



## **TechAlliance helps main street businesses make digital transformations**

*Future Proofing Main Street pairs digital marketing expertise  
and student talent with brick-and-mortars*

**LONDON, ON., June 11, 2020** – Main streets have always been an essential part of life in any community: a place to work, to buy local, and a place to celebrate. As commerce continues to shift online, we must enable main street businesses with innovative tools to future-proof and thrive.

With Ontario’s economy reopening, the federal and provincial governments have joined together to help small businesses make digital transformations — both to recover and generate revenue through a pan-Ontario collaborative project.

This morning, the Hon. Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages and Minister responsible for The Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario ([FedDev Ontario](#)), and the Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria, Ontario Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, announced a \$57-million investment to help main street businesses and SMEs across the region adopt digital technologies to compete now and in the future.

The investments in [Digital Main Street](#), including the new [Future Proofing Main Street](#) delivered by TechAlliance and Regional Innovation Centres, will help Southwestern Ontario businesses adapt to evolving customer demand.

"Main street businesses have been catapulted into the future of commerce, and we all have a responsibility to support their entry into the innovation economy in pursuit of our region’s recovery," said Christina Fox, CEO of TechAlliance of Southwestern Ontario. "The Future Proofing Main Street initiative allows brick-and-mortars to amplify their global market reach, while offering brand-loyal customers technology-enabled solutions to continue shopping local."

"TechAlliance remains founder-focused, building tomorrow's globally competitive innovation economy that enables entrepreneurship, spurs accelerated growth, and attracts ambitious talent and new companies.," Fox continued. "This investment by the federal and provincial governments connects main street entrepreneurs with tech-native talent and puts a contemporary playbook in their hands. These collisions are critical for their continued resiliency and competitiveness through transition."

"As local economies across Ontario reopen, we’re focused on ensuring that our main streets don’t just survive, but thrive. These businesses are the backbone of our economy, a source of local jobs – and local pride," said Minister Joly. "Thanks to the expanded Digital Main Street platform, they’ll be able to expand their offerings and take advantage of more and more people shopping online. Our message to Ontario’s small businesses, and those whose livelihoods rely on them, is clear: we’re working with you to support good jobs and help our economy come back stronger than ever."

“Ontario’s small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and their economic recovery is critical to Ontario’s recovery. The COVID-19 pandemic saw thousands of small businesses across the province close their doors and halt business as many had no ability to shift sales or services online,” said Associate Minister Sarkaria. “I am very pleased, that together with Minister Joly and our federal partners, we are providing small businesses with the tools they need to not only adapt to the challenges of today, but to re-establish, recover and flourish throughout this phased reopening and into the future.”

TechAlliance will deliver advanced-level, future-proof support to main street businesses in the retail, hospitality, and service sectors to complement their brick-and-mortar experience.

Local digital marketing expertise, paired with student talent, will work with companies to provide customized support in developing global market strategies, contemporary digital marketing, advanced ecommerce capabilities, and brand experiences.

By collaborating with local BIA’s, Chambers, Economic Development and Small Business Centres in London-Middlesex, Sarnia-Lambton, Elgin, Oxford, and Huron Countries, and by partnering with Regional Innovation Centres in Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, Halton, Hamilton, Niagara, and Windsor, we will ensure that businesses in all of our communities can compete now and in the future.

To receive more information about Future-Proofing Main Street, sign up for [TechAlliance’s newsletter](#) and apply to [Digital Main Street](#).

### **Quick Facts**

- The [Digital Main Street](#) platform is funded by both the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.
- Support through the Digital Main Street Platform will be offered in three tiers customized to the level of support required by each company to develop or strengthen their online presence.
- TechAlliance will provide advanced level support to future-proof main street businesses through sustained and specialized engagement with main street firms in the retail, hospitality, and services/trades sectors that have an established online presence and are looking to accelerate their digital growth.
- Local students and digital marketing experts will work with the companies to provide tailored support in developing global market strategies and advanced digital marketing for main street businesses that have deployed ecommerce.

## Quotes

"As local economies across Ontario reopen, we're focused on ensuring that our main streets don't just survive but thrive. These businesses are the backbone of our economy, a source of local jobs – and local pride. Thanks to this major investment, they'll be able to expand their offerings and seize the many opportunities presented by online commerce. Our message to "Ontario's small businesses and those whose livelihoods rely on them is clear: we're working with you to help our economy come back stronger than ever."

*-The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario*

"In southern Ontario, the stores along downtown streets are critical to a city's identity. FedDev Ontario and its partners will offer the support these businesses need to rebuild and retool in the digital world, while providing valuable work experience to students that may have been displaced from other opportunities by the pandemic."

*-Kate Young, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedDev Ontario)*

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*-The Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Ontario Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction*

"The global marketplace is rapidly changing, and in order to compete and succeed Ontario must adapt. By using innovative tools and technologies, the Digital Main Street program will help our businesses in expanding their reach to meet new markets and adjust to the new realities of doing business during the pandemic and into the next phase of economic recovery."

*-The Honourable Victor Fedeli, Ontario Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade*

"Main street businesses are an absolutely vital component of Southwestern Ontario's economic recovery, so too are the innovators and student talent who will support their strategic digital transformation through Future-Proofing Main Street. I applaud our government partners for funding this strategic and highly impactful initiative, and for engaging the right partners, like TechAlliance, to ensure main street entrepreneurs have attractive and effective online storefronts to leverage customer loyalty and increase web-driven revenue. This will ensure we keep them contributing to vibrant, local streetscapes and neighbourhoods for generations to come."

*-Mayor Ed Holder, City of London*

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“TechAlliance remains founder-focused, building tomorrow's globally competitive innovation economy that enables entrepreneurship, spurs accelerated growth, and attracts ambitious talent and new companies. This investment by the federal and provincial governments connects main street entrepreneurs with tech-native talent and puts a contemporary playbook in their hands. These collisions are critical for their continued resiliency and competitiveness through transition.”

*-Christina Fox, CEO, TechAlliance of Southwestern Ontario*

“Because of COVID-19, businesses in downtowns across the province, reliant on foot traffic and regular customers, have experienced significant revenue declines. Digital Main Street and the engagement of TechAlliance is key as our companies pivot to ecommerce and digital sales models to sustain themselves, now and into the future.”

*-Barb Maly, Executive Director, Downtown London*

“Hyde Park businesses have been significantly impacted, but that an expanded Digital Main Street with Future Proofing will help businesses overcome barriers to market growth that seemed insurmountable with the onset of the pandemic. We are optimistic that the enhanced program and collaboration with TechAlliance will be an important tool as we work together for the survival and future of London businesses.”

*-Donna Szpakowski, CEO & General Manager, Hyde Park BIA*

### **TechAlliance of Southwestern Ontario**

TechAlliance is the place for dreamers, innovators, and world-changing ideas. We launch new startups and accelerate growth for established tech companies through our Venture Growth & Corporate Innovation, early-stage incubation, and GROW Accelerator.

We create an entrepreneurial culture across Southwestern Ontario that attracts, connects, and retains the next generation of tech talent, building community through experiences, and creating access to capital.

We advocate for startups and fast-growing technology companies, connecting all levels of government and industry to create an environment for businesses to start, grow, and innovate.

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