

MY MAIN STREET

MA RUE PRINCIPALE

BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY APPLICANT GUIDE



Canadian
Urban
Institute

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Urbain du
Canada

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WELCOME APPLICANTS!

We are currently taking applications for **business growth projects taking place between December 1, 2023 and December 31, 2024.**

Applications will be open from February 22, 2024 to midnight on March 31, 2024. Applicants are strongly encouraged to attend an [Information Session](#). Information Sessions will provide an overview of the intake process, provide guidance on developing a project application, and outline helpful tips for completing the application process.

The My Main Street [Business Sustainability stream](#) is set to provide funding quickly and efficiently to provide support for main street businesses across southern Ontario. We are anticipating heavy demand for this program. As resources are limited, applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible.

Questions about the program can be sent to business@mymainstreet.ca.

MY MAIN STREET OVERVIEW

My Main Street is a \$15-million investment from the Government of Canada through the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario](#) (FedDev Ontario) to spur local economic recovery. My Main Street is delivered by the [Canadian Urban Institute](#) (CUI) to help support the revitalization of neighbourhoods across southern Ontario. The program features two streams, the [Business Sustainability stream](#), and the [Community Activator stream](#).

BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY STREAM OVERVIEW

The My Main Street [Business Sustainability stream](#) will provide a range of business supports to approved main street business applicants. Supports include custom market research reports, business training opportunities, and non-repayable contributions of up to \$20,000. Supports will be available for businesses located on eligible main streets across southern Ontario that demonstrate their sustainability and provide a business case on how the funding will strengthen their existing capacity and support their continued growth.

STREAM FEATURES

By participating in the Business Sustainability stream, approved main street businesses will receive access to the following resources:

- **Non-Repayable Contribution**

Eligible businesses can apply for up to \$20,000 in non-repayable contributions to support growing their business, or a smaller amount in one of the following increments: \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$15,000.

- **Market Research Report**

Approved businesses will receive a customized [Market Research Report](#) which will highlight key social and demographic insights related to a main street's local customer base. These reports can help business owners understand their customers, what defines them and where and how they can find more of them. This research is used to identify new business opportunities along the main street, as well as help existing businesses better target and meet the needs of their local community.

- **Online Business Training Opportunities**

Eligible businesses can access a range of online training. There are on-demand videos focused on helping entrepreneurs start or grow their main street business.

The on-demand training videos and upcoming live events will be hosted on mymainstreet.ca.

ELIGIBILITY AND CRITERIA

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY STREAM?

- Enter your address in our [Measuring Main Streets mapping tool](#) to determine if you fall within a main street area. Applicants from communities located within southern Ontario. A full list of eligible regions is included at the bottom of this guide in Appendix A.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible for consideration, all businesses must meet the following criteria:

- Must be a business with a bricks-and-mortar location.
- Must be located on a [main street](#).
- Is employing 1 to 50 employees.
- Is paying commercial property tax (commercially assessed), either directly or through commercial rent.
- Is a registered business.
- Is open to the public for walk-in and onsite purchases of goods and services.
- Is owned by an Ontario resident operating a business in Ontario.
- Is 18 years of age or older at the time of application.
- Is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident.
- Is not a franchise, including those individually owned and operated.
- Is not in a shared workspace such as a hot desk or dedicated desk.
- Is not a consulting or professional services company.
- Is not purely an online business.
- Has completed online application.

- Priority will be given to applicants who are members of equity seeking groups, including Francophone, women, Indigenous, racialized groups, Black communities, newcomers, youth (39 and under), people living with disabilities, Trans, Non-binary and 2SLGBQIA+.
- Priority will be given to applicants who have not previously received funding through the My Main Street Local Business Accelerator program.

INELIGIBLE BUSINESSES

The following types of businesses are ineligible for consideration:

- Distributorships or franchises, including those independently owned and operated.
- Businesses operating within shared workspaces such as a hot desk or dedicated desks.
- Consulting or professional service companies.
- Businesses that are purely online, multi-level marketing or pay-per-click.
- Part time or seasonal businesses.
- Government-owned entities or social service providers.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

The funds must be used to cover costs (net HST) related to the following categories:

- **Equipment**

Includes costs related to the purchase of equipment necessary for the manufacture or creation of products or services to meet the specific objectives as outlined in this application.

