



COVID-19 Business Response
Action Plan
investbarrie.com

- ③ Invest Barrie has initiated the *Barrie Business Response Action Plan* which includes items that will help protect the local economy and assist businesses with the supports needed to navigate these trying times. Invest Barrie will continue to monitor COVID-19 and will make changes when necessary, ensuring businesses are receiving the most current information and up-to-date programming.
- ③ *Federal and provincial economic response programs* are focused on alleviating businesses' financial burdens, to minimize or offset deficits incurred throughout isolation—primarily through supports for core expenses including employees, commercial leases, and tax payments. Many municipalities are compounding this support through alleviation and deferrals of fees for property taxes, water wastewater, and transit.
- ③ *Municipalities have a valuable opportunity* to leverage talent, partnerships, and local resources to enable businesses to re-think traditional operations and generate new revenues —both during the crisis and throughout the transition of societal norms and expectations as the crisis recedes.

The *Invest Barrie Business Response Action Plan* is built on the power of collaboration:

We Are All In This Together

Collaborating Partners

Through the City's Economic & Creative Development Department (Invest Barrie), Small Business Centre (SBEC), and Mayor's Economic Support Task Force there is regular communication with our industry partners to identify actions to support businesses in responding to the economic impact of COVID-19.



There are roles for other community stakeholders that will continue to evolve as the Plan matures:

- ④ *City Council*
- ④ *Service Organizations*
- ④ *Business Leaders*

Barrie Business Response Action Plan

5 Measures

- 1. Connect Business to Financial Supports**
- 2. Support Immediate Revenue Generation to Increase Survival Rate of Existing Businesses**
- 3. Business Outreach – Understand Business Needs**
- 4. Keep the Community Connected**
- 5. Move Barrie's Economy Forward Post COVID-19**

Maximize participation in provincial and federal financial programs

Review and Recommendations on Barrie's funding treatment for 2020 Cultural Grant Program

Communicating City initiatives that reduce burden on business and bring new ideas forward to the City Executive Management Team

1. Connect Businesses to Financial Supports

ACTIONS:

- ③ **Provincial & Federal – Information and Application**
Maintaining [Barrie Business COVID Resources web page](#), including up-to-date listing of all funding programs. Delivering educational programming (see Measure 2) in collaboration with stakeholders to streamline businesses' application and approval of funding resources.
- ③ **Actively reaching out to local businesses** to ensure they are aware of available funding to help them during COVID-19. Making connections with direct contacts at different funding offices, following up on questions and concerns arising in the business community. Assisting with funding application questions and ensuring that businesses have the information needed to apply.
- ③ **2020 Cultural Grants Program**
The 2020 Cultural Grants Program funds have been administered to local cultural organizations. As these organizations ability to deliver on planned programming for 2020 has been significantly impacted by COVID-19, staff will be presenting a report to Council on May 4th 2020 with a recommendation to *continue to support recipients with their existing program funding for 2020* .

ACTIONS:

➤ **Free Transit**

It is critical for people to have the ability to ride the bus to get necessities like groceries or to jobs that we rely on. Offering free transit creates the opportunity to have riders board from the rear door, which reduces risk to transit operators and further supports physical distancing.

➤ **Water Wastewater Billing**

There will be no new late fees or City-imposed non-sufficient funds (NSF) charges for water wastewater bills until June 30, 2020. Businesses and property owners can opt out or suspend pre-authorized payment plans by completing the Water Wastewater Pre-Authorized Payment Form. In addition, no water shutoffs will be carried out until June 30, 2020.

➤ **Property Tax Billing**

There will be no new late fees or City-imposed non-sufficient funds (NSF) charges for tax bills until June 30, 2020. Businesses and property owners can opt out or suspend pre-authorized payment plans by completing the Property Tax Pre-Authorized Payment Cancellation Form

2. Support Immediate Revenue Generation to Increase Survival Rate of Existing Businesses

Collaboration with stakeholders and front-line assistance for businesses impacted by COVID-19

Build businesses' digital capacity to introduce or amplify e-commerce sales options

Provide guidance and support for businesses to pivot, with modified operations/service models or new business models

Topic-specific webinar series for urgent operational issues

Frontline Small Business and Entrepreneurship consultation services

ACTIONS:

➤ **Going Digital Project**

Now more than ever businesses have become acutely aware of the importance of having a strong digital presence. However, building this presence has not been feasible for many small businesses to date, leading to the launch of the Going Digital project. By utilizing its' Digital Service Squad, the Small Business Centre will **provide free remote assessments of a company's digital presence needs** and connect the company with a roster of 18 digital agencies who are able to perform any work necessary to position the company to generate revenue through online sources.

<https://barriebusinesscentre.ca/digital-service-squad/>

Stakeholder Lead: Small Business Enterprise Centre

Support Stakeholders: BIA, HBEC, Chamber of Commerce, Sandbox, Tourism Barrie

➤ **Small Business Centre (SBEC) Virtual Learning Series Webinars**

A series of webinars aimed at **assisting companies with their online presence**. The webinar series is addressing social media, web design, SEO and data analytics. All webinars are recorded to provide maximum accessibility to our business community.

Stakeholder Lead: Small Business Enterprise Centre

Support Stakeholders: BIA

ACTIONS:

➤ **Small Business Centre (SBEC) –**

Maintain small business and entrepreneurship supports as essential services – *Specific counselling* related to cash flow management, business concept review, revenue stream analysis, and leveraging funding programs are being delivered to support small business with addressing COVID-19 impacts

Stakeholder Lead: Small Business Enterprise Centre

➤ **Micro-Mentorship Pilot**

Preparing to launch pilot program to *fast-track businesses and organizations on their journeys to recovery*, by quickly connecting them with skilled, experienced, and creative ‘micro-mentors’ for advice and insight at their time-of-need. This pilot program will shift mindsets from ‘panic mode’ to ‘action mode’ and help organizations identify opportunities to generate revenue by creatively pivoting their businesses and avoiding costly mistakes.

