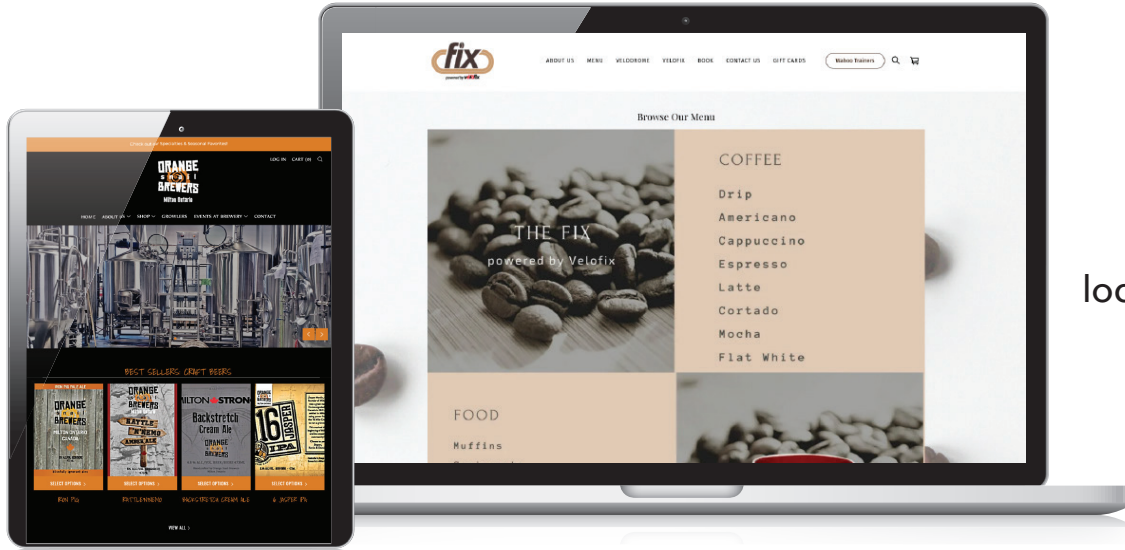
90%

Sold out classes with wait-list

2 ShopHERE:

ShopHERE is funded by the province of Ontario and key corporate sponsors to help Ontario businesses and artists get selling online.

The ShopHERE program creates online stores for independent small businesses and artists at no cost. Offering free one-on-one support to manage their new site after launch. This program empowers business owners with the ability to maintain updated websites and act quickly in response to new mandates and restrictions.

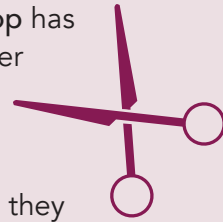


49

local businesses applied to receive FREE custom websites

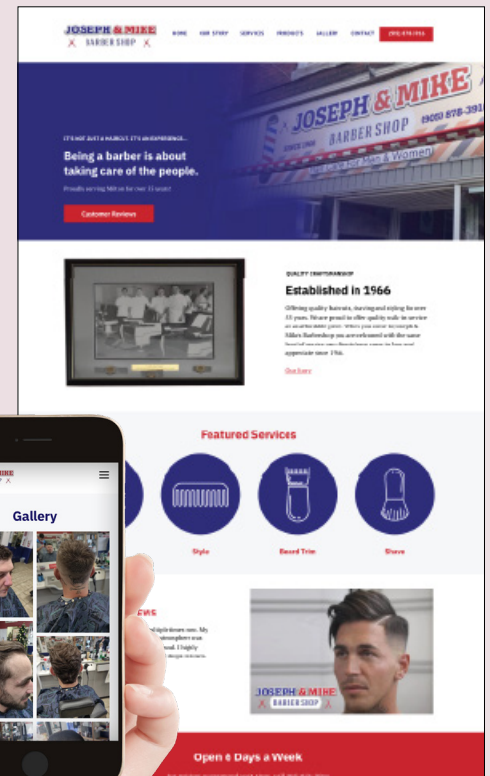
Cutting the Cost of Web Design

In the heart of downtown Milton you'll find a timeless barbershop established in 1966. Jo & Mike's Barbershop has been offering quality haircuts, shaving and styling for over 55 years.



Amidst the recent shutdowns people aren't strolling the streets handing out word of mouth recommendations as they did back in 1966. Online reviews and photos are essential to prospective clients looking for a new style or a new salon/barber.

Through the help of our Milton DSS team and ShopHERE program, owner Joseph Pedulla and sons were able build and publish a Square website in less than 2 weeks at no cost to them. Their new site now contains a photo gallery of their latest haircuts as well as a list of the services they provide. Throughout the site there are honest client reviews and multiple touch points to call ahead or check on wait times. This new site is as timeless as the brick and mortar establishment it represents and will cost less than \$20/yr to maintain.

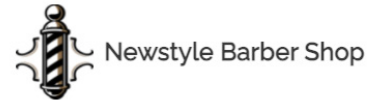
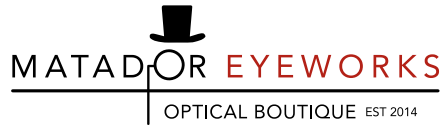


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Digital Transformation Grant 3.0:

The Digital Transformation Grant (DTG 3.0) provided \$2,500 to use towards hardware, web platforms, Digital advertising, digital tools or other areas that would improve a business's online presence.

The following 16 Milton businesses were DTG 3.0 recipients:



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