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The Experts' FORUM

Featured Article:

RESOURCEFULNESS: AN IMPORTANT TOOL

by the Canadian Dairy Commission



Resourcefulness: An Important Tool

Innovate, invest, upgrade

This is what dairy processors and finished food product manufacturers are being told they need to do to keep up in today's marketplace. But how can a company accomplish any of that when times are tough and money is tight? Multinationals and SMEs alike are aware that it takes innovative processes, products and modern equipment to stay in the game, but doing so requires significant capital investment that many companies just can't afford. So what can companies do to remain competitive?



Other people's money

A quick search on Google with a few keywords such as "agriculture", "grants", "interest free loans", will yield a dozen or more web sites listing hundreds of federal and provincial programs with millions of dollars in funding. There is no shortage of programs and funding available for food processors, whether it is to manufacture new products, create new and efficient processes, or purchase new technology. From research, to development, to commercialization, there are programs available to assist companies every step of the way.

Challenges

The programs exist, the money is available, but the tricky part is finding the time to access and review all the documents and forms related to each. Time is definitely a must in order to search out, find, read through and understand the dozens of programs that are available. And of course, not every program will be suited to the company's particular needs. So sifting through eligibility criteria, funding limits and application deadlines can also be challenging.

Filling in application forms and writing proposals adds to that challenge. Despite the amount of programs and funding currently available, organizations are fairly judicious about what projects can qualify and how much money will be allocated. A lot of work must be done and a fair amount of detail must be provided to improve a company's chances of being approved.

Steps to finding the right funding

With the hundreds of funding programs available, it is important to find the ones that are a good match for a company's immediate and future needs. As well, each program has specific eligibility criteria and parameters that may not always be suitable for all companies. Taking the time to properly research available grants and funding can result in hundreds of thousands of dollars of outside assistance to help a company with its primary goal which is to compete for the future and remain profitable.

SSRAP Approach

Step 1 → Step 2 → Step 3 → Step 4

Search

Whether by internet or by way of a compiled list (\$) of federal and provincial funding programs, a thorough search of available programs and funding is an important first step.

Sort

With the initial search complete, the next step is to sort through the various programs and determine which ones are best suited for the company. Every program has its own eligibility criteria, list of eligible activities and conditions associated with the funding. It is important to choose only the programs that will benefit a company's needs and intent.

Review

Once a list of suitable funding programs is established, it is now time to read and understand the programs (i.e. application procedures, company's responsibilities, conditions, etc).

This is also the time to ask questions. Most programs provide contact information and program agents who are more than happy to help.

Apply

Armed with a list of funding programs and an understanding of each one, it is now time to apply.

Providing as much detail as possible and supplying all the information requested will prevent delaying the application and ultimately, may result in receiving the funding if eligible.

Options for finding funding

The search for programs and the application procedures can be complex and time-consuming. It can often be overwhelming and difficult to know how best to proceed with a particular application. Some companies can spare the time and resources to research and find suitable programs and funding. Some even have staff dedicated to such tasks. Others, however, simply do not have the resources and must either dedicate someone from within or acquire the resources by hiring a new staff member or a consultant to perform the task. Either way, there are advantages and disadvantages to each option.

1. **Do-it-Yourself (DIY):** If a company can spare the time and resources, a few days worth of internet searching and phone calls can result in a great return. This is a very hands-on approach and allows the company to become very knowledgeable about the programs and choose the ones that really suit the company's needs. On the other hand, depending on how many programs a company applies to, it can be a very time consuming and overwhelming process.

For those companies that will be taking the DIY route, various institutions across the country offer workshops on preparing and writing proposals for funding programs. These workshops, which are usually moderately priced, offer an opportunity to learn about researching and identifying potential funding programs, understanding the conditions and eligibility criteria of the programs, developing a focused proposal and finally, presenting the final proposal in a professional manner. (See **Appendix A** on page 6 for a list of some of the organizations offering workshops.)

2. **Hire a Student:** Hiring a university business or marketing student through a summer student hiring initiative is an economical alternative to using company resources. Many university students have the training and energy to sift through all of the information available which allows the company

employees to remain focused on their business. That being said, because of studies, students may only be available for a few months in the summer to provide this service, so plan accordingly. Two months should be more than enough time to get the right information and allow for the initial application process to be prepared and submitted before the student heads back to campus.

3. **Consultant/Consulting Firm:**

Many private firms and individuals specialize in searching for funding and grant opportunities for companies and can do everything from searching to writing and submitting proposals on a company's behalf. Some charge a percentage of the funds collected, others charge a set fee based on what particular services are required. Some private consultants may already have compiled and updated a list of programs and funding available which make the process a little quicker. As well, they have the experience necessary to fill out applications and write proposals that may increase the success of an application being approved.

