Xero recently released new data showing that the more digitally connected small businesses performed better during the worst months of the pandemic and as the recovery got underway. Governments have recognised these benefits and many now have programs in place to help small businesses start the digital process. We have summarised some of these programs, across Xero markets, to help small businesses get started.

Xero’s app marketplace has over 1000 small business apps for our customers to choose from and link to their Xero account. These cover all aspects of running a small business including banking, invoicing, online payment systems, stock management, quoting and staff management.

Using Xero Small Business insights data from Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, for Xero customers that had 5 or more apps added to their Xero account jobs were down 1.8% y/y in December 2020. This is much better than those who had no apps attached, who experienced job declines of 5.1% y/y for December 2020.

The OECD is also focusing on how to encourage small business take-up of digital and cloud technology to improve automation of many business functions and lift productivity. COVID-19 accelerated small business digital take-up, with early evidence from global business surveys suggesting up to 70% of SMEs have intensified their use of technology during the pandemic.

For those small businesses looking to increase the use of digital tools and automation, there are lots of government-run programmes available to help. We’ve listed some of these below to help you find the main programmes that are in place where you operate.

Australia

- **Australian Small Business Advisory Service (ASBAS):** This program provides advice on how digital tools can help small businesses, including websites and online selling, small business software, security and social media marketing.

Canada

- **Canada Technology Adoption Fund** - In its recent Budget, funding was announced to help as many as 160,000 small and medium-sized businesses adopt new digital technologies through advisory services and skills training. Eligible businesses will receive micro-grants and access to zero-interest financing to help offset the costs of going digital.
New Zealand

- **Digital Boost Training Programme**: The programme has free resources, case studies and access to experts for small businesses to refer to, covering a range of topics (cash flow, sales, marketing etc.). The 2021 NZ Budget committed an additional $44 million towards this digital skills programme that will supply core training to 50,000 to 60,000 New Zealand small businesses, digital business advisory service to assess digital needs and create bespoke digital business action plans.

Singapore

- **SMEs Go Digital programme**: This is a comprehensive programme, which has already supported over 60,000 SMEs, that covers expert advice, industry-specific digital plans, pre-approved digital solutions, grants to assist with digitisation and e-invoicing assistance.

United Kingdom

- The UK Government recently launched the **Help to Grow Scheme** which is part of the plan to equip SMEs with the right skills and tech tools to contribute to the growth of the economy.

United States

- **U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Technology Coalition** – A programme to encourage small businesses to leverage technology for growth and differentiation via digital education and training.