

TORONTO'S BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS' RESPONSES TO COVID-19

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Executive Summary

COVID-19, and the subsequent political and cultural behavioural reactions, have had a substantial impact on Main Street communities. This project was conducted by undergraduate student researchers under the supervision of Dr. Tom Griffin. This project aimed to categorise the response of Toronto's Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) to these impacts, by reviewing publicly available information from websites and social media. The data was collected between July 6th to July 13th, 2020. BIAs have evidently been very active since mid-March to help their business members and community more broadly access information and supports.

BIAs have shared information and resources with their businesses, including:

- Links on their websites to
 - government supports and programs (83%)
 - guidelines on re-opening (65%)
- Promoting their member businesses with original posts (83%) and reposts (79%) on social media
- Directly promoting (23%) and sharing posts (23%) for fundraising efforts for local businesses, and local organizations such as hospitals (20% original post, 16% repost)
- Sharing information Digital Main Street (66%)
- Holding webinars (13%) and promoting external events to relating to strategic recovery (49%)
- Conducting member surveys (19%) and promoting other data collection efforts (43%)

BIAs have also been communicating with the general public, sharing information and resources including:

- Information on which businesses are open (66%), for contactless and curbside/in person service
- Public health information, with original posts (40%) and sharing others' (73%)
- Guidelines on applying for government supports including CERB (30%)
- Activities that involve member businesses (25%)

This report serves as a description, and not evaluation of the effectiveness or quality of BIAs themselves, and in no way seeks to determine whether the initiatives have been successful. Additionally, this report is limited by the fact that only publicly available materials were analysed, and there are likely other initiatives, communications, or other measures that the research team were not privy to and therefore failed to document.

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1. Introduction

Main Streets are central to community interaction and well-being, offering services, retail, and produce, creating employment and culture, and forming an identity for the neighbourhood. Local businesses often form coalitions to work together and enhance their area. In Toronto these groups take the form of Business Improvement Areas (BIAs). Toronto is home to more than 80 BIAs¹ who represent a variety of businesses, communities and neighbourhoods across the city. A BIA is “made up of commercial and industrial property owners and their non-residential tenants who join together under a volunteer Board of Management (BIA Board) to carry out improvements and promote economic development within their designated area”². BIAs exist to carry out a variety of functions including street maintenance, beautification, security patrols, landscaping, maintenance of public spaces and decorating, among others^{3, 4}. Additionally, many BIAs host events and festivals that enrich or highlight the culture of the neighbourhood and give reason for people to visit⁴.

The arrival of COVID-19 in 2020 greatly impacted people's lives around the globe in a variety of significant and lasting ways. On March 11th, 2020, COVID-19 was officially classified by the World Health Organization as a global pandemic⁵ and governments began coordinating a public health response. In Canada, this included social distancing, shelter-in-place orders and, later on, encouraging or mandating the use of masks in public places. The virus and subsequent orders have modified motivations and behaviour, and in

¹www.toronto-bia.com/about-tabia/

²www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/city-administration/city-managers-office/agencies-corporations/agencies/business-improvement-areas-bias/

³ Briffault, R. (1999). A government for our time? Business Improvement Districts and urban governance. *Columbia Law Review*, 99(2), 365–477.

⁴ Griffin, T. (2020, July). An Exploration into Toronto Business Improvement Areas' Engagement of the Visitor Economy. Institute for Hospitality and Tourism Management Working Paper. Available at: www.ryerson.ca/htmresearch/research/current-research/bia-s-and-tourism-development/

⁵www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020

turn societal norms and have had a dramatic impact on business. Small businesses in particular have had to adapt to sudden changes in demand, supply and the regulatory environment, stretching their resources and capacity. As the reality of doing business on Toronto's Main Streets has changed, BIAs have had to shift their own focus and roles to help businesses in their area survive.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore how BIAs in Toronto have responded to the pandemic. This report was conducted by undergraduate student researchers under the supervision of Dr. Tom Griffin, and uses data collected from publicly available information published by Toronto BIAs between July 6th-13th 2020. BIAs' efforts to help their communities in response to the pandemic such as marketing, sharing of information and resources, and initiatives to help business owners were recorded and categorized. This project aims to help BIAs and Main Streets learn from each other and identify ideas or initiatives that could be borrowed to better serve their members during this critical time. Further, this report could be if a similar crisis occurs or restrictions were to be re-imposed at some point.

It is important to note that this report serves as a description of BIA actions rather than an evaluation of the effectiveness or quality of BIAs themselves. This report in no way seeks to determine whether the initiatives have been successful. Additionally, this report is limited by the fact that only publicly available materials were analysed, and there are likely other initiatives, communications or other measures that the research team were not privy to and therefore failed to document.

2. Impact of COVID-19 on BIAs

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been substantial and far-reaching. Even before the pandemic, BIAs faced a number of challenges including limited budgets and capacities, vacant storefronts, changes to property taxes, competition from big box stores, malls and online shopping, development, regulations, stakeholder management, absent landlords, and lack of data on visitor behaviour⁶.

With the arrival of the pandemic, orders to shelter in place and curtail or modify business operations have resulted in substantial decreases in footfall and consumer activity on Main Streets. A survey recently conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) found that only 52% of independent businesses in Ontario were fully open as of the end of June because of COVID-19 restrictions⁷. Two of the hardest hit sectors have been retail and hospitality which make up a significant portion of Main Street businesses⁸. These sectors are considered high risk because of their highly interactive nature, requiring customer service in a physical location⁹.

All Main Streets are likely to be impacted by consumer hesitancy to visit and spend time in public spaces, as well as government imposed and encouraged restrictions. Although there will be some shared impacts, different types of Main Streets are being impacted in varied ways¹⁰. For example, BIAs that rely heavily on office workers and students are struggling areas as they normally would as schools and places of work engage in virtual services¹¹.

⁶ Griffin, T. (2020, July). [An Exploration into Toronto Business Improvement Areas' Engagement of the Visitor Economy](#). Institute for Hospitality and Tourism Management Working Paper.

⁷ www.cfib-fcei.ca/sites/default/files/2020-07/COVID-19-survey-results-June29.pdf

⁸ bringbackmainstreet.ca/memos-from-main-street/why-main-streets-matter

⁹ techcrunch.com/2020/03/19/startups-rethink-what-it-means-to-be-high-touch-during-a-pandemic/

¹⁰ bringbackmainstreet.ca/memos-from-main-street/memo-4-main-streets-across-canada?mc_cid=935c35bb9f&mc_eid=ff90ba8193

¹¹ bringbackmainstreet.ca/memos-from-main-street/memo-4-main-streets-across-canada?mc_cid=935c35bb9f&mc_eid=ff90ba8193

Neighbourhood Main Streets typically have a higher percentage of small and independent businesses operating. These businesses may see the greatest impact of all because of a lack of resources (money, time, expertise, etc.) available to deal with the fallout from the pandemic¹¹. Since they are typically located in residential areas, however, they may have more support from their local patrons who may feel loyalty, while also working from home and spending more time in the immediate area.

3. Methodology

A content analysis was conducted on 80 BIAs in Toronto, Ontario. The content analysis was based solely on publicly available information published on BIAs' websites and available social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Direct communications and interactions between BIAs and their member businesses were not within the scope of this report. This report is therefore only a measure of what was publicly available, not on the totality of BIA efforts.

Initially, the research team of four independently reviewed the websites and information from BIAs with the largest 2019 operating budgets, making lists of all efforts and initiatives relating to COVID-19 they could find. A full list of types of initiatives was created through discussion amongst the research team. Three researchers then used this to code two additional BIAs and returned to discuss their findings. The list of initiatives and activities was updated, and a final BIA was tested independently by each researcher before the coding list was finalised to improve inter-coder reliability. After final discussions, the final list was confirmed and converted into a Google Form survey to be used by three researchers for data collection. Discussion and communication were constant throughout the process. One third of all BIAs were independently coded by two researchers, and results were compared and revised on an ongoing basis. The data was collected during a one-week period from July 6th to July 13th, 2020. Researchers would first go to the homepage of the BIA website, and then systematically scroll through each section, as well as using the 'find' function to look for key phrases. The activity of each BIA on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn were also reviewed and categorized. Since this study is only interested in BIA responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers only coded BIA social media content posted on or after March 15th, 2020.

BIAs were then grouped into four categories based on 2019 operating budgets. The budget groups were defined as “under \$175k”, “\$175k to \$275k”, “\$276k to \$500k” and “over \$500k”, with around one quarter in each group (Table 1 below).

Table 1: BIAs by Budget Category based on 2019 Operating Budgets

Budget Category	N	%
Under \$175k	21	26.3%
\$175k to \$275k	19	23.7%
\$276k to \$500k	20	25.0%
Over \$500k	20	25.0%
Total	80	100.0%

4. Results

The results are presented under the following three main topics; supports and resources for local businesses, information for consumers and the public, and BIA strategies and events.

Support for Businesses

The first main topic concerns BIA efforts to help their local business members, with information relating to resources and government programs, increased promotion, fundraising, and supports for switching to online business models

Sharing Information with Businesses

Since the pandemic began, the Canadian government has been providing its citizens, businesses and different sectors with various financial support programs, such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA)¹². Many BIAs have been providing information on their websites to update their members with the resources that they might find beneficial.

Figure 1 shows that 60% of all BIAs have a dedicated section or page on their websites regarding COVID-19 where they provide information on different resources and updates on the current situation. The majority of BIAs, including all BIAs with over \$500k budget, and between 75%-80% of others, shared links to various government resources, such as tax deferrals and rent assistance, and more than half (53%) of all BIAs provided some detailed summaries (not just links) of the programs and resources available.

