



Step Forward Entrepreneurs Program

Program Objective

The primary objective of the Step Forward Entrepreneurs Program (SFEP) is to enhance innovation and commercialization for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Innovation is defined as a new or refreshed process, product or service that creates value (economically) for a start-up, individual entrepreneur, existing organization or company in transition. This support could be applicable, but not limited to, the following examples of contracted expertise, services or direct costs:

1. Sales and Marketing
 - a. Trade show exhibiting
 - b. Travel expenses
 - c. Market research
 - d. Development of promotional materials
2. Product Development
 - a. Market/Product Research or Market-entry Fees
 - b. Training, Certifications or Licenses
 - c. Software development assistance (mobile applications, programs or platforms)
3. Business Development
 - a. Third party management support or training
 - b. Lean manufacturing and productivity studies
 - c. Innovation process audits / Business capacity development
 - d. IP assessment / protection, planning and strategy assistance / product licensing
 - e. Feasibility studies
 - f. Export development
 - g. Development of business, sales and marketing plans and / or international strategies (global markets)

Or other business growth expertise or services the SME requires

Up to \$5,000 in assistance may be provided towards approved costs in the above categories

Eligibility

The innovative client must be a for-profit entity, registered as a sole proprietor, partnership, or corporation located in the District of Nipissing, Timiskaming, Parry Sound or Muskoka looking to develop their ability to advance the growth of their business along the commercialization path as defined by the program objectives. The program is not intended to support, nor is applicable to, businesses operating as distributors or re-sellers and priority will be given to entrepreneurs and SMEs who demonstrate the potential to create jobs and grow the economy. Note that SMEs would not receive support for existing staff wages or administrative costs, website development, location costs or rolling stock. Individual applications are subject to a competitive review process.

Contributory Requirement

Projects are supported up to 85% of eligible costs, before tax. For approved projects in the amount of \$5,000, a minimum project cost of \$5,900, prior to taxes, is required.

Applicants will be required to register as an IION client and fill out occasional surveys as a reporting requirement for up to five years. This is to properly capture aggregate economic data. Failure to fill out annual surveys and the SFEP survey could result in making the Applicant ineligible for future IION funding programs. IION will maintain the confidentiality of collected data, meaning it will only be used in terms of total results from all projects, and no particular SME is ever personally identified.

For more information please contact Matthew at:

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