
UPDATE

For Immediate Release
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March 17, 2021

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation

Online grant program expands to support more businesses

Updated on March 17, 2021

VICTORIA – In response to a high number of applications, the B.C. government is investing an additional \$30 million in the Launch Online Grant program.

The Launch Online Grant program provides up to \$7,500 to businesses to help build or expand an e-commerce site to reach more customers and to sustain and grow their business.

An online presence is integral for businesses that want to adapt their operations to better reach customers in their community, throughout B.C. and beyond. These changes will help approximately 4,000 more businesses market their products and services online.

“Many small businesses have had to change the way they operate as more and more people shifted to online purchasing during the pandemic. Our government has been there to help these businesses adapt,” said Premier John Horgan. “By expanding eligibility to our successful launch online program, more B.C. small businesses from the hardest hit sectors will have access to the tools they need to boost their online presence, grow their e-commerce capacity and become more resilient as we build toward a brighter future.”

The new funding is in addition to the February 2021 announcement of \$12 million to support 1,500 businesses to enhance or establish their online presence. Currently, over 3,500 businesses from around the province have applied, demonstrating the need for these supports.

Businesses in the hard-hit tourism sector, like tour operators or hotels, and businesses in the service industry, such as massage therapists, personal trainers or hair stylists, can now access the grants to build or improve their online booking systems.

As part of the eligibility enhancements, 30% of the grant funds will now be reserved for Black, Indigenous and people of colour-owned (BIPOC) businesses, as well as rural businesses. This is expanded from the original 25% of grant funds that were reserved for Indigenous and rural businesses.

“The Launch Online Grant program responds to the way the pandemic has changed the business world, and the strong demand shows we are filling an untapped need,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation. “In addition to expanding the program, we are reserving a portion of the funds for BIPOC businesses because our recovery must be inclusive, taking care to not leave people behind.”

As part of the program, successful applicants will work with local B.C. service providers to complete their online store. Through this model, the grant funding can be reinvested in B.C.-based marketing and technology companies to generate revenues for local companies and help

secure and grow jobs.

“The pandemic has impacted so many people throughout B.C., it has also disproportionately impacted people and communities of colour,” said Nerissa Allen, president, Black Business Association of BC. “I am pleased to see funding set aside for the Black, Indigenous and people of colour business community. This change, combined with opening the grant program to service-based businesses, will give business owners and entrepreneurs the opportunity to access funds that will help revive their business.”

The Launch Online Grant program is part of StrongerBC: BC’s Economic Recovery Plan. The plan focuses on a recovery that is innovative, sustainable and inclusive. It outlines the latest steps the Government of British Columbia is taking to help people, businesses and communities come out of COVID-19 stronger, without leaving people behind.

The program is administered by Alacrity Canada. Small and medium-sized businesses can apply online: www.launchonline.ca

Learn More:

For more information on the Launch Online Grant program, including the application process and eligibility, visit: www.launchonline.ca

For more information on StrongerBC, visit: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/>

For more information on Alacrity Canada, visit: <https://www.alacritycanada.com/>

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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Launch Online Grant program overview

The Launch Online Grant program is based on a first-come, first-served basis. The program will provide eligible business owners with up to \$7,500 to cover 75% of eligible expense to develop or enhance an e-commerce platform.

The program will run until Sept. 30, 2021, or until all funds are distributed.

Eligibility criteria for businesses include having:

- a goods and services tax number and paying taxes in B.C.;
- generated sales of more than \$30,000 in either 2019 or 2020, and;
- one to 149 employees (applications can be submitted by sole proprietors).

As part of the application, businesses are required to develop a grant proposal that indicates how they plan to use the funds.

Recipients of the Launch Online Grant can use the funding for a variety of online-related expenses, including cost to build the online shop or booking system, pictures, advertising costs, subscription costs of an e-commerce platform and training staff to manage the online shop or online booking system.

All service providers used to create or enhance the businesses online shop or online booking system must be based in B.C. and be registered to do business in B.C.

Based in Victoria, Alacrity is a non-profit organization that promotes technology entrepreneurship and facilitates regional investment.

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