

GOVERNMENT FUNDING CHECKLIST

Accessing government **grants**, government **loans** and **funding**, has never been easier. Get your small business ready with the below **key points**.

Your Business Plan

- ☐ Is your idea thought out?
- ☐ Know your audience/market?
- ☐ Have you done your research?
- ☐ Do you have your financials?
- ☐ Growth and Marketing Plan?
- ☐ Long-term goals?

Funding Needs

- ☐ Do you truly need funding?
- ☐ What do you need it for?
- ☐ How much do you need?
- ☐ Can you back it up?
- ☐ Do you have a minimum?
- ☐ Does your plan explain?

Funding Search

- ☐ Is your business plan ready?
- ☐ Be open to all funding options
- ☐ Local, Provincial & Federal
- ☐ Include a breakdown of needs
- ☐ Think 3-6 months first
- ☐ Verify criteria & deadlines

Applications

- ☐ Read full application first
- ☐ Do you meet the requirements?
- ☐ Include your plan & financials
- ☐ Apply on time
- ☐ Follow up to confirm submission
- ☐ Follow up bi-weekly

Bonus Tip

Get expert help to complete your plan, and financials, to find options and to help you apply for funding.

Why? Over 80% of denied applications are due to business plan, or application mistakes. **These can be avoided!**

Your Business Plan:

Your business plan is one of the most crucial documents you **must have** when applying for government funding options. Without a properly developed business plan, your government funding applications will quickly be denied.

Is your idea thought out?

To apply for government funding, you must have a solid business idea; one that you have given some thought to and can truly impress a funding agency with.

Know your audience/market?

In order to compile a proper business plan, you must know about who you are targeting; more specifically, who is your audience, where is your market, and be able to explain within your plan.

Have you done your research?

If your goal is to apply for government funding, your business plan must impress. To do so, it should be evident that you have done the needed research into your business idea, in order to complete your ultimate pitch for the funding.

Do you have your financials?

When starting a business and are considering funding, you must have financial statements ready to share. These can be projections or estimates, hopefully based on your research. These financials will be used along your business plan to determine specifics of your funding ask.

Growth and Marketing Plan?

To solidify your business plan and your funding ask, most funding agencies will look at your business plan's growth strategy and marketing plan. This is done to determine the future outlook of the business and potential success if you are approved the funds.

Long-term goals?

Just like with any investment, government funding agencies want to know that the money they are investing into your business will generate some sort of return. Be it simply profit for your business, additional income tax generated, jobs created..etc, to ensure you have a solid business plan, outline your long-term goals of your business, keeping in mind the required funding.

Your Funding Needs:

Obtaining funding for your small business requires some careful thinking, as improper use of such funding can be the difference between the success and failure of a business. To ensure your success with government funding specifically, the below should be considered.

Do you truly need funding?

Extra money is nice to have when starting or expanding, but not every business truly needs the cash influx. Government funding can come in many forms, often taxable as income, or repayable as loan interest, which can impact your bottom line. If funding is not needed and you don't need to ask for 3rd party funding, it is best to be avoided.

What do you need it for?

Government funding exists for many different startup or expansion costs that a business may have. To truly determine your requirements for any type of funding, you have to review your financial statements and see where you fall short. Anything you are unable to cover on your own, or need assistance with, can be turned into a funding requirement for your business.

Example: *Startup costs; costs of equipment purchase; supplies/inventory, marketing costs, website development costs, wage support, training costs, renovation costs, R&D..etc*

How much do you need?

If you have carefully considered your financial statements and determined your short-falls, you may need to have the extra funds. But how much? Generally speaking, it is recommended to ask only for what you need to cover the required costs; or the necessary costs to keep you going.

Keep in mind that government funding agencies all have their minimums and maximum amounts, which you should be aware of before applications are submitted.

Can you back it up?

At the time of applications, no matter how much you ask for, the funding agencies may ask you to explain your funding ask amount - or more likely, to provide invoices, work-orders, or statements where you will spend the money. Not having this ready, may impact your chances of success.

Do you have a minimum?

While it would be nice to obtain as much funding as possible, especially if free money, it is a good idea to go into a funding application acknowledging your minimum needed. The "minimum", means the amount of money that you must have in order to move ahead, not necessarily the amount that would be "nice to have".

Does your plan explain?

