Guidelines
Market Exploration Program UK

1. Program Objectives

The **Market Exploration Program UK** (the "Program") is a strategic market access initiative designed to support high-growth Atlantic Canadian ICT companies in cybersecurity, SaaS/enterprise software, and data analytics and AI as they explore, validate, and position their solutions within the United Kingdom's (UK) expanding innovation ecosystem.

The Program will:
- Build a comprehensive understanding of the UK digital ecosystem, including key stakeholders, buyer engagement strategies, and regulatory requirements
- Equip Atlantic Canadian companies to localize their offerings, ensuring product-market fit and the development of tailored, effective sales strategies
- Foster long-term trade relationships through relationship-driven market entry
- Unlock new export opportunities by delivering customized in-market support, strategic introductions, and guided navigation of the UK innovation ecosystem

This initiative supports the objectives of the ***Atlantic Trade and Investment Growth Strategy*** ***(ATIGS)*** *by increasing the number of Atlantic Canadian companies engaging in international business and fostering market diversification.*

2. Eligible Applicants

All applicants must:
1. Be a registered business in good standing in one of the four Atlantic provinces.
2. Have a differentiated and validated technology or product.
3. Have a proven product market fit with a defined target audience.
4. Demonstrate interest in exploring opportunities in the UK.
5. Have no outstanding legal actions or defaults under other financial assistance programs from provincial or federal agencies.
6. Be willing to commit the required participation fee and cover their own travel, accommodation, and per diem costs for the in-market component.
7. Have sufficient resources to target, visit and achieve growth in the UK market.

Ineligible applicants include:
- Non-export-ready companies
- Businesses not operating in or related to cybersecurity, SaaS/enterprise software, and data analytics and AI
- Publicly funded organizations and non-revenue-generating not-for-profits

3. Program Structure & Phases

The Program is delivered in **two phases**:

<u>Phase 1: Education and Preparation (Virtual)</u>
Duration: 4 weeks – October 2026
Participation fee: $150.00 + HST, per company
Activities:
The first session will be delivered jointly to all participating companies to provide a foundational understanding of the UK digital ecosystem and how it operates. Most subsequent sessions will also be delivered to the full cohort, covering topics relevant across cybersecurity, SaaS/enterprise software, and AI & data analytics, such as UK market dynamics, value proposition refinement, market entry strategies, procurement processes, and business culture.

Where topics require specialized expertise, such as cybersecurity regulations, sector-specific compliance requirements, or other technical considerations, separate breakout sessions will be delivered by sector-specific consultants. This approach ensures that all companies benefit from shared learning while also receiving tailored guidance on the unique requirements of their respective sectors.

This is a flexible opportunity, where companies may choose to participate in Phase 1 only—a virtual education and preparation component that offers market validation before committing to in-market activities—or continue to Phase 2, which includes in-market support and B2B meetings.

Companies that complete Phase 1 and demonstrate interest and readiness to move forward are invited to apply for Phase 2, where applicants are evaluated based on their capability and commitment to scaling in the UK.

<u>Phase 2: Market Entry (In-Market)</u>
Duration: November 2026 – February 2027
Participation fee: $2000.00 + HST, per approved/selected company
Activities:

- Work with a local UK consultant to co-develop a market entry scope of work.
- Ten (10) targeted B2B meetings per company (mix of virtual and in-person).
- Five days in total of in-market activities in the UK, specifically in Edinburgh, Scotland and Newcastle, England:
    - Meetings with trade commissioners, consultants, and strategic introductions to key industry stakeholders
    - Site visits
    - Pitch coaching (companies will have access to a consultant to help refine their sales pitch specifically for these regions)
    - Networking reception with live pitch opportunities

4. Eligible Costs

The Program covers:

- Third-party professional fees (consultants for program-delivered activities)
- Program-related event and workshop costs

- Branding, translation (if applicable), and digital assets for program delivery

Participants are responsible for:
- Airfare, accommodations, meals, and per diems
- Personal expenses and costs unrelated to the Program delivery

5. Program Criteria

Applications will be evaluated on:
- Interest in exploring opportunities in the UK market
- Potential for the technology to address needs/gaps in the UK
- Ability to participate fully in the program activities

6. Application Process and Timeline

1. **Application Submission:** Complete the application form by the stated deadline.
2. **Review & Selection:** Evaluated by program organizing committee.
3. **Phase 1 Acceptance:** Confirm participation and submit fee payment.
4. **Review & Selection for Phase 2:** Based on Phase 1 engagement and readiness.
5. **Phase 2 Acceptance:** Confirm participation and submit fee payment.