Around two-thirds (65%) of all BIAs were sharing government guidelines on re-opening protocol (e.g. Bloor Yorkville BIA¹³). Another example is the Reopening Checklist created by the Liberty Village BIA¹⁴. Around 85% of the highest budget group BIAs were

¹² www.canada.ca/en/departement-finance/economic-response-plan.html

¹³ www.bloor-yorkville.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Restaurant-Reopening-Regulations.pdf

¹⁴ www.libertyvillagebia.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ReopeningChecklist-LVBIA.pdf

providing this type of information to their members, which is slightly higher than the total of 65% across all BIAs.

A smaller percentage of BIAs (9%) also shared information on social and health services that were available in the area. Downtown Yonge BIA for example, provided a list of social services that were still open to support those seeking shelters and respite during this difficult time.

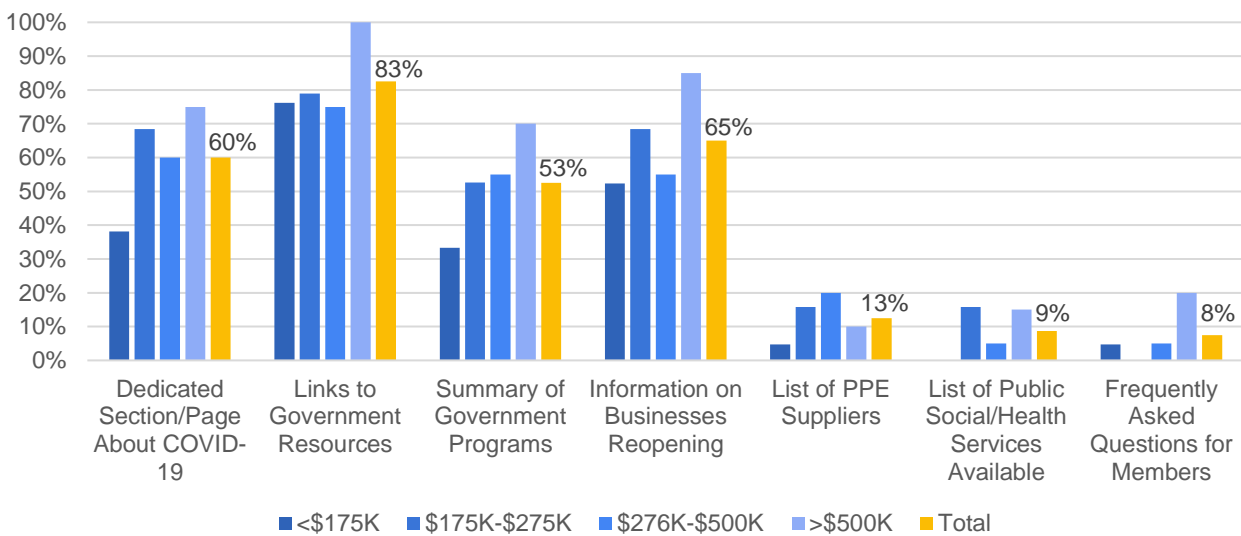
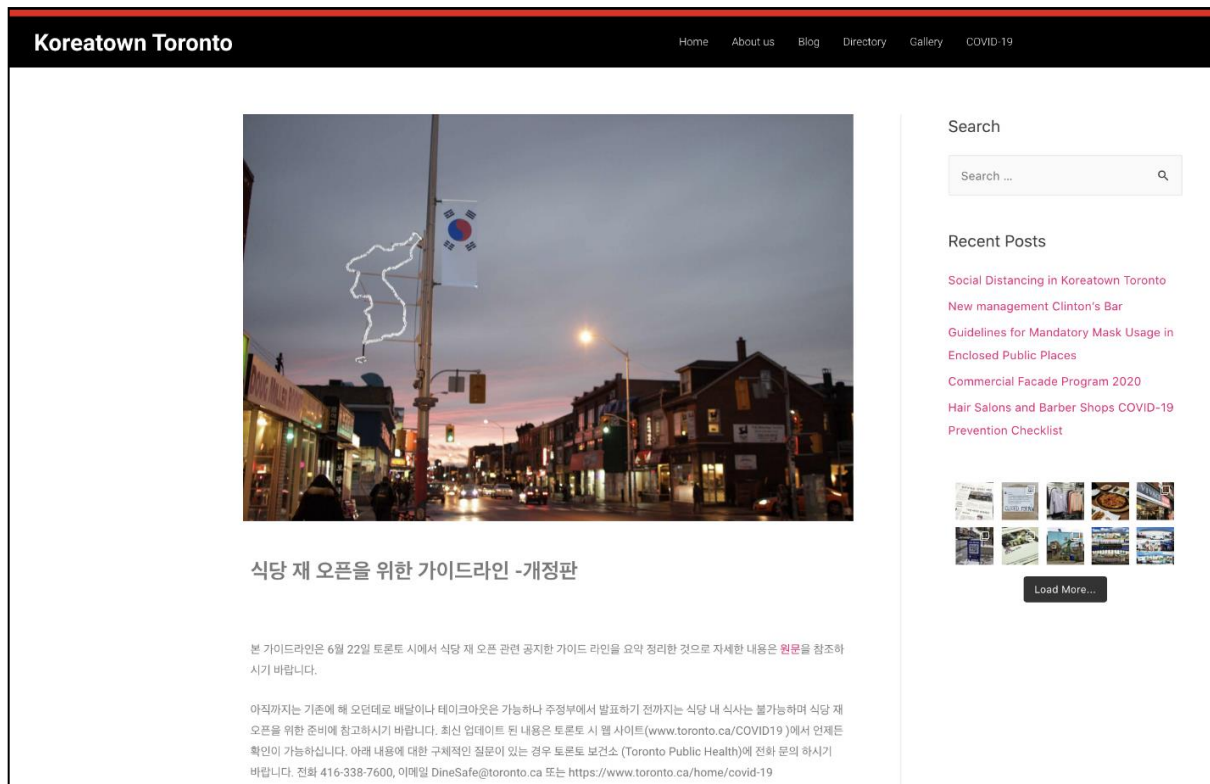


Figure 1. Sharing Information with Businesses

Some BIAs such as Koreatown put in the extra effort to provide a translated version of government reopening guidelines, which could be found on their website and accessible by the public.



[COVID-19 Guidelines for Re-Opening your Restaurant](https://koreatownbia.com/covid-19-guidelines-for-re-opening-your-restaurant/) taken from KoreaTown BIA
(koreatownbia.com/covid-19-guidelines-for-re-opening-your-restaurant/)

Researchers also found several BIAs appeared to have been relatively inactive prior to the pandemic based on their social media and website activity, but became more involved after March sharing relevant information and resources. There were also noticeable differences between the roles some BIAs played, with some being more marketing oriented (more frequent amongst higher budget BIAs), while others were more focused on sharing information amongst their community and members.

Promotions of Member Businesses

Many BIAs were promoting their local businesses on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, as well as their own websites. This project distinguished between original posts and sharing of others' posts on social media, as well as posts promoting specific businesses and the neighbourhood more generally (e.g. parks, routes etc.). The promotion of gift cards, some subsidised, was also categorized.

The majority of BIAs were active on social media promoting their local businesses and the neighbourhood in general. Around 83% of all BIAs made original postings promoting specific businesses on their social media accounts, and 79% shared social media posts from the businesses. Three-quarters (75%) of all BIAs had also posted about their neighbourhood in general, for example highlighting natural areas and parks. It is a highly cost-effective way for the location and its businesses to receive more exposure due to the low-cost nature of social media promotions.

