

Broadband for E-Business and Marketing (BEAM) Program

Program Description

Throughout its history, the Algoma region has provided a wealth of natural resources for the larger industry-based companies found in Northern Ontario and beyond. The small to medium enterprises (SMEs) operating within Algoma have also contributed admirably to the overall economy of the region. However, with the proliferation of broadband connectivity, the need for SMEs to truly capitalize on its use via E-Business solutions has become evident as the global digital marketplace creates a much more competitive environment in which SMEs must operate.

With the assistance of FedNor, SSMIC is offering the Broadband for E-Business and Marketing Program (BEAM), which aims to support SMEs in this rejuvenation process by assisting them with their adoption and implementation of E-Business solutions. The key objective of this process is to further grow the SME's business, while making them more modernized and competitive as a result. The SMEs that fully utilize their chosen E-Business tools can expect to reap the benefits of what all businesses need to continually strive for – that is to improve efficiency, reduce costs and create growth.

SSMIC's role within the BEAM Program will be to advise and facilitate the SME during the E-Business technology selection and adoption process to ensure their business goals are met by the chosen solutions. This will involve working with eligible businesses to define these goals, recommend courses of action, and finally understand and implement E-Business solutions in support of these goals. SSMIC's focus during this process will be to act as one of the initial technical advisory resources so that the SME does not have to be.

Eligibility

The program will be eligible to Algoma district SMEs within any sector of business looking to update their business by integrating E-Business solutions. "E-Business" is defined as using ICT to conduct business via the Internet. This can include buying/selling goods and services, servicing customers and business partner collaboration. Eligible solutions can be categorized in several areas such as: website development, E-Marketing and business operation software design/integration. Some specific eligible activities are: *creating/upgrading websites (including mobile, social media and apps), e-commerce integration, search engine optimization/marketing, CRM/ERP software integration, and custom software development*. SSMIC will also encourage the use of the Algoma district's service providers to implement their needs if needed.

SMEs are eligible to apply for the BEAM program provided they meet the following minimum requirements:

- Operating as For-Profit (registered sole proprietor, partnership, or corporation) within the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation service area
- Established seasonal businesses **are** eligible
- Not-for-profit organizations **are not** eligible.

A business who has previously received funding from the BEAM program may potentially be eligible for funding under the following conditions:

- Funding availability under the program.

- Three years has passed since the completion date of the original BEAM funded project.
- If applying within three years of the completion of the original BEAM funded project, a business may potentially receive funding if the original project received funding below the \$5,000.00 funding cap. The new project is potentially eligible for funding of up to a maximum of \$5,000.00 combined with the funding provided from the previous project.
 - *Example:* If my business received funding from the BEAM program in 2015 which totaled \$4,000.00 and I am applying for BEAM funding for a project in 2017, my business is potentially eligible for funding of up to a maximum of \$1,000.00, totaling \$5,000.00.

Eligible Activities

Applicants are eligible to receive funding to support contracted services or direct costs related to developing their digital skills and incorporating E-Business technologies into their operations. The primary intent of the program is to support professional contracted services. Consideration will be given to support the direct costs associated with these contracted services, provided they are within reason and are critical to the success of the project (subject to application review). For example, small capital purchases related to software or hardware would be considered. However, inventory would not be eligible under this scenario.

During the application process, the Applicant will be asked to define their project’s business goals and proposed technical solutions by choosing one or more components from a set of categories. As shown below, these categories reflect the nature of the project being proposed. Some examples are provided under each to assist in understanding the type of activities that will be considered eligible during the application process. Please note that if your project concept is not represented below, the opportunity will be given to define your project’s unique characteristics for further consideration. *The categories and examples for each are:*

Web and Marketing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website Creation or Modernization • Website Content Development (Text, Audio, Video) • Mobile Website Optimization / Mobile Applications • Content Management System (CMS) Integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media Optimization (SMO) • Search Engine Optimization (SEO) • Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Integration
Sales	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Order Processing • Website Shopping Cart Integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Commerce • Electronic Payment Systems
Competitive Intelligence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Metrics • Analytics 	
Production and Internal Operations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems or Data Integration (i.e. Finance/Accounting Fulfillment, Shipping, Inventory Management, Project Management) 	

Non-Eligible Activities

On-going operational activities of the Applicant such as existing staff wages, administration costs, location costs, rolling stock, recurring subscription fees, travel and online advertising costs are considered *non-eligible*. Capital costs not directly associated with professional contracted services (subject to review) are *non-eligible* (e.g. inventory costs).

Maximum Assistance to SME

*Maximum financial assistance eligible under the program is **75% of approved Total Eligible Project Costs up to \$5,000 per SME**. If the project exceeds the maximum amount, the Applicant is responsible for covering the difference in cost.*

SME Contribution Requirement

*The SME is required to provide a **25% Project Cost Contribution to SSMIC amounting to 25% of approved Total Eligible Project Costs**, including any HST applicable. Amount is non-refundable and is payable upon receipt of invoice. Contribution must be received before any payment is advanced to contractors.*

Other Program Requirements

- The Applicant is required to undergo the SSMIC client intake process and submit a completed Client Intake Form (for new and inactive clients (not active more than 1 year) only).
- The Applicant is to submit a copy of their Articles of Incorporation or Business Name Registration, whichever is applicable.
- Applicants must meet with SSMIC staff before pursuing any formal quotes. The intent is to determine the Applicant's project needs so that it aligns with the business goals and needs. The Applicant will then have a clear vision of the project when pursuing quotes from vendors. SSMIC staff will be available as an advisory resource throughout the project lifecycle.
- A minimum of **two quotes** must be provided to SSMIC staff from proposed vendors being targeted prior to any project related work being started. Applicants are strongly encouraged to pursue quotes from Algoma based vendors.
- Approved BEAM projects must be completed within **four (4) months** from the approval date. An invoice for the project work must be submitted to SSMIC prior to this date for payment approval. Final payments will be provided only when SSMIC is satisfied that the Applicant has submitted all of the required documentation and satisfied all of the program requirements.
- Work undertaken prior to the date the application is received is not eligible for the program.
- *Reporting Requirements:*
 - The Applicant agrees to complete an exit survey to assist in measuring the initial project impact to your business and improve on the delivery of the program.
 - The Applicant agrees to provide a brief feedback/testimonial (250-400 words) on the benefits and results of the program upon completion of the Project for mandatory reporting to FedNor.
 - The Applicant agrees to complete a follow up survey (normally 6-12 months after project completion) to assist in further measuring the project impact to your business.
 - The Applicant further acknowledges that the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre has a five year obligation to track the applicant's commercialization efforts and results and the applicant agrees to provide SSMIC an update of its commercialization efforts and results for mandatory reporting (upon request) to FedNor which will include applicant's annual revenues, job creation, and other related information as required.

Program Application Date

The program is now open for submission and we process applications on first come, first served basis.

Contact Information

For further information, please contact:

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