This option, like a university student, allows a company to remain focused on its core activities which is to manufacture and sell products. A consultant may cost quite a bit more than a university student, but in the end, it can save a company valuable resources and time as a result of their expert training and previous related experience.

The Canadian Dairy Commission (CDC) can help!

Besides offering its own funding program (CDC Matching Investment Fund), the CDC has a small list of funding and programs available to food manufactures on its MILKingredients.ca web site that will make the search a little easier.

The *R&D and Support Services* section of MILKingredients.ca provides summary information on dozens of services provided by

the Canadian Government and by provincial and private organizations in such areas as agriculture, consulting, and financing.

As well, the CDC's Dairy Marketing Program team has spent a lot of time researching and getting to know some of the many programs available and would be happy to help get a search started.

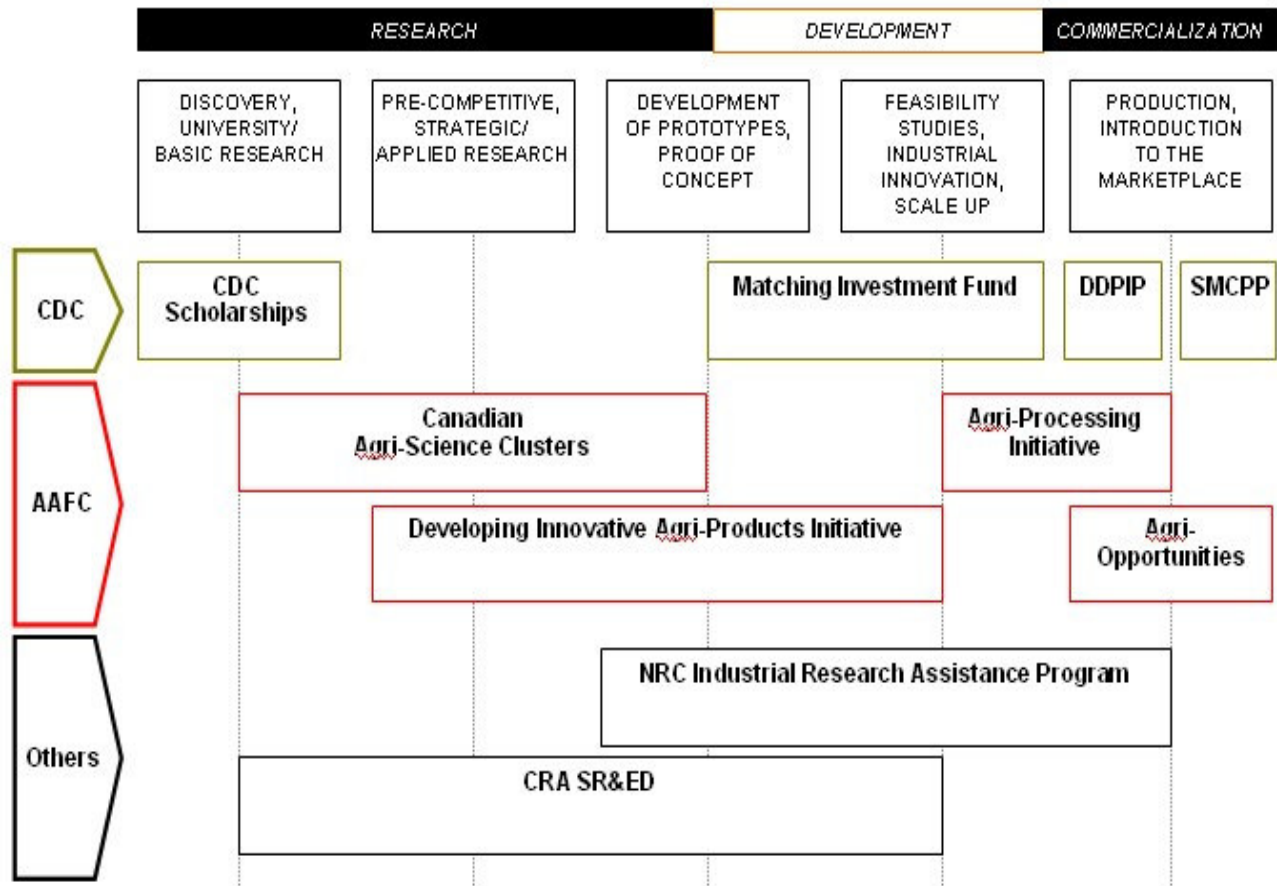
Below is a table with a few of the programs listed in the *R&D and Support Services* section of MILKingredients.ca and is for information purposes only. Please contact the programs directly for details and/or clarification. For more programs and services, please visit the *R&D and Support Services* section of MILKingredients.ca.

