

MEMO

To: Emergency Management Committee
From: Economic Recovery Task Force
Date: May 5, 2020
Subject: Orillia Online Initiative

Objective:

The Economic Recovery Task Force (ERTF) has reviewed significant consultation to date and have identified the need to assist local businesses in adapting their customer interface to include the online sale of products and services. This will not only allow these businesses to have a continued revenue stream during the current economic restrictions, but will also strengthen these businesses so that they can diversify their service delivery models on a long term, continued basis.

Proposal:

The Downtown Orillia Management Board, CDC and Chamber of Commerce have already quickly adapted their existing programs to offer online webinars, loans programs and one-on-one support. The ERTF is proposing to complement these efforts through the following 6 components of a proposed “Orillia Online” initiative:

1. Recommend that the Task Force submit a proposal to the CDC Board of Directors to update the terms of reference for their existing Digital Loan Fund to allow greater flexibility to address COVID-19 impacts. This Digital Loan Fund provides loans of up to \$10,000 for clients to digitally or technologically enhance their business.
 - a. **Timeframe:** Immediately
 - b. **Lead:** Wendy Timpano, Orillia Area CDC
 - c. **Budget requirements:** None
2. Recommend that the Task Force prioritize the promotion of the upcoming 3-part CDC Business Series, “How to Take Your Business Online”. Since the series has reached maximum capacity (25 attendees), it is recommended that the Task Force provide funding for a second offering of the 3-part CDC Business Series for Orillia area businesses, to be coordinated and delivered by the CDC.
 - a. **Timeframe:** Immediately, upon budget approval.
 - b. **Lead:** Wendy Timpano, Orillia Area CDC
 - c. **Budgetary requirements:** \$1,500
3. Recommend that the Task Force support the development of new digital adaptation “how-to” guides specific to retail sales helping consumers become more familiar with online shopping.

MEMO

- a. **Timeframe:** Within two weeks of EMC support
 - b. **Lead:** Lisa Thomson-Roop, Downtown Orillia Management Board
 - c. **Budgetary requirements:** None

4. Recommend that prior to May 15, the Task Force re-assess the need for one-on-one digital support and consider the extension and expansion of the Digital Main Street Program, by extending the Digital Service Squad's contract for service of all Orillia businesses. Digital Main Street is an innovative program designed to help main street small businesses achieve digital transformation. The program is built around an online learning platform, structured training programs, grants and Digital Service Squads teams of street-level experts that help main street small businesses manage and grow their operations through technology adoption. Since the DOMB is delivering this program locally, they have noted that the Digital Main Street Resources are available on the Downtown Orillia Website under member services and in newsletters etc. All businesses can access these resources, however the Digital Service Squad (contract currently awarded to Mehreen Shahid) is currently only available to businesses within the BIA. If the EMC is supportive of exploring an extension of this service, this initiatives would include a brief 3-day survey of all Orillia businesses to understand if there is a City-wide demand for this service and/or further support. This should be facilitated through the promotion and sharing of partners, and the use of paid Facebook post "boosts".
 - a. **Timeframe:** Within two weeks of approval
 - b. **Lead:** Lisa Thomson-Roop, DOMB and Laura Thompson, City of Orillia
 - c. **Budgetary requirements:** \$100 to "boost" Facebook survey.*
**If it's determined that the Digital Service Squad should be extended beyond May, and be available to all Orillia businesses this could have a budgetary impact of approximately \$10,000. However, the ERTF would report back to the EMC/Council if this is recommended to proceed.*

5. Recommend that the Task Force explore the creation of a grant program to be facilitated through the CDC to offset the costs of businesses' digital adaptation to online sales, similar to that of the Town of Blue Mountains.
 - a. **Timeframe:** Within 2 weeks of EMC support
 - b. **Lead:** Laura Thompson, City of Orillia
 - c. **Budgetary requirements:** TBD*
**If it's determined that a grant program is feasible within the confines of the Municipal Act, the Task Force would report back on the recommended grant values, overall budget and criteria for access.*