Stakeholder Lead: Invest Barrie, Small Business Enterprise Centre

Support Stakeholders: HBEC, Chamber of Commerce, Sandbox

ACTIONS:

➤ ***Virtual Town Hall Meetings with Government***

As new funding programs and supports are being launched at the Federal and Provincial levels we will *provide business with updates from all levels of government*, regular updates to business are scheduled through online town hall format with local MP, MPP's and the Mayor.

Stakeholder Lead: Chamber of Commerce, Sandbox

➤ ***Informational Webinars on Managing COVID-19 Impacts to Business***

Many webinars are being co-ordinated and delivered on various topics from detailed information on *how to utilize COVID-19 funding programs, managing cash flow, exploring new revenue generating opportunities, managing mental health, employment law issues, and many more*. Complete listings can be found [here](#).

Stakeholder Lead: Small Business Centre, Chamber of Commerce, Sandbox, Henry Bernick Entrepreneurship Centre, Tourism Barrie

Direct business outreach by
Invest Barrie

Business Impact Surveys

Sectoral Focus Groups

3. Business Outreach – Understand Business Needs

ACTIONS:

① *Invest Barrie Business Outreach*

Direct engagement with local manufacturers, ICI landlords and realtors, artists and other key business to *understand impacts, share best practices*, opportunities to supply medical equipment, and to ensure companies are aware and *connected to all available resources*.

Stakeholder Lead: Invest Barrie

② *Business Impact Survey*

In partnership with the County of Simcoe and City of Orillia, a multi-part survey was created that aims to *capture the impacts of COVID-19 on local business, and support advocacy efforts to higher levels of government*. Invest Barrie in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce have promoted the survey through their channels. Survey can be found [here](#) and Georgian College's Research Analytics students will be conducting a detailed analysis of results.

Stakeholder Lead: County of Simcoe

Supporting Stakeholders: Invest Barrie, Chamber of Commerce, HBEC, Town of Innisfil

ACTIONS:

➤ **Arts Community Impact Survey**

An arts community specific COVID-19 impact survey has been sent out to obtain a better *understanding of the impact* to this growing employment sector and its key needs. Results will *inform recommended direction* for the 2020 Barrie Cultural Grant Program. The survey can be found [here](#).

Stakeholder Lead: Invest Barrie

➤ **Tourism Barrie Focus Group Sessions**

To better understand impacts to the hospitality and tourism industry and what *short and long term needs and recovery plans* should address, a set of video & teleconferences are scheduled with specific industry stakeholders. Barrie **hotels, restaurants, retailers and tourism operators** will be invited to participate in sessions the week of April 20th.

Stakeholder Lead: Tourism Barrie

Supporting Stakeholder: Invest Barrie

4. Keep the Community Connected

Mayor's Economic Support Task Force

Manufacturers Discussion Forum

Virtual Connections

PPE Response Efforts

Employment Connections

ACTIONS:

➤ **Mayor's Economic Support Task Force**

Established with the purpose of connecting with key business organizations to *determine urgent needs across different sectors of the economy*, open two-way communication, develop communication best practices between business organizations, and discuss & implement tangible steps to seek *support for short term and long-term business needs*. Several initiatives have been launched as result of the collaboration between organizations.

Stakeholder Lead: Mayor Lehman

➤ **Manufacturing COVID 19 Chat Forum**

Based on industry feedback, Invest Barrie has launched a chat forum for manufacturers focusing on best practices as they are working through COVID-19. It is a private platform that *enables local manufacturers to share ideas, best practices and ask questions of each other*. Through the forum companies have been able to connect for supply chain of PPE, and share job and retooling opportunities in support of medical supply.

Stakeholder Lead: Invest Barrie

ACTIONS:

➤ Virtual Connections

The business support services ecosystem has rallied to deliver programming remotely to ensure that the *connectivity between our business and entrepreneurial community remains strong, connected and supported* during this time. Sandbox has maintained its CNNX Peer Groups and 'Thirsty for Knowledge' discussion series via online meeting platforms. HBEC has introduced a weekly series of online 'Coffee Talks' to bring local business together to discuss impacts and measures they are taking to manage their businesses during COVID-19, and the Chamber of Commerce has leveraged online platforms to connect its members for networking, connecting and issue discussion addressing both mental and business health.

Stakeholder Lead: Chamber of Commerce, Sandbox, Henry Bernick Entrepreneurship Centre (HBEC)

➤ Employment Connections

Working with local employment service agencies to *match job seekers with employment* and connecting employers who are experiencing staff reductions to support employers that are hiring. They assist in making matches wherever possible.

Stakeholder Lead: Employment Ontario Offices

ACTIONS:

➤ PPE Response Efforts

Stakeholders have been communicating and raising awareness for PPE needs in the community and connecting local companies to Ontario supply opportunities.

Highlights of Impacts:

Georgian supporting health-care partners with donations and innovative manufacturing

Construction Association comes together to support RVH

Local Businesses Supporting Health Care Workers

Through consultation with key sector stakeholders, community and business consultation, develop a Recovery Action plan to accelerate businesses' path to re-opening post-isolation, and bring employees and customers back safely and efficiently.

5. Moving Barrie's Economy Forward Post COVID-19

**We are in this
together.**

**Together we
will succeed.**