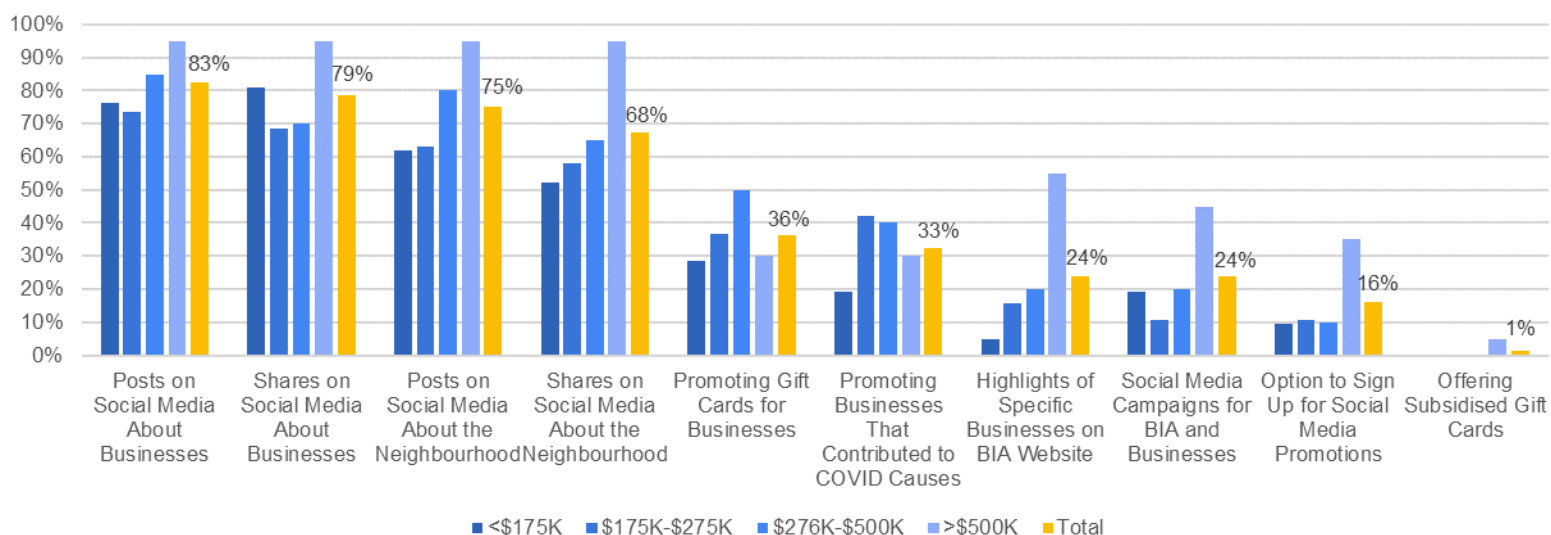
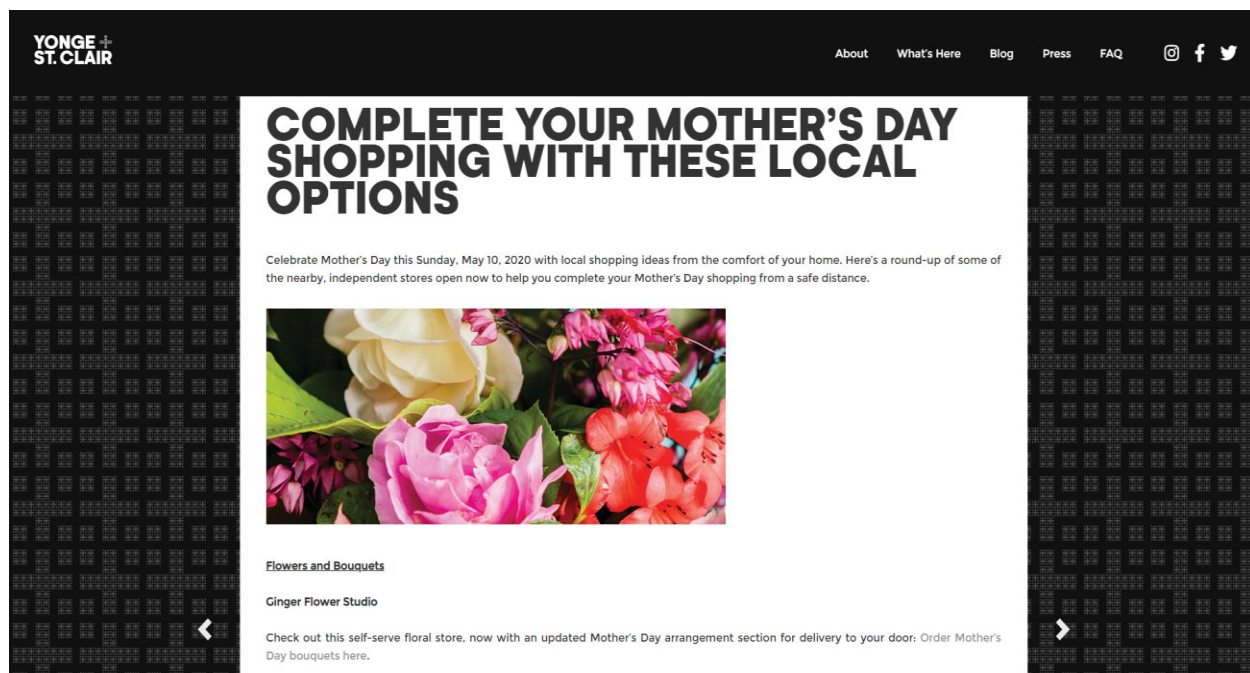


Figure 2. Promotions of Member Businesses

One quarter (24%) of BIAs also highlighted specific businesses on their websites. For example, the Yonge & St. Clair BIA promoted a restaurant patio list and local stores to offering specials for Mother's Day¹⁵.

¹⁵ yongestclair.ca/blog/



Complete Your Mother's Day Shopping With These Local Options taken from Yonge & St. Clair BIA (yongestclair.ca/mothers-day2020/)

More than one third (36%) of BIAs were promoting gift cards from their members¹⁶. Some BIAs were subsidizing gift cards for their area's businesses, for example the Yonge & St. Clair BIA were selling gift cards at 50% of their value¹⁷.

¹⁶ www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/gift-card-purchases-could-help-small-businesses-cope-with-covid-19-experts-1.4855170

¹⁷ yongestclair.ca/gift-card-stimulus-program-at-yonge-st-clair/



Gift Card Stimulus Program at Yonge + St. Clair taken from Yonge & St. Clair BIA (yongestclair.ca/gift-card-stimulus-program-at-yonge-st-clair/)

Fundraising for Local Businesses and Organizations

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a huge challenge for small businesses, with some temporary and permanent closures¹⁸. Some BIAs (23%) had established fundraising campaigns for their members, and were sharing others' efforts to raise money on social media (23%).

¹⁸ www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/financial-pressures-of-covid-19-force-several-canadian-small-businesses-to-close-permanently-1.4898283

Around one fifth (20%) of BIAs were making original posts promoting donations to local organizations, such as the local hospitals, and 16% had shared a re-post. BIAs across different budget groups were equally likely to make original posts promoting donations for local businesses, however when it came to sharing information for other local groups, BIAs with the highest budgets were more likely to be sharing information than others.

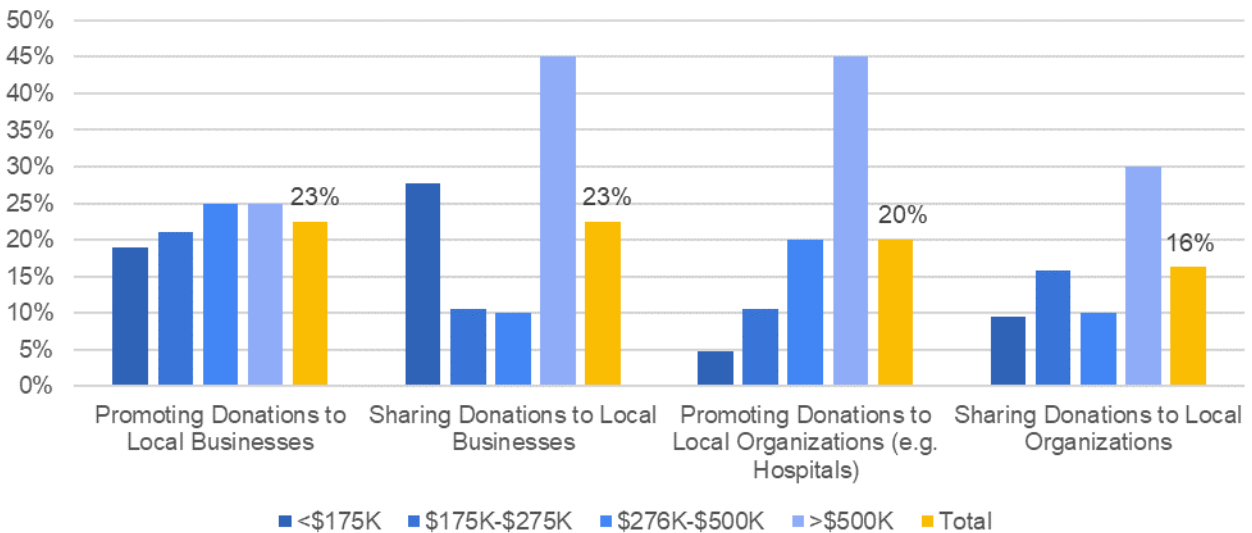
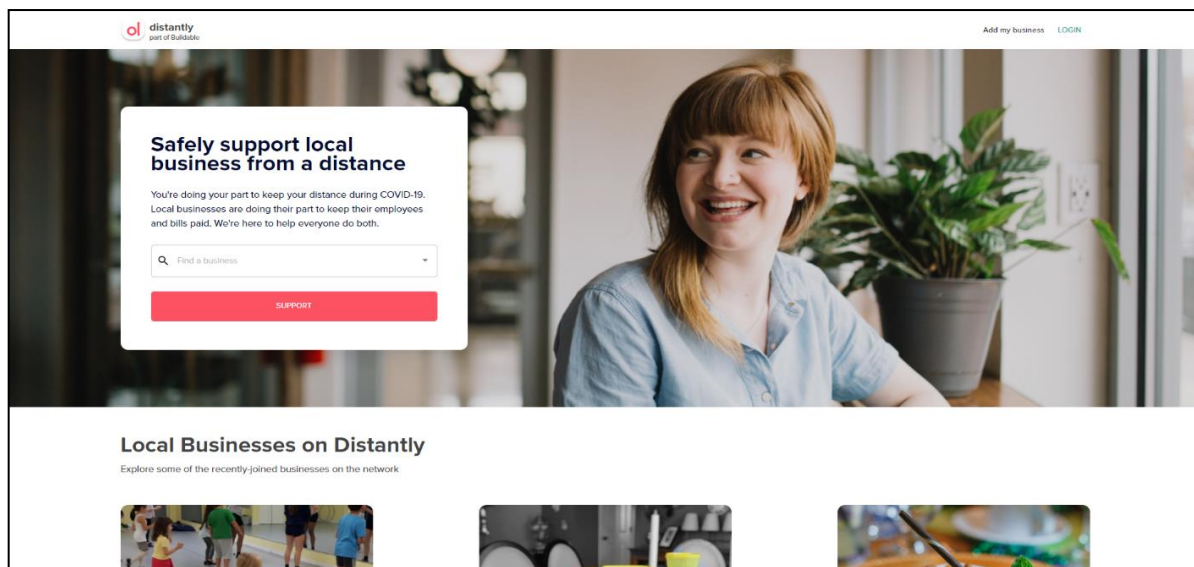


Figure 3. Fundraising for Local Businesses and Organizations

Distantly is a tool that many BIAs were using to raise support for their members. For example, Bloor-Yorkville BIA were asking businesses to sign up on the www.distantly.ca website to be eligible to receive donations from those who wish to support them¹⁹.

¹⁹ www.bloor-yorkville.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Sign-Up-for-Distantly-Small-Business-Support.pdf



Distantly | By Buildable taken from Distantly (www.distantly.ca)

Using Digital Platforms

BIAs have been promoting and helping raise familiarity with alternative distribution channels as a result of social distancing impacts. One of the most commonly mentioned resources was the Digital Main Street, “a program and service that helps main street businesses achieve digital transformation..., created by the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) with direct support from the City of Toronto”²⁰. Around two-thirds (66%) of BIAs introduced Digital Main Street on their websites or social media, which was fairly consistent across the different budget groups (53% to 75%). Almost half (46%) of BIAs also provided additional information to support their member’s digital transitions and advice on how businesses could create a digital presence online.