- **Leasehold Improvements**

Costs can include improvements to the business space or other improvements or updates necessary to improve the customer experience.

- **External Façade Renovations**

Includes costs such as signage or external façade updates.

- **Inventory**

Includes costs related to adding new product lines or services to meet the needs of your customers. Funds cannot be used to replenish existing or ongoing inventory requirements.

- **Technology**

Includes costs related to secure technology to support business operations including point-of-sales (POS), customer relationship management (CRM) or other software or programming. Funds cannot be used to pay for existing contracts/renewals or on-going IT/website maintenance agreements.

- **Marketing Campaigns**

Includes costs related to a marketing campaign specifically related to your project proposal. Marketing campaigns must include specific goals and objectives, a focused topic, and a start and end date outlined in your application. Collateral marketing materials within the campaign can include print materials (flyers, brochures, business cards, newspaper ads); electronic marketing materials (websites, social media ads or posts, email campaigns, content articles, blogs or paid online advertising); or other activities (networking, trade shows, sponsorships, editorials, articles, referrals, testimonials, sales promotions, discounts, contests, samples) necessary to get the attention of potential customers and keep current customers engaged with your business and products/services.

- **Lease (for businesses at their main street location for under 1 year)**

Includes costs related to securing a storefront/commercial location (initial lease costs, utilities deposits and installation/set-up, security systems etc.).

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Below is a non-exhaustive list of expenses that are not eligible for reimbursement through My Main Street:

- Purchasing land and/or buildings, real estate fees and related costs.
- Capital Costs (land, building construction, underground plumbing)
- Indirect costs/overhead
- Purchasing a vehicle.
- Depreciation or amortization expenses
- Staff wages/paystubs
- Payments to any member or officer of the Recipient's Board of Directors
- Costs of individual membership in a professional body
- Construction of new buildings or facilities
- Legal fees related to litigation.
- Partisan, political or election related activities.
- Research projects where findings are not, or are not intended to be, tangibly applied as an outcome of the project. For example, carrying out a feasibility study without intending to carry out the work.
- Events and activities that do not abide by local and provincial Public Health guidelines.

Contact business@mymainstreet.ca if you are unsure about your specific expense.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications will be submitted online through the [My Main Street website](#). **The submission of an application is not a guarantee of funding.** To make informed funding requests, applicants will be required to review eligibility requirements and evaluation criteria to complete the application. For an application to be complete, all supporting documentation must be submitted with the application. Applicants that submit an application that is incomplete or missing required documents will be notified of their Incomplete status.

Supporting documents that need to be uploaded with your completed application include:

- Copies of Business Registration
(Letters of Incorporation, Partnership Agreement, or Master Business License)
- Verification of Commercial Property Taxes:
(Copy of a Commercial Tax Bill or Lease Agreement highlighting its inclusion in the rent)
- Storefront Photo
(High resolution photo of your storefront)

Applications will be assessed on a rolling basis. Successful applicants will be notified between April 1, 2024 – May 30, 2024 of their application result. If information is missing or incomplete, the application and attachments will be returned with a notification to the applicant. Resubmissions will result in a new submission date for the application.

APPLICATION INTAKE

To ensure efficient and timely distribution of funding to support community revitalization efforts, the program will launch for intake as follows:

- **Intake Period 1: February 22, 2024-March 31, 2024**

- **Intake Period 2 (if required): May 30, 2024-July 15, 2024**

This intake period will only move forward if the entirety of the fund is not committed during Intake Period 1.

We are anticipating heavy demand for this program. As resources are limited, applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible.