7. Application Process

To apply for the Program, companies must download, complete, and submit, via email, the **MEP UK Application Form** located in the sidebar under ***Related Documents*** to:

Judith Dardon, Export Development Executive
Invest Nova Scotia
judith.dardon@investnovascotia.ca

Once submitted, an e-mail notification will confirm receipt. Registration is not complete until you submit payment for Phase 1.

Applications for the Program must be received by **5:00 PM (ADT) on Wednesday, September 30, 2026**.

Applications received past the submission deadline will not be considered.

8. Payment Submission Process

To submit the mandatory Phase 1 Participation Fee*, click on the respective Eventbrite link below:

- **Nova Scotia Companies Only: Submit Payment**
- **Atlantic Canada Companies located in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, or Newfoundland & Labrador: Submit Payment**

**Companies that do not meet the minimum criteria will be notified via email and will be refunded the $150.00 + HST Phase 1 Participation Fee.*

**Companies that qualify for Phase 2 will receive a payment link.*

9. Application Requirements

Your application should clearly outline:
1. **Products and Services** – Brief overview of the technologies you offer.
2. **Market Readiness** – Any existing insights, activities, or questions related to the UK market.
3. **Team & Capabilities** – Key personnel, partners, and resources that will lead the market entry.
4. **Goals** – What you hope to learn or achieve through this market exploration.

10. Applicant Selection Process

Applicants will be assessed on:
- Meeting the eligibility requirements listed in Section 2.
- Differentiation and validation of their digital product, service, or technology.
- Demonstrated product-market fit and understanding of target audience.
- Interest in exploring opportunities in the UK market.
- Capacity and commitment to actively participate in program activities.

11. Applicant Commitments

By participating, companies agree to:
- Pay the participation fee for each phase (**Phase 1: $150.00 + HST and/or Phase 2: $2000.00 + HST**).
- Attend and actively participate in all virtual and in-market activities.
- Work closely with assigned consultants and Program staff.
- Cover their own travel, accommodation, and per diem costs for in-market activities.
- Complete all required surveys and post-program follow-ups.
- Represent Atlantic Canada professionally in all Program-related activities.

12. Program Timeline

Activity	Dates
Recruitment & Application Intake	September 2026
Phase 1 – Virtual	October 2026
Phase 2	November – February 2027
Phase 2 – In-Market	February 22 – 26, 2027

13. Deliverables & Reporting

Participants must:

- Attend all required sessions and meetings in both phases
- Complete post-program surveys and follow-up interviews
- Provide updates on business leads, partnerships, and market readiness outcomes

The Program will provide:

- Final consultant report with market insights and recommendations
- Consolidated program report for stakeholders

14. Terms & Compliance

- Funding provided by ATIGS and partner contributions will cover program-delivered costs only
- Participant fees are non-refundable
- Program activities, schedules, and content are subject to change
- All participants agree to be included in program publicity and reporting

15. Contact / Application Submission Information

For more information, please refer to the **Market Exploration Program UK FAQ** located in the sidebar under ***Related Documents*** or contact your provincial representative below:

Nova Scotia / Program Lead
Judith Dardon
Export Development Executive
Invest Nova Scotia
judith.dardon@investnovascotia.ca | 902.456.1533

Prince Edward Island
Shelby McDonald
Trade Officer, Global Trade Services
Innovation PEI – Province of Prince Edward Island
shelbymcdonald@gov.pe.ca | 902.213.0673

Newfoundland and Labrador
Patrick Foran
Provincial Trade Commissioner
patrickforan@gov.nl.ca | 709.729.1873

New Brunswick
Jeff Gordon-Johnson
Export Development Executive / Chargée du développement des exportations
Opportunities NB / Opportunités NB
jeff.gordon-johnson@onbcanada.ca | 506.230.1420

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) *(if applicable)*
Josée Ouellet
Economic Development Officer Strategic Growth – Trade & Export / Agent de développement économique Croissance stratégique – Trade &/ Commerce et exportation
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) / Agence de promotion économique du Canada atlantique (ACOA / APECA)
josee.ouellet@acoa-apeca.gc.ca | 506.260.9735

For complete details about the Program, visit www.investnovascotia.ca/MEPUK.