Some (18%) were collaborating with other 3rd parties such as Ritual²¹, an application that allows customers to place orders prior to their visits to minimize contact between the store employees and customers.

²⁰ digitalmainstreet.ca/

²¹ ritual.co/partners/ritualone

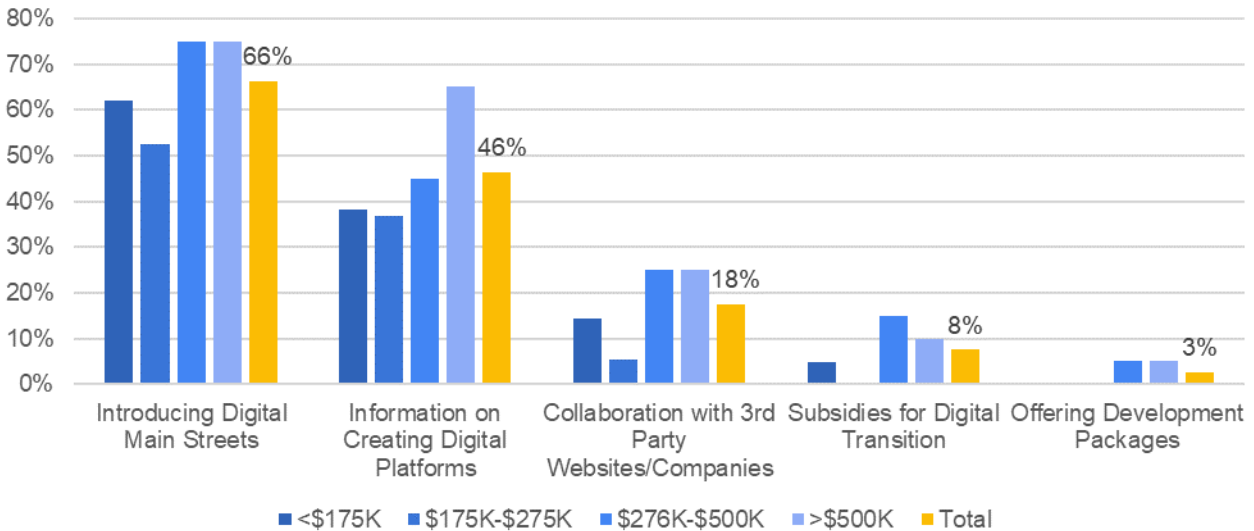



Figure 4. Digital Platforms

Additionally, a few BIAs (8%) were providing and sharing financial incentives for their members' digital transition. The Digital Main Street Ontario Grants, a popular subsidy promoted by a few BIAs, which allowed businesses to receive up to \$2,500 for their digital transition. For example, Duke Heights BIA were offering development packages, which included websites and information that could support their members and provide them with the resources they might find useful²².

²² dukeheights.ca/digital-services/



During this time of change, many people are exploring the best option to digitally enable their business. The DUKE Heights BIA has put together a number of website and website related, resources and services to make it easier for you to understand the options available to your business and identify what may work best for your business. Please contact the DUKE Heights BIA at business@dukeheights.ca if you need help understanding and choosing between the various options, or if you would like to take advantage of the discounted customised website packages below.

Web Development

Ecommerce Development

Digital Services taken from Duke Heights BIA (dukeheights.ca/digital-services/)

Virtual Support Provided by BIAs

Many BIAs have shifted operations online to support their members virtually, including webinars, and other consultation services. One-in-five (19%) BIAs were providing their members with business resources such as posters and toolkits, that were created by the BIAs themselves. Some BIAs (13%) were also hosting webinars and virtual meetings to help their members and community stay informed and updated about the latest information. For example, Liberty Village BIA provided their members with *Liberty*

Connect, a weekly conference call to answer member questions and provided support²³. Duke Heights BIA also provided a discussion board on their website that served as a forum for their members to interact and ask questions virtually²⁴. It is worth noting that BIAs from the highest budget group were significantly more active at providing these online services compared to the others.

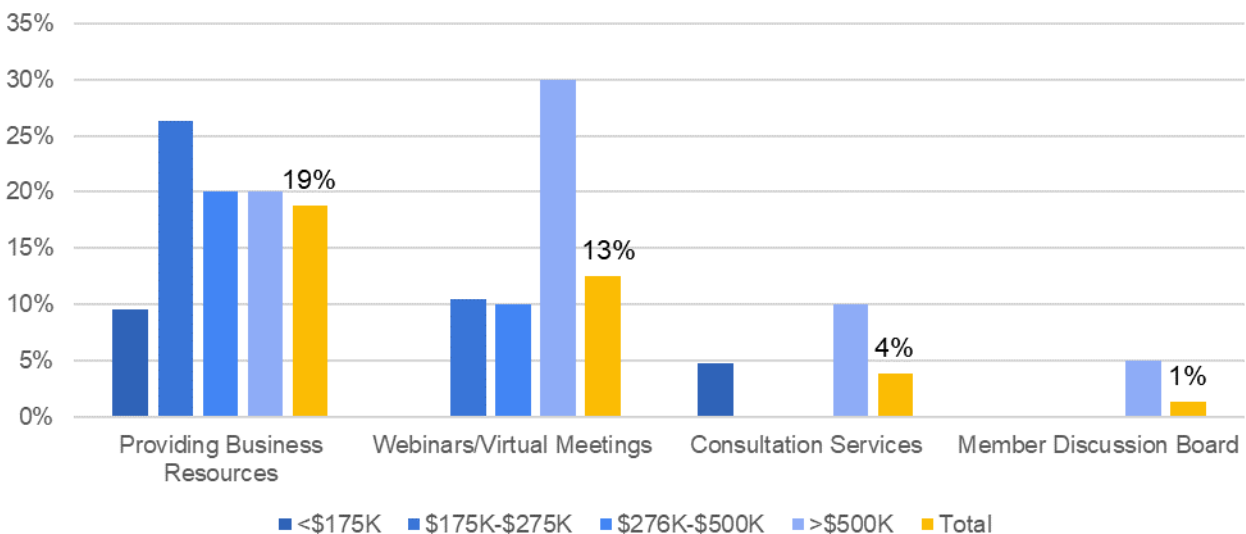


Figure 5. Virtual Support (Provided by BIA)

Virtual Support Provided by Others

Many BIAs (48%) were also promoting services provided by external organizations to their members. Services from BusinessTO Support Centre²⁵ and Digital Main Street were two of the most common being shared.

²³ www.libertyvillagebia.com/liberty-connect-2/

²⁴ forum.dukeheights.ca/

²⁵ www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-economic-support-recovery-for-businesses/covid-19-business-sector-resources/businessto-support-centre/

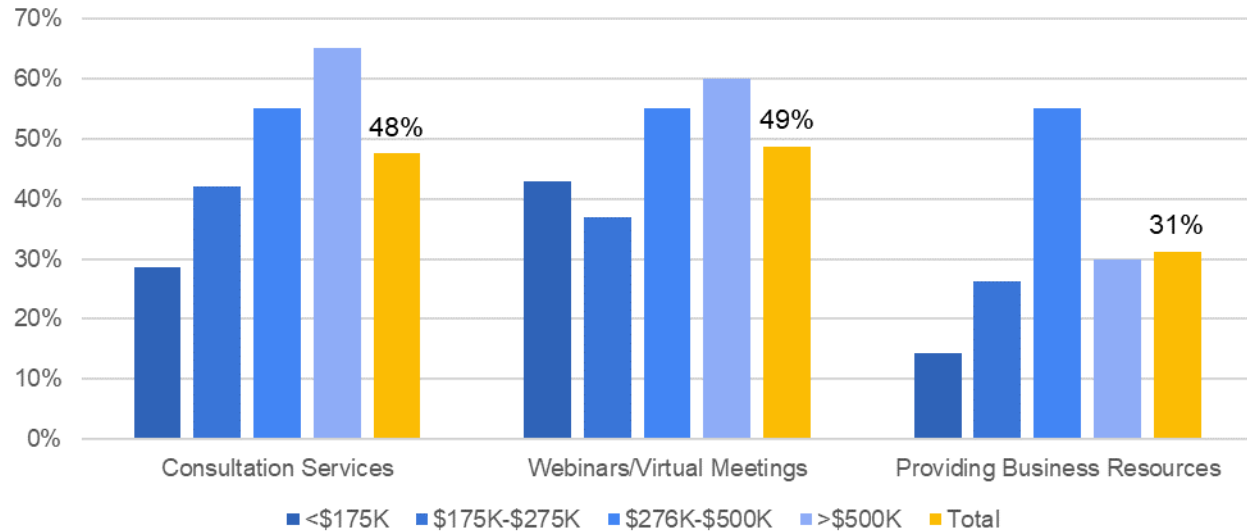


Figure 6. Virtual Support (Provided by Others)

Collecting Data and Feedback

Many BIAs (43%) have been encouraging their members to complete surveys from other organizations, often from the City of Toronto^{26, 27}, and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)²⁸. There was a fairly equal distribution across all budget groups when it comes to promoting surveys to member businesses from other organizations.

In addition, some BIAs (19%) have been conducting their own surveys of members, the main focus of which have been engagement and perceptions of government programs such as the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) program.