To ensure funding will reach across all of southern Ontario, and effective engagement of underrepresented groups, a minimum of 25% of funding (\$3.25 million) will be committed toward rural communities with populations less than 100,000, and up to 50% of funding (\$6.5 million) to participants from traditionally underrepresented and equity-deserving groups.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	DATE
Intake period 1: Applications open	There will be an open application process for businesses within southern Ontario, which will provide reimbursements for project expenses incurred between December 1, 2023 and December 31, 2024.	February 22, 2024
Applications close	Applications must be submitted within the intake period.	March 31, 2024
Project selection	Successful applicants for funding will receive notification of application result.	April 1 - May 30, 2024
Intake period 2 (if required): Applications open	There will be a second open application process for businesses within southern Ontario. This intake period will open with the remaining funds that are not distributed during the first intake.	May 31, 2024
Intake period 2 (if required): Applications close	Applications must be submitted within the intake period.	June 30, 2024
Project selection	Successful applicants for funding will receive notification.	July 31, 2024
Intake period 1: Final Reports	Deadline for final submission of reports and eligible costs for projects from the first intake.	September 30, 2024
Intake period 2: Final Reports	Deadline for final submission of reports and eligible costs for projects from the second intake.	December 31, 2024

HOW WILL APPLICATIONS BE ASSESSED?

Applications to the Business Sustainability stream will be confirmed for eligibility, and evaluated based on the following criteria, in relation to their identified business need:

- Business model overview
- Proposed use of funds
- Goals and objectives of proposal and how they will be measured
- Impact on the Main Street
- Improvements to business productivity
- Impact on increasing jobs
- Innovation
- Project impact on business sustainability and long-term business strategy
- Capacity and resource analysis

Once applications have been scored, they will be assessed for equitable regional distribution, rural distribution, and distribution to traditional underrepresented and equity-deserving groups.

APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

Applications will be reviewed for eligibility and completion. Applications that are eligible and complete will then be evaluated and scored by a Selection Committee comprised of:

- Representatives who are both internal and external to the My Main Street Program, with demonstrated experience working with small businesses, local economic development, successful project implementation, and project management.
- Representatives from a cross section of geographic communities across southern Ontario.
- Representatives with the above experience who identify as members of equity-deserving communities from across southern Ontario.

Before initiating their scoring process, the Selection Committee members will be required to participate in a training session facilitated by the Canadian Urban Institute that will outline the project's vision, objectives and requirements, and address issues of systemic bias.

All applications will be scored based on a standardized Scoring Form measuring the evaluation criteria above.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENT LENS

Once applications have been scored against the project evaluation criteria, CUI will finalize the decision process factoring in necessary requirements related to:

- Funding available for program year;
- Allocation of 25% of available funding to areas with populations of less than 100,000;
- Ensuring additional consideration is given to traditionally underrepresented and equity-deserving groups
- Regional distribution of program funds.

PAYMENT AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Once all required documents have been submitted and verified, approved applicants will receive their initial advance of 50% their total contribution, with 50% holdback pending the submission of their interim report and supporting documents.

Participating businesses will also need to submit a final report once all funds have been expended. It is also expected that participating businesses will share their business in My Main Street communications.

To receive payments, non-repayable contribution recipients will be required to submit information on their expenditures and provide copies of all relevant receipts. Businesses must keep all original copies of receipts, invoices and agreements related to this program for a period of seven (7) years and meet all Canada Revenue Agency guidelines and requirements as to their storage and reporting.

APPENDIX A: ELIGIBLE LOCATIONS

The full list of eligible regions surrounding municipalities can be found below, however, you can directly enter your address in our [Measuring Main Streets mapping tool](#) to determine if you fall within the program’s eligible region.

Brant County	Hastings County	Peel Region
Bruce County	Huron County	Perth County
Chatham-Kent	Kawartha Lakes	Peterborough County
Dufferin Region	Lambton County	Prescott and Russell Counties
Durham Region	Lanark County	Prince Edward County
Elgin County	Leeds and Grenville Counties	Renfrew County
Essex County	Lennox and Addington County	Simcoe County
Frontenac County	Middlesex County	Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Counties
Grey County	Niagara Region	Toronto Region
Haldimand-Norfolk County	Northumberland County	Waterloo Region
Haliburton County	Ottawa Region	Wellington County
Halton Region	Oxford County	York Region
Hamilton Region		

