

Guidelines

Productivity & Innovation Voucher Program



1. Program Objective

The Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program supports small and medium-sized businesses to access the direct assistance they need to help make their business more productive and innovative. The purpose is to contribute to the development of a new product, service, or process while enhancing linkages between businesses and post-secondary academic institutions in Nova Scotia.

The Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program is a credit note, paid directly to the Academic Institution, based on two tiers.

- **Tier 1:** Vouchers of up to \$15,000 for eligible businesses that have not previously been awarded a voucher or are applying with a new project.
- **Tier 2:** Vouchers of up to \$25,000 for eligible businesses to build on previously completed work under a Tier 1 voucher.

Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program Vouchers are valid until March 15, 2024.

2. Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for the program the business must:

- be a Nova Scotia registered business in good standing (current registration on the *Registry of Joint Stock Companies*)
- have a permanent establishment in Nova Scotia.
- have most of its workforce currently residing in Nova Scotia (some exceptions may apply where it can be demonstrated that the economic benefit can be accrued to Nova Scotia). Contact the [Regional Business Development Advisor](#) in your area to discuss.
- have fewer than 100 employees at the time of application.
- have an export plan outlining the following:
 - The products or services you plan to market;
 - Your company's target market(s) and distribution channels with supporting research;
 - Challenges in the target market(s) (competition, cultural differences, import controls, intellectual property status, certifications, etc.) and how these will be overcome.
- If the company is pre-revenue, the company must clearly demonstrate the development of both a business plan and export plan. The application may be subject to additional review or additional information required.

A business' eligibility is at Invest Nova Scotia's sole discretion, based on the above-outlined criteria and information provided by the applicant.

Businesses not eligible for the program include:

- Franchisees
- Games of chance operations and bingo halls
- Personal service providers
- Real estate developers, agents or brokers
- Licenced liquor establishments whose primary business is alcohol sales (excepting production breweries, brew pubs, wineries, and distilleries)
- Distributors, agents, or traders, including retailers, except where value-added products or services are part of the deliverables or for the purpose of selling Nova Scotia products/services abroad
- Associations
- Professional service providers, except where the project represents a unique and/or strategic opportunity with potential economic benefit, incremental sales outside Nova Scotia, and/or job creation. Contact the [Regional Business Development Advisor](#) in your area to discuss
- Creative industries companies' activities which are eligible under the Creative Industries Fund
- Tourism operators
- Publicly funded organizations
- Non-revenue-generating not-for-profit organizations

3. Projects Assisted

The Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program is a credit note for businesses to access expertise and technical solutions from the province's post-secondary academic institutions. The project must clearly demonstrate the potential to contribute to the development of a new product, service, or process that will help a business become more innovative and productive.

Eligible projects include:

- Applied research;
- Engineering services;
- Prototyping;
- Product development, research and design;
- Market advice; and
- Field testing.

4. Eligible Service Providers

Academic institutions listed as Service Providers will be eligible for the Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program.

For a complete list of Service Providers, and areas of expertise identified by participating Service Providers, please refer to the [Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program](#) webpage.

The chosen researcher must be at arm's length from the business.

5. Program Criteria

Businesses must demonstrate how the project will help increase a business' productivity and innovation.

The goal of the project must result in at least one of the following outcomes:

- Increased productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness;
- Development and/or increased innovation of business' products, services, or processes;
- Improved capacity to provide products and/or services to markets outside of Nova Scotia.

The applicant's historical performance, together with the tie between its export plan and the project outcomes, will be used to assess a business' application.

Voucher decisions will be based upon the application demonstrating that the above criteria would be met. Project applications are subject to a competitive process and not all applications that meet these criteria may be approved.

6. Application Process

- Prior to submitting an application, applicants **must** contact their local [Regional Business Development Advisor](#)
- Applicants must complete and submit the online Application Form available at www.investnovascotia.ca/PIVP
- For an application to be considered complete, all the following **must be submitted prior to the deadline of May 31, 2023**:
 - Completed online Application Form, signed (all questions **must** be answered)
 - Service Provider Form must be completed and signed by the Service Provider and submitted with the online Application Form.
- Project commencement must be after the submission of a **completed application**. Only project costs incurred after the application date are eligible to be claimed. Any expenses incurred prior to approval are at the business' own risk.
- There is no application fee for this Program.

7. Application Intake

Applications for the Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program will be accepted from **May 2, 2023 until May 31, 2023, by 5:00 p.m. ADT.**

8. Terms of Voucher

- All projects must be completed, and claims submitted before March 15, 2024.
- Productivity and Innovation Vouchers issued in 2023 are valid until March 15, 2024;
- Past Tier 1 voucher recipients are eligible to apply for a second Tier 1 voucher. The second Tier 1 voucher application must be a different project than the previously awarded Tier 1 voucher;

- Tier 2 vouchers are limited to one per Tier 1 project;
- A business may have only one active voucher at a time;
- Businesses are eligible to apply for a Tier 1 voucher and Tier 2 voucher in the same fiscal year;
- A company is only eligible for two Tier 1 Vouchers
 - Each of these vouchers may lead to a Tier 2 voucher.
 - If the Company completes one Tier 1 voucher and then initiates another Tier 1 voucher, the Company then forfeits their right to the first project's Tier 2 funding;
- Vouchers are non-transferable and will be voided if reproduced, transferred, or re-assigned;
- Vouchers can only be used to obtain services from the list of eligible Service Providers;
- Businesses are to select a provider and service that best fits their needs. Applicants must discuss their project with an eligible Service Provider and lead researcher prior to submitting an application;
- The voucher is only payable against eligible costs as outlined in Section III of the Application Form;
- A voucher may be revoked on the basis of information discovered after the issuance of the voucher; and
- Limited equipment purchase is permitted with vouchers. Applications that outline special equipment needs will need to provide details on how the equipment relates to the project.

9. Voucher Compliance and Payment

The Service Provider must submit deliverables for project completion within 60 days of project completion. For a project completed within 60 days prior to March 15, 2024, the deliverables must be received by Invest Nova Scotia no later than March 15, 2024. Failure to meet these timelines could result in project claim being denied.

Deliverables will include the following:

- Project Completion Report detailing work completed by the Service Provider and outcomes aligned to the project; and
- Claim Form submitted by the Service Provider to Invest Nova Scotia.

10. Other Pertinent Information

A) Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Information collected in connection with this program is subject to, and will be created in accordance with, the [Nova Scotia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#).

B) Public Announcements and Disclosure of Information

Approved applicants must consent to:

- Participate in any public announcement or public ceremony relating to the awarding of a Productivity and Innovation Voucher to the business and related accomplishments, at a mutually agreeable time; and
- The release of project information (company name, sector, region), and to the media and general public.

C) Contact Information

For more information, visit www.investnovascotia.ca/pivp or contact the [Regional Business Development Advisor](#) in your region.