²⁶ www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-reopening-recovery-rebuild/covid-19-about-reopening-recovery-rebuild/

²⁷ bot.hostedincanadasurveys.ca/index.php/783599?lang=en

²⁸ E.g. silkstart.s3.amazonaws.com/ec52f9e3-8c6f-421f-a662-1dc8477dfd0f.pdf

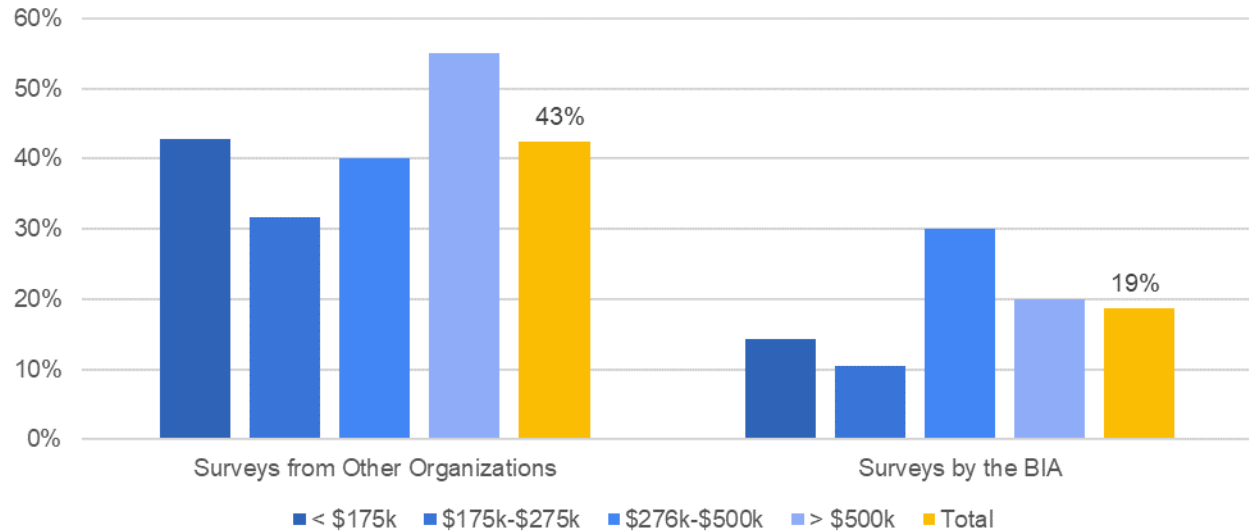




Figure 8. Collecting Data and Feedback

One example is Broadview Danforth BIA who have been sharing their survey results publicly on a regular basis²⁹.

²⁹ www.thedanforth.ca/members/item/717-latest-survey-results-released-this-morning



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© Thursday, 04 June 2020 15:54

Latest Survey Results Released This Morning

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[Email](#)


Good Morning All,

First, thank you to everyone who took the time to complete our most recent survey. I know it's probably the last thing you want to do but.... the information that we get is invaluable in our efforts to pressure the government to make amendments to existing financial aid programs and to enact a freeze on commercial evictions. This time our survey went out not just to businesses and landlords in Toronto but also to those in Ottawa and Guelph. And the information gathered shows that whether you're in a large, medium or small city in the Province of Ontario everyone is in the same difficult situation.

This morning Councillor Fletcher and MPP Peter Tabuns hosted a virtual media conference to announce the survey results. They were joined by our Board Treasurer Philip Koccev (iPro Realty) and by our colleagues from Ottawa and Guelph.

Attached please find 3 files:

- Survey results from commercial tenants
- Survey results from commercial landlords
- A one page summary of all results



Member Resources

Find a great list of reference and resource items for your business here and here.

54 Police Division: 416-808-5400

55 Police Division: 416-808-5500

Recent Tweets

Tweets by [@BroadviewDanBIA](#)

Latest Survey Results This Morning taken from Broadview Danforth BIA
www.thedanforth.ca/members/item/717-latest-survey-results-released-this-morning

Additional Security Measures

In the time after lockdown there have been reports of additional thefts³⁰ and scam alerts³¹. Around one-third (35%) of BIAs were sharing some information directed to their members regarding additional security measures on social media, and one-quarter (23%) on their own websites. These numbers were highest for the BIAs in the top budget group of more than \$500k, with half (50%) sharing information on social media, and 30% on their websites. Out of all BIAs, 4% were implementing 24/7 security measures automatically or by request, all of which were in the budget group of over \$500k.

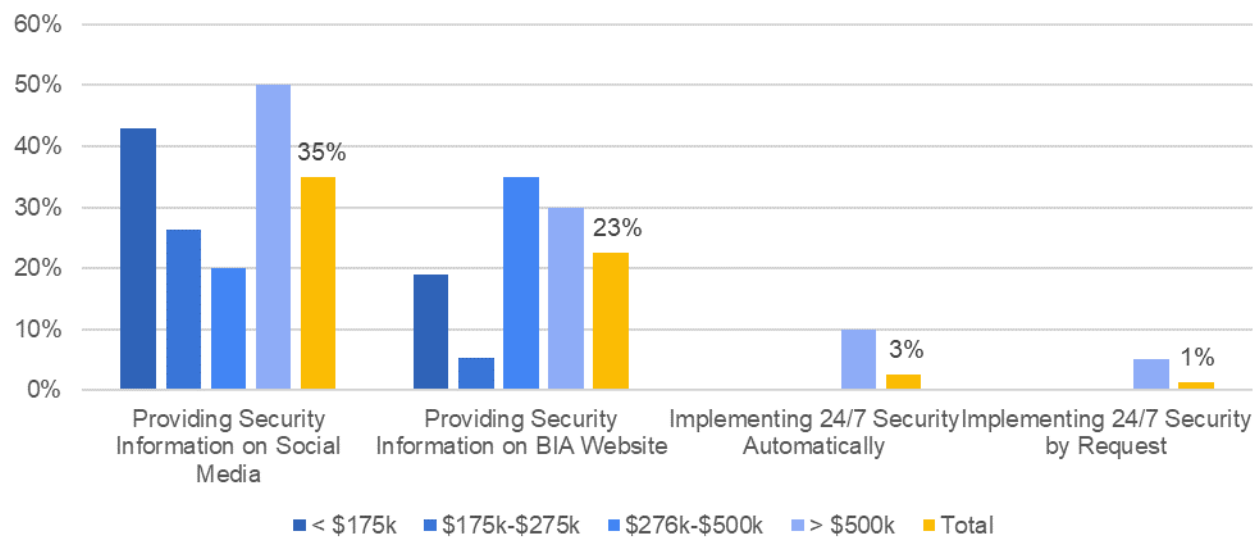


Figure 7. Additional Security Measures

Information for Customers

Apart from sharing information and resources with their local businesses, BIAs were also providing links, ideas, and communications directed at consumers. These were categorized into listings of businesses how to patronize them, health and safety information, economic support for individuals and families, and suggestions on activities that consumers could engage in that support local businesses.

³⁰ www.retail-insider.com/retail-insider/2020/4/stephen-okeefe-thefts-increase-in-retailers-in-canada-that-remain-open-during-covid-19-pandemic-expert

³¹ www.toronto.com/news-story/9964156-covid-19-related-scams-are-on-the-rise-toronto-police-warn/

Listing of Member Businesses in Operation

Many BIAs (66%) listed businesses that had remained in operation in the midst of the pandemic, and how they could be accessed, whether online and contactless (55%) and/or curbside pick-up or in-person (53%).

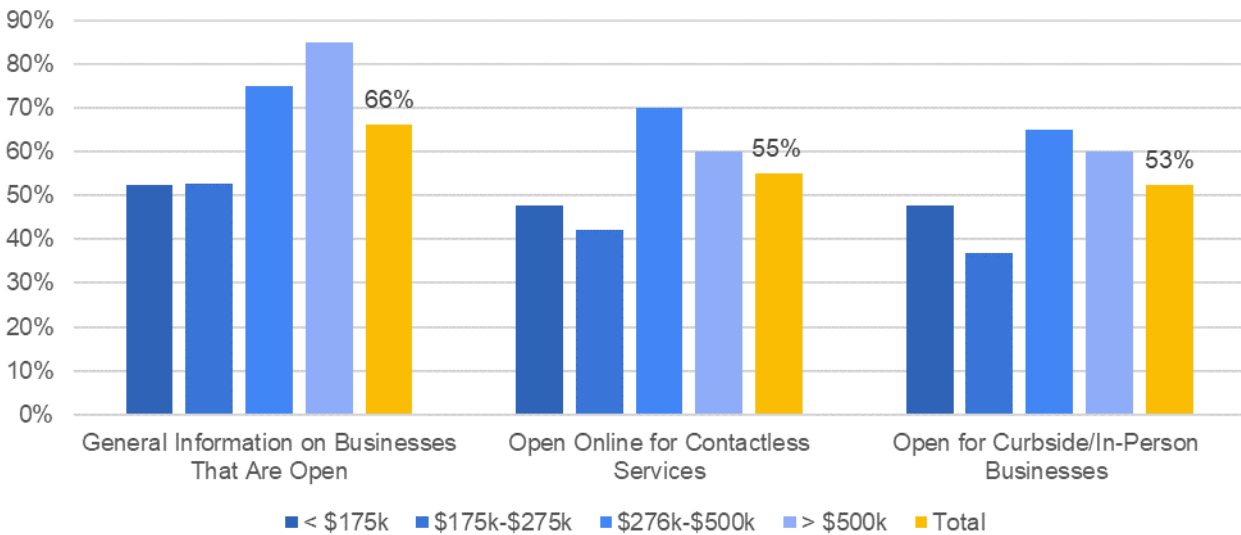
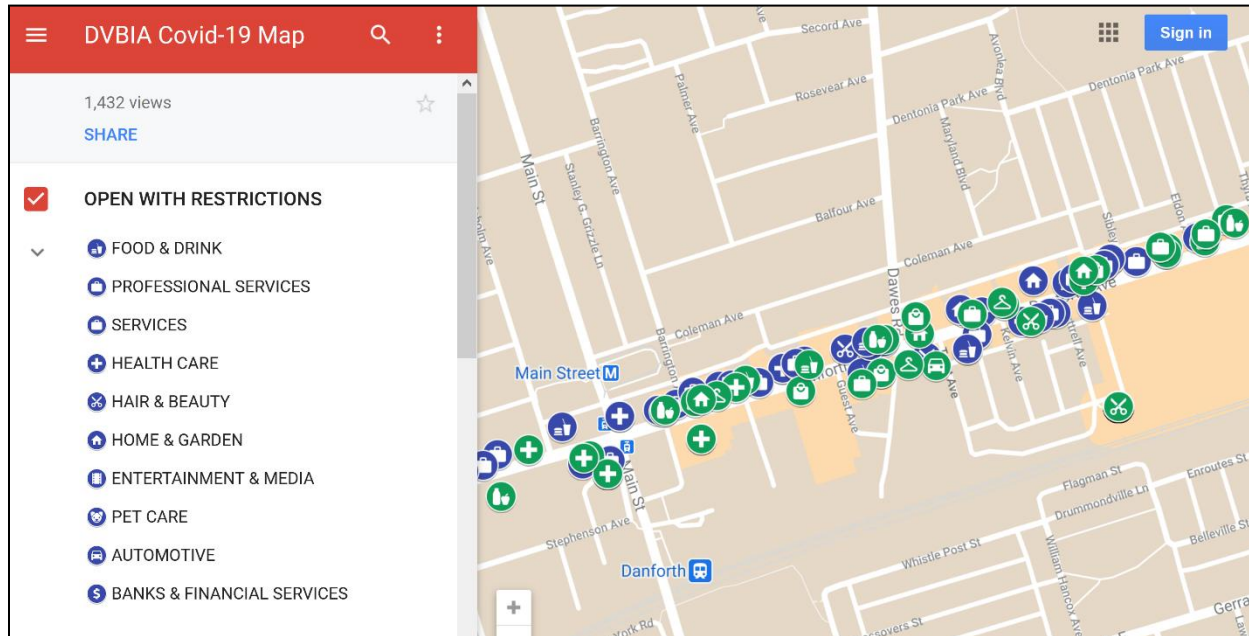


