

The FirstOntario 1Awards kicks off 10th annual business competition

This year marks a decade of supporting small business communities with \$135,000 in prizes

Hamilton, ON, March 1 – The FirstOntario 1Awards is celebrating 10 years of supporting local entrepreneurs and their dreams of success. Business owners in Hamilton, Halton, Brant and the Niagara Region can apply now for a chance to win and share in \$135,000 in cash and in-kind, professional services.

To celebrate this 10-year milestone, all FirstOntario communities have been combined under the 2022 1Awards competition with a bigger prize pot this year.

“The 1Awards started 10 years ago as a way to support local businesses and help get them to the next level with assistance from our community partners,” said Joanne Battaglia, Vice President Marketing, Communications and Community Partnerships. “A decade later, businesses need support more than ever, given the impact of the pandemic. This program could not be possible without the ongoing commitment from our community partners.

In nine years, FirstOntario and 1Awards partners have invested more than \$1.6 million into more than 40 businesses through the Hamilton and Niagara competitions. This year’s partners include [Agro Zaffiro LLP](#), [Giant Shoe Creative](#), [KPMG](#), [Mohawk College](#), [PLAY](#), [The Hamilton Spectator](#), [The Thornton Group](#) and [Weever](#). Additional sponsors include the [Hamilton Chamber of Commerce](#), [Global Payments](#) and [Carmen’s Group](#).

Successful applicants will present a 15-minute pitch in May to the partners who want to hear about the business – past success, present challenges and future aspirations. Winners can share \$25,500 in cash and \$109,500 of in-kind services. The partners determine how the prizes will be allocated following the presentations based on individual needs.

Eligible candidates must apply online at [1Awards.ca](#) before midnight on **Friday, April 1**. Eligible businesses must have less than 50 employees and have been in operation for at least two years. They must demonstrate measureable growth, innovation and community impact. Full details can be found at [1Awards.ca](#)

About FirstOntario Credit Union

FirstOntario is a full service cooperative financial institution, serving members for more than 80 years throughout the Golden Horseshoe, Niagara Region and Southwestern regions of Ontario. With \$5.8 billion in assets under management, FirstOntario is one of Canada’s largest credit unions. Everyone is welcome to be part of FirstOntario for financial services including daily transactions, mortgages, lines of credit, loans and investments. FirstOntario profits are invested into the communities we serve through support for entrepreneurs, competitive rates and charitable pursuits including our award winning student nutrition program. Learn more about us today at [FirstOntario.com](#).