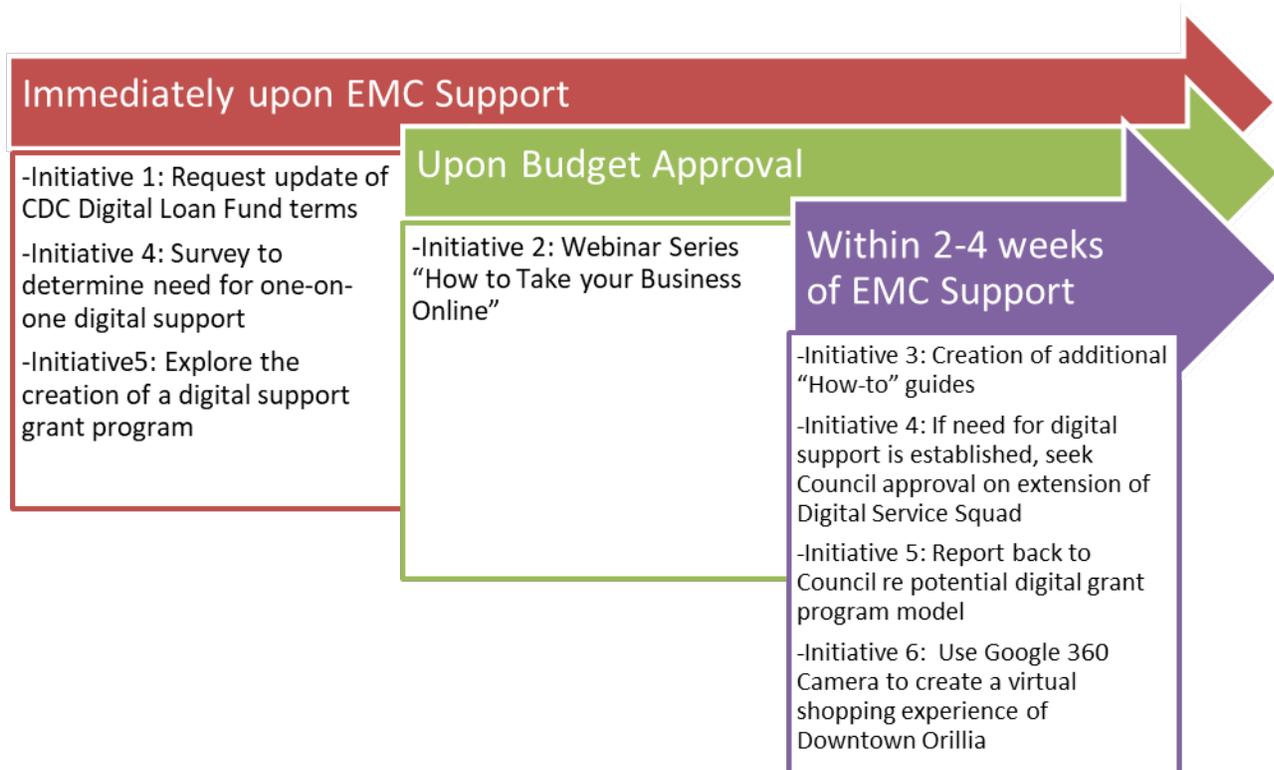
6. Recommend that the Digital Service Squad explore the use of the Google 360 Camera to create a virtual tour/shopping experience of Downtown Orillia.
 - a. **Timeframe:** Within 1 month of approval
 - b. **Lead:** Lisa Thomson-Roop, Downtown Orillia Management Board
 - c. **Budgetary requirements:** None

MEMO

Should Council approve this initiative, the no-cost elements of the program would be implemented immediately, and a press release would be distributed to inform the community of this initiative.

Timeline:

In order to achieve maximum impact, time is of the essence for both the approval and implementation.



Accountability:

This initiative would be overseen by Laura Thompson who will be accountable for all 6 components. These would be delivered by Task Force members Wendy Timpano, Lisa Thomson-Roop and Councillor David Campbell.

Anticipated outcomes:

Should EMC support this initiative, and the requested funds are approved, this initiative would have the impact of training up to 25 additional businesses on how to get their businesses online, a "how-to" guide would assist consumers who are not used to shopping online access Orillia's online products and services, and the EMC and Council

MEMO

would facilitate local businesses in accessing Digital Loans and potentially grants. The online resources provided through the Digital Main Street program would be promoted to all Orillia area businesses to further increase the number of businesses who are able to transition to offering online sales.

This initiative would assist businesses with their immediate needs for an ongoing revenue stream during the COVID-19 economic restrictions. In many cases, businesses which are still open but have transitioned to online sales or alternate methods of pick-up and delivery are continuing to sustain between 30%-70% of their pre-COVID income. This in turn lessens their reliance on loans and government assistance programs, and increases their chance of business survival in the short term.

Further, these efforts would allow businesses to expand their operations beyond their “brick and mortar” storefronts. Collectively this strengthens and adapts Orillia’s economy to weather long term impacts by helping businesses adopt new and evolving technology.

Prepared by: Laura Thompson, Ec.D., CEC.D.
Senior Manager of Business Development

Reviewed by: Economic Recovery Task Force