Figure 12. Listing of Member Businesses in Operation

This information was often found on the BIA website, as a list or an interactive Google Map as the Danforth Village BIA created.



Danforth Village BIA COVID-19 Map (www.google.com/maps/d/u/2/viewer?mid=15aVNJBk-ttOEjLUYCB4ROXq35saJDKfI&ll=43.68937618280211%2C-79.29728100000001&z=16)

Health and Safety Information

Most BIAs (73%) had shared others' information on social media, and 40% on their own websites, relating to general health and safety suggestions that the public should follow to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

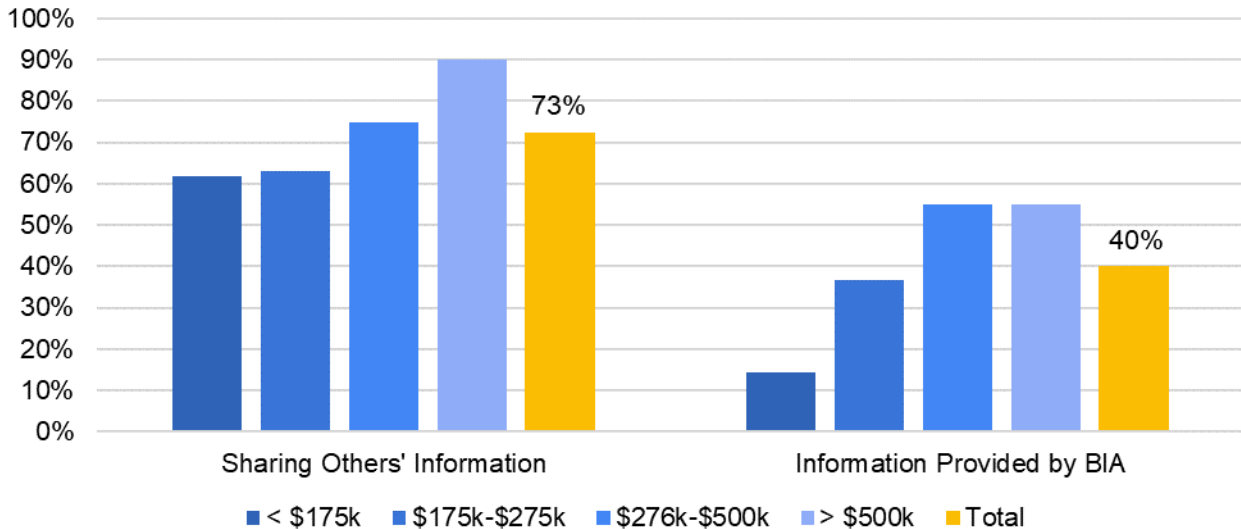
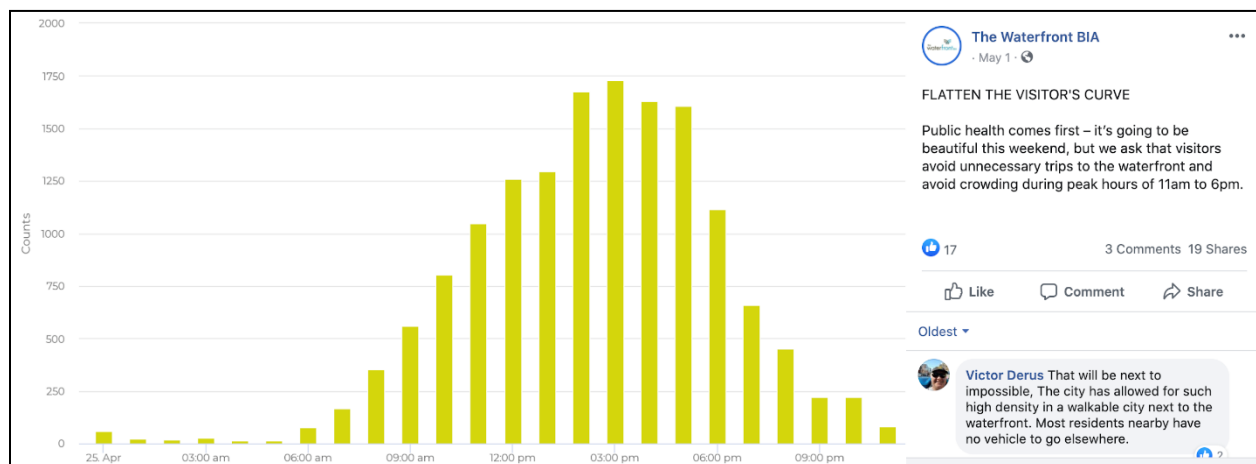


Figure 9. Health & Safety Information

One interesting example came from the Waterfront BIA, who shared information on peak periods to their area, to help people make decisions about the best time to visit.



FLATTEN THE VISITOR CURVE taken from the Waterfront BIA

(www.facebook.com/waterfrontbia/photos/a.105069342920394/3091194884307810)

Some BIAs used the opportunity to share information on health and safety information to promote their member businesses. For example, the Church-Wellesley Village BIA promoted member businesses that sell fashionable masks with a post about

the new mandatory face covering bylaw³². An additional example was the Beach Village BIA who sold masks directly, with all proceeds from the sale going towards supporting the local businesses³³.



Mandatory Face Covering Bylaw taken from Church & Wellesley BIA
twitter.com/ChurchWellesley/status/1280502189736239104?s=20

³² twitter.com/ChurchWellesley/status/1280502189736239104?s=20

³³ www.facebook.com/BeachVillageBIA/posts/10156924151156853

Economic Support for Individuals and Families

Many BIAs (30%) were sharing information intended for individuals relating to various government supports and resources. Some BIAs have tens of thousands of social media followers, and this was an interesting use of their networks that demonstrates a commitment to the broader community.

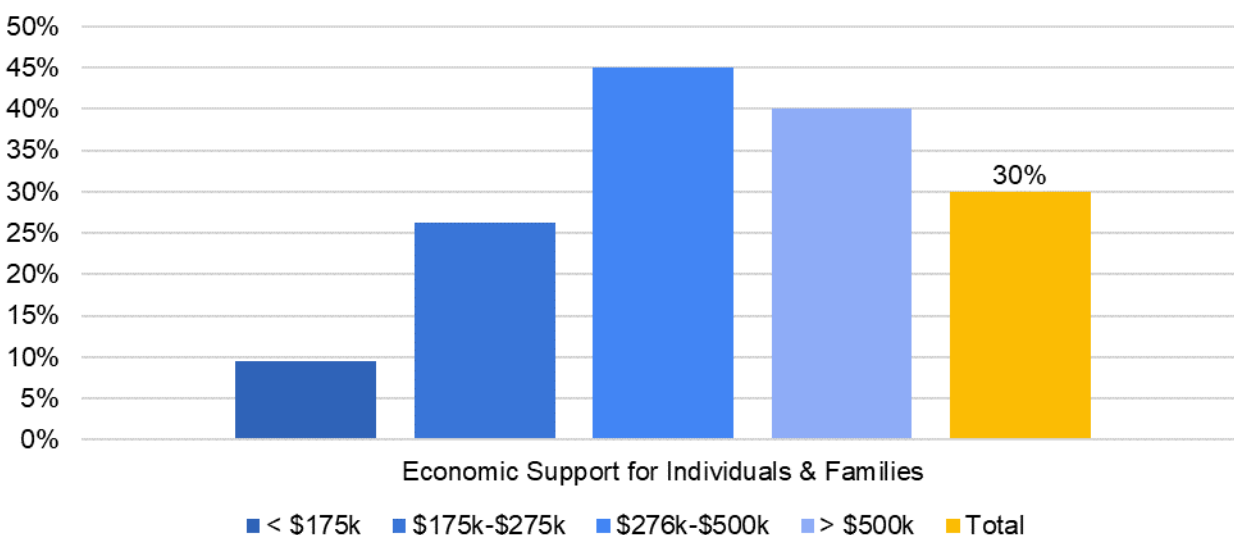


Figure 10. *Economic Support for Individuals & Families*

For example, the Liberty Village BIA was one of many that shared information on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), with concise summaries and explanations on who qualifies, and how to apply.



Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)


The benefit will provide \$2000 / month for the next four months for workers who are not getting a paycheck because of COVID-19. This includes:

- Persons who have lost their job due to COVID-19
- Persons who are contract workers who can no longer work due to COVID-19
- Persons who are Self employed who can no longer work due to COVID-19
- Persons who are sick or in quarantine and not receiving a salary due to COVID-19
- Persons who are looking after someone who is ill due to COVID-19
- Persons who are looking after children or parents due to COVID-19
- Persons who are employed but are not receiving a an income due to COVID-19

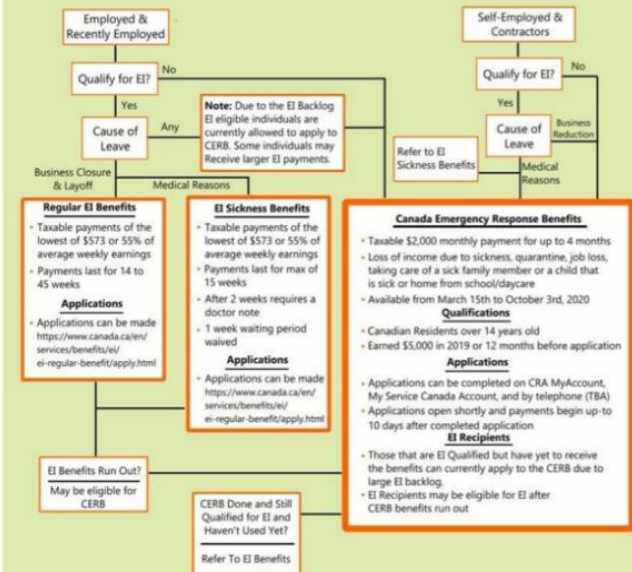
For More Information & To Apply:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/benefits/apply-for-cerb-with-cra.html>



Last Updated: Monday, May 4th, 2020



Navigating The Canada Emergency Response Benefit & Employment Insurance



Last Updated: Monday, May 4th, 2020

COVID-19 Resource Package taken from Liberty Village BIA (www.libertyvillagebia.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/LVBIA.COVID19ResourcePackage.pdf)

Suggestions for Member-Related Activities for People Staying at Home

In response to public calls for residents to stay home and away from Main Streets³⁴, some BIAs (25%) came up with ways for the public to engage their community and businesses without actually visiting. A large amount of this content was in the form of videos or blog posts, which were not as common among BIAs of smaller budget groups.

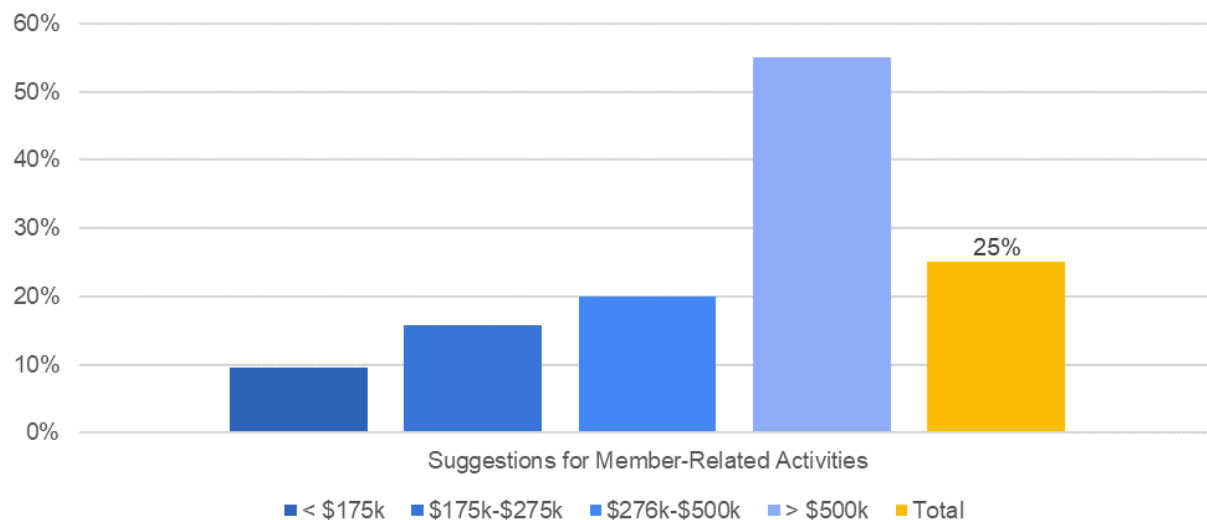


Figure 11. Suggestions for Member-Related Activities for People Staying at Home

Some common examples included promotion of physical fitness classes via Zoom, ordering ingredients from a neighbourhood store for cooking or baking sessions, free access to e-books and audio books from their community library, how workers at home could connect with stores they used to frequent³⁵, and more.

The Bloor Yorkville BIA came up with activities to entertain families, with some of these activities being free. One of the most noteworthy activities was to promote OverDrive by Toronto Public Library; With the largest collection of eBooks and audiobooks, the Toronto Public Library is now accessible to everyone³⁶.

³⁴ www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-reduce-virus-spread/

³⁵ twitter.com/MyTOFD/status/1268256656049295360

³⁶ www.bloor-yorkville.com/creative-at-home-activities/

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Toronto Public Library Yorkville Branch

Expand Your Library

No library card? Not a problem. While the [Toronto Public Library Yorkville Branch](#) may be closed, you can now access OverDrive, Toronto Public Library's largest collection of ebooks and audiobooks. Using campaign code TPL2020, users can sign up for an Instant Digital Card unlocking endless literary entertainment. Along with thousands of ebooks and audiobooks, users can access collections for children and teens, small collections in French, Chinese, Russian, Spanish, and Portuguese, as well as nearly 3000 streaming videos. Each user can borrow up to 30 items at a time.

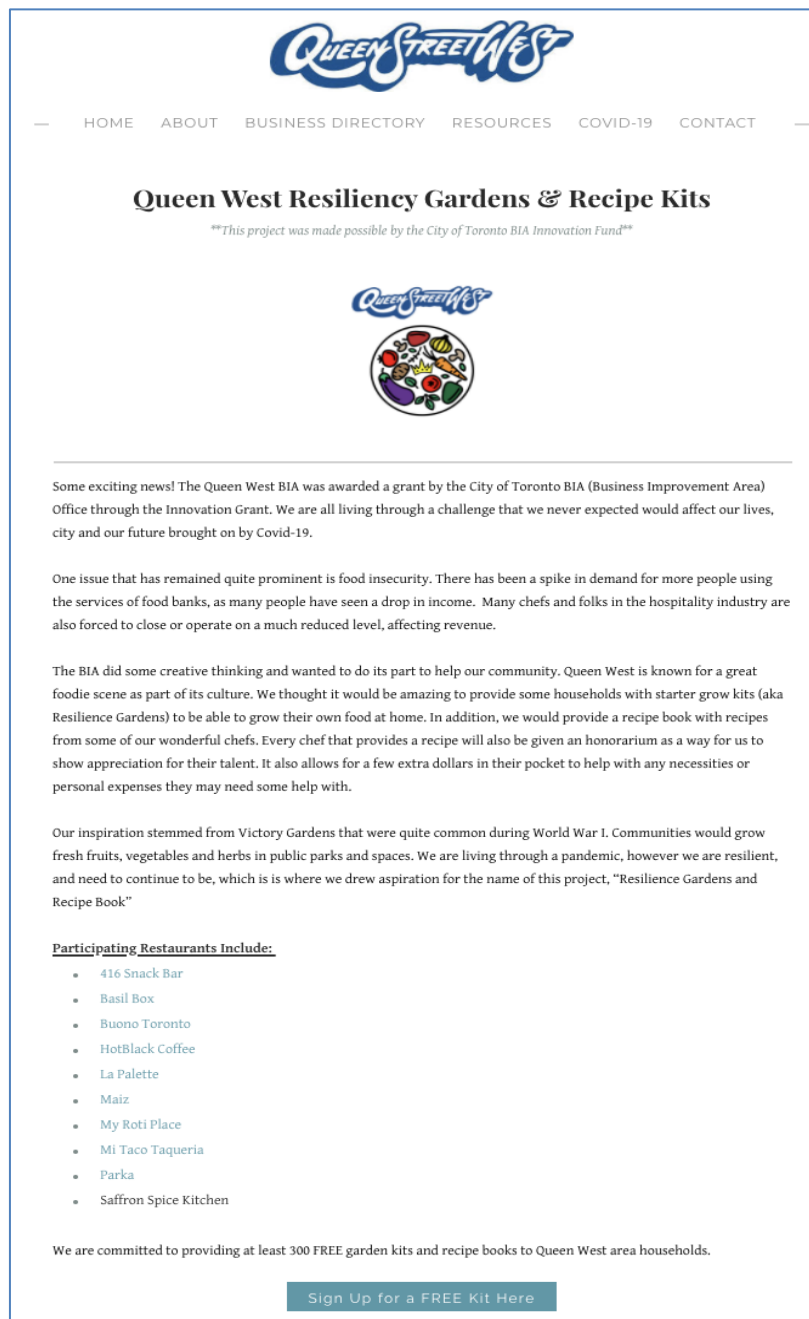
Sign up for [Digital Library Services](#)

Explore New Hobbies

Catering to nearly every type of entertainment seeker, [Game and Hobby Zone](#) is where you'll find all the classics, the latest board games, and plenty of puzzles to help keep your household occupied. While Game and Hobby Zone doesn't have an online store, they are offering online shopping through Facebook messenger and via email. Offering both curbside delivery and pickup, their team will help set you up with everything from games, puzzles, and even model sets. If you aren't sure what exactly you're looking for, feel free to reach out for ideas!

