

The Business Advisory Services Funding Program is a temporary funding initiative available to Saskatchewan exporters to assist in procuring specialized business advisory services that will support the advancement of their market diversification initiatives. This funding may include, but is not limited to, accessing services such as strategic planning, technology or digital transformation, human resources (HR), financial, and/or operational efficiencies.

Funding assistance is provided at 50% of eligible third party consulting costs to a maximum reimbursement of \$5,000.00 CAD per approved application per fiscal year. Eligible projects must take place between April 1, 2026 and March 31, 2028.

Eligibility Requirements:

Applicants must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be a Saskatchewan based company offering an exportable product or service.
- Be in full compliance with all applicable government laws and regulations.
- Be an incorporated business, partnership or proprietorship registered federally or provincially and operating in Saskatchewan for a minimum of two years. Applicants may be required to provide proof of incorporation or supporting documentation.
- Have minimum annual sales of \$25,000.

Eligible Costs:

Eligible costs include fees for services provided by a consultant or external service provider, subject to the following conditions:

- The consultant must be an independent contractor, unaffiliated with the applicant company. All transactions must be conducted at arm's-length and at fair market value. Expenses will be deemed ineligible where an employer-employee relationship or affiliation exists.
- The consultant must possess specialized expertise or training not otherwise available within the applicant organization and must not be an employee or representative conducting business on the applicant's behalf.
- Applicants must provide evidence of the work performed, such as contracts, scopes of work, deliverables, and proof of payment.
- The consultant must be performing work related to Saskatchewan operations.
- Applicants must clearly describe the consultant's work and demonstrate how it will directly support expansion into new markets.
- Retainer fees and monthly installment arrangements are not eligible.
- Consultant travel and per diem costs are not eligible and must be excluded from reimbursement claims.
- Consultant fees must be charged and claimed within the approved project term. Failure to demonstrate that work was completed in accordance with the contracted deliverables and timelines may result in the claim being deemed ineligible.
- Each application may include only one consultant or service provider.
- Only competed applications will be assessed.
- Applications are reviewed and approved based on available funding.
- Submission of a completed application does not guarantee funding.
- Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis, subject to funding availability.
- This temporary program ends on March 31, 2028, all projects must be completed by March 1, 2028.

Ineligible Consulting Activities/Expenses:

Ineligible consulting activities include but are not limited to:

- Website upgrades
- External staff training courses
- Consulting contracts that exceed 12 months
- Outsourced operational duties

Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Operational expenses and staff wages
- Management or staff travel and per diem costs
- Consultant administration or management fees
- Fees for consultants outside of Canada unless it is demonstrated that the service is not available in Canada
- Meeting expenses (e.g., equipment rental, refreshments)
- Purchase of equipment or tools
- In-kind volunteer labour or donated services or materials

STEP reserves the right to determine the eligibility of expenses.

Reimbursement Procedure:

- All funding is provided on a reimbursement basis for eligible costs incurred. Funding advances are not available.
- To receive reimbursement, applicants must submit the following within 21 days of project completion:
 - Detailed invoices and receipts with clear proof of payments for consulting services.
 - A complete project report and program evaluation form (available from the program administrator).
- Applicants must be prepared to provide evidence of project deliverables (e.g., business plans, studies, reports, documented procedures, certificates) for quality assurance purposes. All materials will remain confidential.
- Upon receipt of complete documentation, reimbursement will be issued by EFT within four weeks in Canadian dollars.
- Payments will be made to the company or legal entity, not to individuals.
- Failure to meet program conditions or timelines will result in default, loss of eligibility and forfeiture of reimbursement.

Funding Stacking Restrictions

Applicants may not use other provincial or Canadian government funding (Federal, Provincial, or Municipal) to cover the same costs submitted under this application.

For additional information, please contact stepfunding@sasktrade.sk.ca.