Organization	Description	Link
Canada Business	Canada Business' goal is to provide businesses with the resources they need to grow and prosper, including a wide range of information on government services, programs and regulations.	Canada Business has a "Government grants, loans and financing" search function that allows you to choose from a variety of search options so companies can find the right program for their needs. Find financing programs for your business: http://www.canadabusiness.ca/eng/search/sof/
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC)	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada offers a wide range of programs and services to encourage and sustain the agricultural and agri-food industry in Canada.	For information on what program might apply to your business visit: http://www4.agr.gc.ca/AAFC-AAC/displayafficher.do?id=1204137480722&lang=eng
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)	OMAFRA has pulled together some of the key programs that may be of interest to companies. The list includes federal, provincial and municipal programs as well as some programs offered by utilities providers. Contact information is included for each of the programs.	http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/industry/funding-prog-index.htm
Ministère d'Agriculture Pêcheries et alimentation du Québec (MAPAQ)	The "Ministère d'Agriculture Pêcheries et alimentation du Québec" offers a multitude of learning, support and funding programs.	For more information, visit: http://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/md/Programmes/Pages/Programmes.aspx
Government of New Brunswick	Business Development Program A Canada / New Brunswick Growing Forward initiative to: increase the knowledge and application of business management skills and practices in the New Brunswick agriculture and agri-food industry to enable businesses to be more profitable; assist participants evaluate their current business situation and to undertake formal business planning and training to address their needs; and maximize the agriculture industry's ability to respond and adapt to changes in their business environment.	For more information: http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/services_renderer.200941.html

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)	<p>The goal of the BDP is to help set up, expand and modernize small business by offering financing in the form of interest-free, unsecured, repayable contributions.</p>	www.acoa.ca/e/financial/business.shtml
National Research Council of Canada (NRC)	<p>Industrial Research Assistance Plan (IRAP): IRAP's mandate is to help companies develop and adapt industrial technologies to impel their productivity, profitability and international competitiveness.</p> <p>Professionals involved in IRAP have experience in a wide range of industries including food processing, bio-technology and agriculture. Client's technical needs are met by identifying opportunities, accessing technical and financial resources, and solving production problems.</p>	<p>For more information, refer to IRAP's web page at: http://www.nrc.ca/irap/</p>
Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)	<p>Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) This program offers tax incentives to Canadian businesses. Geared toward small and start-up companies, the SR&ED program provides financial assistance through investment tax credits to individuals and corporations developing or improving technological products or processes. Companies that qualify can deduct 100% of the capital SR&ED expenses for the year, or carry them forward indefinitely if not claimed in the current year.</p> <p>The federal government also offers the Preclaim Project Review (PCPR) service to make the SR&ED Program more accessible. This service helps companies determine which research and development projects are eligible and obtain valuable guidance on how to substantiate their SR&ED claims. The PCPR is available at the request of the company and is not required for participating in the SR&ED Program.</p>	www.cra-arc.gc.ca/sred/
Government of Alberta – Agriculture and Rural Development	<p>Business Opportunity Grant The <i>Business Opportunity Grant</i> program is designed to provide assistance to Alberta primary agriculture producers, and small agri-business organizations in accessing one-to-one expertise that will contribute to helping their business adapt to the changing business environment. It is aimed at individuals and small business organizations that are looking to transform their operation to meet market and consumer demands. Contracting services such as, independent risk management consultants, advisory and business</p>	http://www.growingforward.alberta.ca/growingforward/program_BusinessOpportunityGrant.htm

opportunity analysis services that will contribute to making informed and calculated business decisions will be supported.

CDC MIF: Positioning



Appendix A

Below is a list of organizations offering workshops and courses on writing proposals for grants and funding programs. Please note that this is not an extensive list and that the Canadian Dairy Commission does not endorse any of these courses. The list below is for information purposes only. Your local business associations and Chambers of Commerce may also be able to provide information on workshops in your area.

Organization	Workshop Title	Link
British Columbia		
Simon Fraser University	<i>Grants and Proposals: Writing for Success</i>	http://www.sfu.ca/wp/gpws.htm
Applied Solutions and Consulting	<i>Grant Writing and Program Planning</i>	http://www.asc4solutions.com/ASCWorkshopsGrantWriting&ProgramPlanning.html
Saskatchewan		
Saskatchewan Literacy Network	<i>Proposal Writing Workshop</i>	http://www.nald.ca/library/learning/pww/proposalwriting-jan07.ppt
Manitoba		
Volunteer Manitoba	<i>Effective Proposal Writing</i>	www.volunteermanitoba.ca
Ontario		
Ryerson University	<i>Professional Grant Development Workshop</i>	http://granttrainingcenter.com/signup/219