Contact details:
[Facebook](#)
info@gameandhobbyzone.com

Your Bloor-Yorkville Guide to Creative At Home Activities taken from Bloor-Yorkville BIA
[\(www.bloor-yorkville.com/creative-at-home-activities/\)](http://www.bloor-yorkville.com/creative-at-home-activities/)




QUEEN STREET WEST

— HOME ABOUT BUSINESS DIRECTORY RESOURCES COVID-19 CONTACT —

Queen West Resiliency Gardens & Recipe Kits

This project was made possible by the City of Toronto BIA Innovation Fund



Some exciting news! The Queen West BIA was awarded a grant by the City of Toronto BIA (Business Improvement Area) Office through the Innovation Grant. We are all living through a challenge that we never expected would affect our lives, city and our future brought on by Covid-19.

One issue that has remained quite prominent is food insecurity. There has been a spike in demand for more people using the services of food banks, as many people have seen a drop in income. Many chefs and folks in the hospitality industry are also forced to close or operate on a much reduced level, affecting revenue.

The BIA did some creative thinking and wanted to do its part to help our community. Queen West is known for a great foodie scene as part of its culture. We thought it would be amazing to provide some households with starter grow kits (aka Resilience Gardens) to be able to grow their own food at home. In addition, we would provide a recipe book with recipes from some of our wonderful chefs. Every chef that provides a recipe will also be given an honorarium as a way for us to show appreciation for their talent. It also allows for a few extra dollars in their pocket to help with any necessities or personal expenses they may need some help with.

Our inspiration stemmed from Victory Gardens that were quite common during World War I. Communities would grow fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs in public parks and spaces. We are living through a pandemic, however we are resilient, and need to continue to be, which is where we drew aspiration for the name of this project, "Resilience Gardens and Recipe Book"

Participating Restaurants Include:

- 416 Snack Bar
- Basil Box
- Buono Toronto
- HotBlack Coffee
- La Palette
- Maiz
- My Roti Place
- Mi Taco Taqueria
- Parka
- Saffron Spice Kitchen

We are committed to providing at least 300 FREE garden kits and recipe books to Queen West area households.

[Sign Up for a FREE Kit Here](#)

Queen Street West BIA utilized the Toronto BIA Innovation Fund³⁷ and came up with the "Queen West Resilience Gardens & Recipe Kits" project³⁸. The BIA provided the residents of the neighbourhood with starter growing kits to be able to grow their own food at home, and a recipe book with recipes from the neighbourhood restaurants.

Queen West Resilience Gardens & Recipe Kits taken from Queen Street West BIA (www.queenstreettoronto.com/queen-west-resiliency-gardens-recipe-kits.html#)

³⁷ www.toronto.ca/business-economy/business-operation-growth/business-improvement-areas/bia-financial-incentives/innovation-fund/

³⁸ www.queenstreettoronto.com/queen-west-resiliency-gardens-recipe-kits.html

BIA Initiated Events and Long-Term Strategy

The final main theme covered how BIAs were dealing with their own events and festivals during this time, and whether there was any mention of long-term strategies, beyond immediate recovery, that had changed since COVID-19.

Live and Virtual Events

Many BIAs host their own events, small and large, that provide neighbourhoods and Main Streets with custom, reputation, and a cultural focal point. Around one-in-five (18%) of BIAs had yet to make a call on their events, and were awaiting for further developments before cancelling, while 10% had already announced that in-person live events had been cancelled and were moving to some version online. This does not mean that other BIAs were necessarily going ahead with their events, only that this is the information that was available through BIA websites and social media posts.

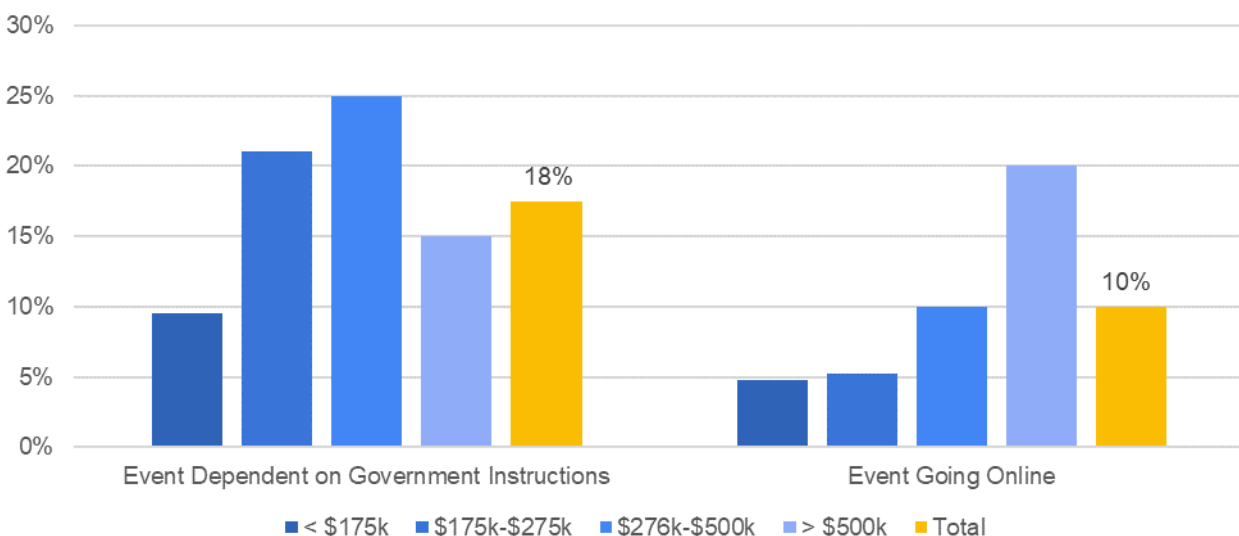


Figure 13. Live and Virtual Events

Long Term Strategy

Almost one-in-five (19%) of BIAs had some form of long term strategic plan on their websites, that considered expansions of boundaries, revitalization of the neighbourhoods, streetscape master plan, and master plan for development. However, at the time of data

collection, all the long-term plans were published before the pandemic with no mention of how COVID-19 might affect them. It is perhaps too early to expect BIAs to have addressed the long term recovery and transformational strategies that no doubt will need to be addressed³⁹.

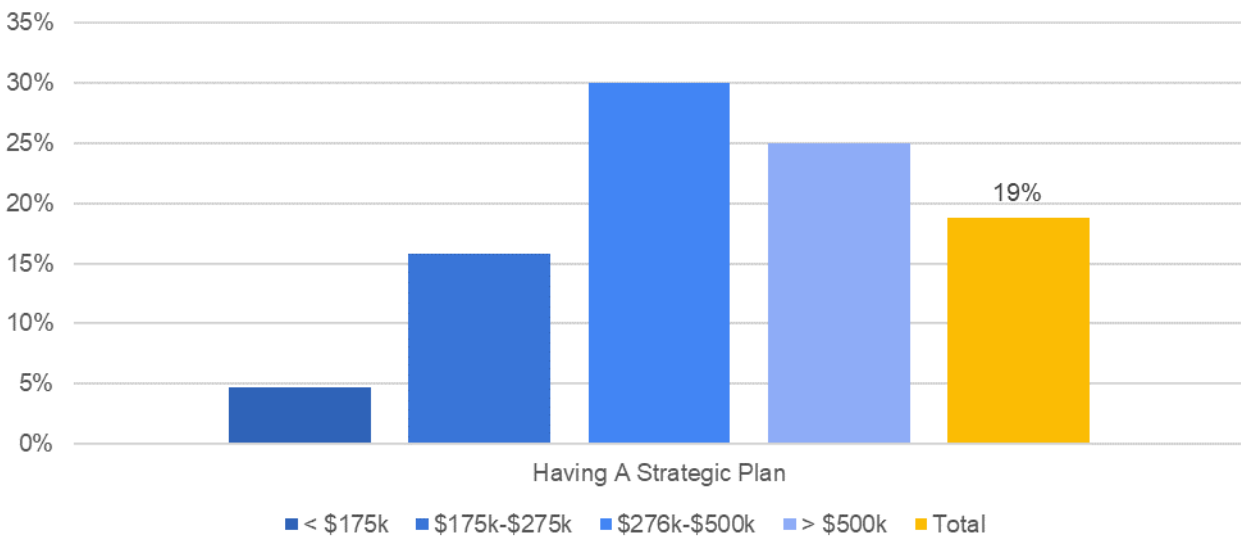


Figure 14. Long Term Strategy

³⁹ www.placemanagement.org/covid-19/

5. Partnerships with Institute for Hospitality & Tourism Research

There are several potential ways for BIAs to partner with the our Research Institute and the Ted Rogers School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Ryerson University. If you would like to discuss them please connect with Tom Griffin to discuss (tom.griffin@ryerson.ca).

- The Institute for Hospitality and Tourism Research⁴⁰ aims to conduct research that is relevant to the industry. There are opportunities to partner on grant applications to fund research projects. Please contact Tom if you would like to learn more.
- Our school runs a co-op program, where students work for four or eight months at a placement. Some details are available on the website⁴¹ or contact Tom to discuss ideas and ask questions.
- We have many students who are keen to find part-time and summer employment. If you have positions you want to share, we would be happy to distribute them directly to our students and through our Business Career Hub⁴².
- We teach classes on marketing, market research, service design, and more⁴³. We are always looking for class project ideas, and guest speakers. Please contact Tom if you'd like to discuss this further.

⁴⁰ www.ryerson.ca/htmresearch/

⁴¹ www.ryerson.ca/trsm-co-op/

⁴² www.ryerson.ca/trsm-careers/

⁴³ www.ryerson.ca/tedrogersschool/hospitality-tourism-management/programs-and-admissions/curriculum-overview/