

Business Technology Improvement Fund



Business Technology Improvement Fund (BTIF) Program Description

The Algoma region has provided a wealth of natural resources for the larger industry-based companies found in Northern Ontario. Algoma's small to medium-size enterprises (SMEs) have also contributed to the overall economy of the region. However, with the proliferation of broadband connectivity, the need for Algoma's SMEs to truly capitalize on broadband connectivity they will have to enhance business growth through adoption of digital technology and develop innovative technology solutions.

With the assistance of FedNor, Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) is offering the Business Technology Improvement Fund (BTIF), which aims to assist SMEs in digital technology adoption, enhancement and implementation. The key objective of this program is to further accelerate growth of the SME's business, while making them more modernized and competitive in today's global digital marketplace.

SSMIC's role within the BTIF program is to advise and facilitate the SME during the selection and adoption of technology solutions to ensure their business goals are met. This will involve working with eligible businesses to help define its goals, recommend courses of action, and implement solutions to enhance the business's competitive advantage.

SSMIC's focus during this process will be as the SME's initial advisory resource for the application and advocate for the project's success.

Eligibility

The BTIF program is open to Algoma district SMEs* looking to enhance its business by adopting digital solutions.

Digital Solutions can be categorized in several areas such as (but not limited to):

- + E-business enabling technologies
- + Business operation software,
- + Design/integration,
- + Hardware.

Some specific eligible activities are (but not limited to):

- + E-business enabling technologies and added functionalities that can provide competitive edge to SMEs
- + *E-commerce integration,*
- + *Search engine optimization/marketing,*
- + *CRM/ERP software integration,*
- + *Custom software development,*
- + *One-time or subscription-based software/service costs,*
- + *Hardware,*
- + *Technical assessments and consultations.*

SSMIC encourages the use of an Algoma district service provider(s) to implement a project's requirements.

***Eligible SMEs under the program may include, but are not limited to, the following industry sector categories:**

Advanced Manufacturing; Agri-Food; Health/Biosciences; Clean Technology; Digital; Tourism; Resources.

Please contact SSMIC for more information on possible eligible projects

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

- ✚ Operating as For-Profit (registered sole proprietor, partnership, or corporation) within the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre service area (Algoma)
- ✚ Businesses must be in operations for a minimum of **one** year.
- ✚ Established seasonal businesses **are** eligible

- ✚ NOTE: Not-for-profit organizations **are NOT** eligible.

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

- ✚ Funding availability under the BTIF program.
- ✚ Three years has passed since the completion date of the original BTIF funded project.
- ✚ If applying within three years of the completion of the original BTIF funded project, a business may potentially receive funding if the original project received funding below the \$25,000.00 funding cap. The new project is potentially eligible for funding of up to a maximum of \$25,000.00 combined with the funding provided from the previous project.

Example: If my business received funding from the BTIF in 2019 which totaled \$20,000.00 and I am applying for BTIF for a project in 2021, my business is potentially eligible for funding of up to a maximum of \$5,000.00, totaling \$25,000.00.

Eligible Activities

The primary intent of the program is to support professional contracted services or direct costs related to developing and implementing technology solutions. 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 that focus on these business objectives:

- ✚ Enhancing Business Processes,
- ✚ Service Excellence,
- ✚ Optimizing Management Services,
- ✚ Human Capital Development,
- ✚ Expanding/hiring new staff

Some of the types of eligible examples that meet the above objectives are noted in the chart below.

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.

Software	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Accounting & Financial Management ✓ Customer Relationship Management (CRM) ✓ HR Management Software ✓ Project Management Software ✓ Sales ✓ Customized Software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ eCommerce ✓ Information Management & Collaboration ✓ Enterprise Resource Management ✓ Social Media Management ✓ Supply Chain management Systems
Professional Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implementation services including project management, data conversion/cleansing and integration services ✓ Training (software specific) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Social Media Optimization (SMO) ✓ Search Engine Optimization (SEO) ✓ Data Analytics and Integration
Capital Purchases	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Initial project subscription-based software/service costs ✓ Hardware (i.e. Enterprise software and services, Software specific to a manufacturing process, Servers to enhance or increase competitiveness, Computer Terminal and Peripherals specific to software applications or manufacturing processes, 3d printer, etc.) 	

Ineligible Activities

On-going operational activities of the Applicant such as:

- ✚ Staff wages,
- ✚ Administration costs,
- ✚ Location costs,
- ✚ Rolling stock,
- ✚ Recurring subscription fees, (not specifically tied to the initial project start-up) travel,
- ✚ Online advertising costs.

These examples are considered *non-eligible*.

Capital costs not directly associated with professional contracted services (subject to review) are *ineligible* (e.g. inventory costs).

Please contact SSMIC for more information on possible ineligible projects

Maximum Assistance to SME

Maximum financial assistance eligible under the program is **50% of approved Total Eligible Project Costs up to \$25,000 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 50% Project Cost Contribution to SSMIC amounting to 50% 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 approved project 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 BTIF projects must be completed within **four (4) months (or approved project time)** 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 the required documentation and satisfied all 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 improvement as required.

Program Application

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

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