With any application for funding, it is recommended that your business plan matches what you're asking for in terms of funding. If a funding agency is to review your plan to determine your likelihood of eligibility, will they see that you truly need this amount, for the outlined needs you have? If not, it is suggested to have your plan show and explain your funding needs - as well, explain the benefit you as a business will have if the asked-for funds are successfully obtained and approved.

The Funding Search:

Conducting a funding search for your small business, one that must turn successful in order for your business to startup, or stay afloat, you must be proactive and consider more than you are accustomed to. The funding search stage can be fruitful if you remain open.

Is your business plan ready?

Prior to starting any funding search, you must be ready to act once a program is found. As programs change so often, being ready is a must. With that in mind, your business plan is the key document that you will need in order to take the first steps into funding success.

Are you open to all funding options?

When it comes to government funding, there are many different program options and program types to consider. In order to be successful, it is recommended to be open to all forms of funding.

Forms of funding via Canadian government sources:

- 1. Government Grants (one time, renewable, partial contributions)*
- 2. Government Loans (no interest, low interest, conditionally repayable)*
- 3. Tax Breaks and Credits*

Consider all Local, Provincial and Federal options

The above mentioned funding options can come from a number of sources, including your local government office, the provincial level governments, or the federal government of Canada. Being open to all funding types, from all sources, will greatly increase your chances of getting funded.

Pro Tip: *80% of government funding seekers only look at local government funding options and miss out on hundreds of available provincial, inter-provincial and federally funding options.*

Include a breakdown of your funding needs

Since there are hundreds of different funding options, the goal that the agencies have, always focus on specific goals. These goals often start with funneling money towards a certain need in the industry. By providing a breakdown of what you need money for within your business, you may be able to take advantage of multiple funding options to cover all of your requirements.

Think 3-6 months first

Applying and getting funding should not be seen as a once in a life time experience; instead, you may apply as many times as you need the support. With that in mind, it is ideally recommended to apply for funding based on what your needs are initially, which cover your first 3-6 months of business. Any money needed thereafter, you can revisit once again.

Verify the application criteria and deadlines

Lastly, once you've gone through the process and found the proper funding options for your business, before you start the application, it is recommended to review the application details in full; are you eligible, do you meet the criteria, do you fit the conditions, are you able to apply within the given time-frame?

If yes, move forward!

The Applications:

Application time is a stressful time as often if you are seeking funding, you must truly need it; and government funding applications simply seem scary - but if you take your time, keep your eye on the fine details, it's quite simple. Follow the below steps to ensure your application success!

Read full applications first:

*Prior to starting to complete the applications, take a moment and skim through the information asked for; get it all ready; and start the process. Avoid skipping any steps and be sure to complete every question in full detail. **Watch for tips and recommendations within the application.***

Do you meet the requirements:

As you go through the application, you may notice that the applications ask for additional details; which are considered requirements to apply. These can range from simple points like including your business number, to include your business plan, financials, a pitch deck presentation, to as much as asking for your bank statements, invoices..etc

Do not skip these requirements. If they are asked for, they are a must.

Include your Plan & Financials

With 90% of government funding applications, you will be required to include your formal business plan and financial statements. Just as above, as this is a requirement, be sure to include it. It is recommended to include your business plan document, often in a Word file, PDF, or similar; something that can easily be opened. Avoid having password protected documents. With regards to your financials, PDF's, Excel Files, or similar are often most recommended.

Avoid sending in multiple files; multiple variations; or confusing documentations that are not asked for. Only provide what the applications ask for.

Apply on Time

Funding program deadlines are in place in order for the program to hand out the needed funds to the applicants on time. If a deadline is announced, be sure to submit your application on time, prior to the deadline. In most cases, you should give yourself at least 7 days before the deadline to apply. Applying past the deadline, your application in most cases will not be considered.

Follow up to confirm submission

After you have successfully completed your submission to a funding program, it is on you to confirm your submission has been successfully sent. You may follow up with the funding agency to review that your application, business plan, financial documents, or any support documentation has been received. In most cases, if this is not done and something is missing, an agency will likely not accept you, or sadly, will not notify you - risking your acceptance.

Follow up bi-weekly

Funding applications can at times take 2-6 weeks to be reviewed - more time should be allocated to this if there are deadlines that are in the future. As a funding applicant, it is recommended to allow at least 2 weeks for the review process to be completed; however, past the initial 2 weeks of your application submission, it is good to follow up bi-weekly to verify your standings.