

Government grants and assistance

Starting a business requires capital, so it makes sense to benefit from grants and incentives whenever you can. With financial assistance from the government, not only can your business achieve a successful launch, but in terms of later growth, you can develop new products, become more energy efficient and increase your workforce.

Mostly, this type of funding comes in the form of grants. The Canadian government recognizes the importance of small businesses in creating a strong and inclusive economy for all. To help your business succeed, they have created programs to supply tax breaks, wage subsidies or loan guarantees that advance their priorities from both policy and economic points of view.

Qualifying

Funding is what most small business owners are looking for when they consider a grant – which is different than a loan because it doesn't have to be paid back. However, government grants do come with provisions that require you as the business owner to contribute. Most often this means putting in your own money alongside government money (10% to 50% is standard).

For good reason, the government wants to invest in businesses that will employ more people. If your business is one that's going to create jobs, it'll be viewed more favourably when it's considered for government funding. For example, the [Northern Business Opportunity Program](#) in Ontario specifically states that "The proposed new business will operate on a full-time basis and result in job creation in Northern Ontario."

How specific are the requirements?

The Government of Canada grants money to small businesses in industries they want to develop. They're generally only available if your business is in a particular place and a certain industry. If your business falls into one of the categories, you've got a good chance of qualifying for a grant or assistance.

For example, the [Centre of Excellence in Next Generation Networks](#) (CENGN) offers support for businesses that are specifically involved in technology and innovation.

Are there any general small business grants?

Yes, there is financial assistance available through government programs. You'll still have to make some kind of contribution to demonstrate your commitment, but there are programs that offer not just funding, but support, training and mentoring. Some of the most popular are:

★ [Self-employment programs](#)

Not only will you receive income support while you're planning and setting up your business, but you'll get support in other areas as well, such as creating your business plan and calculating your costs.

★ [Aboriginal Business and Entrepreneurship Development](#)

If you are Aboriginal or have a majority-owned Aboriginal business, you can apply for up to \$99,999 to help you start, develop and grow your business.

★ [Canada Book Fund](#)

This grant is aimed at Canadian publishers who are specifically looking to publish works by Canadian authors.

These are just some of the programs available. For a full list of [grants, contributions and financial assistance](#), see the Canada Business Network website. There are programs that apply to businesses in all provinces and territories, and others that apply only to businesses in your region.

Exporting assistance

International trade is one area the government is especially keen to support. If you're thinking about exporting, there are a range of options available to help boost your working capital, such as:

- ★ **CanExport program**

You could get up to \$99,999 to reimburse up to 50% of eligible expenses to promote your business in new international markets.

- ★ **Small Business Development Program**

If you wish to start or grow your export activities in Nova Scotia, you may be eligible for a cost-share

rebate of up to 50% of your project costs, to a maximum incentive of \$15,000.

- ★ **Soft Landing Program**

If your business is IT-related, you could be eligible for reimbursements of up to \$4,000 towards transportation and accommodation costs and up to three months of desk space at a co-working location, accelerator or incubator.

The Canada Business Network website has a [full list of export financing options](#).

Summary

As you can see, it's worth doing your due diligence when it comes to government assistance because you should find out if you'll qualify for at least some of it. And that's free money – a great asset when you're starting out.

Not only that, but many of the programs that offer financial assistance also provide business advice, which is well worth taking advantage of, particularly when you're just starting out.

