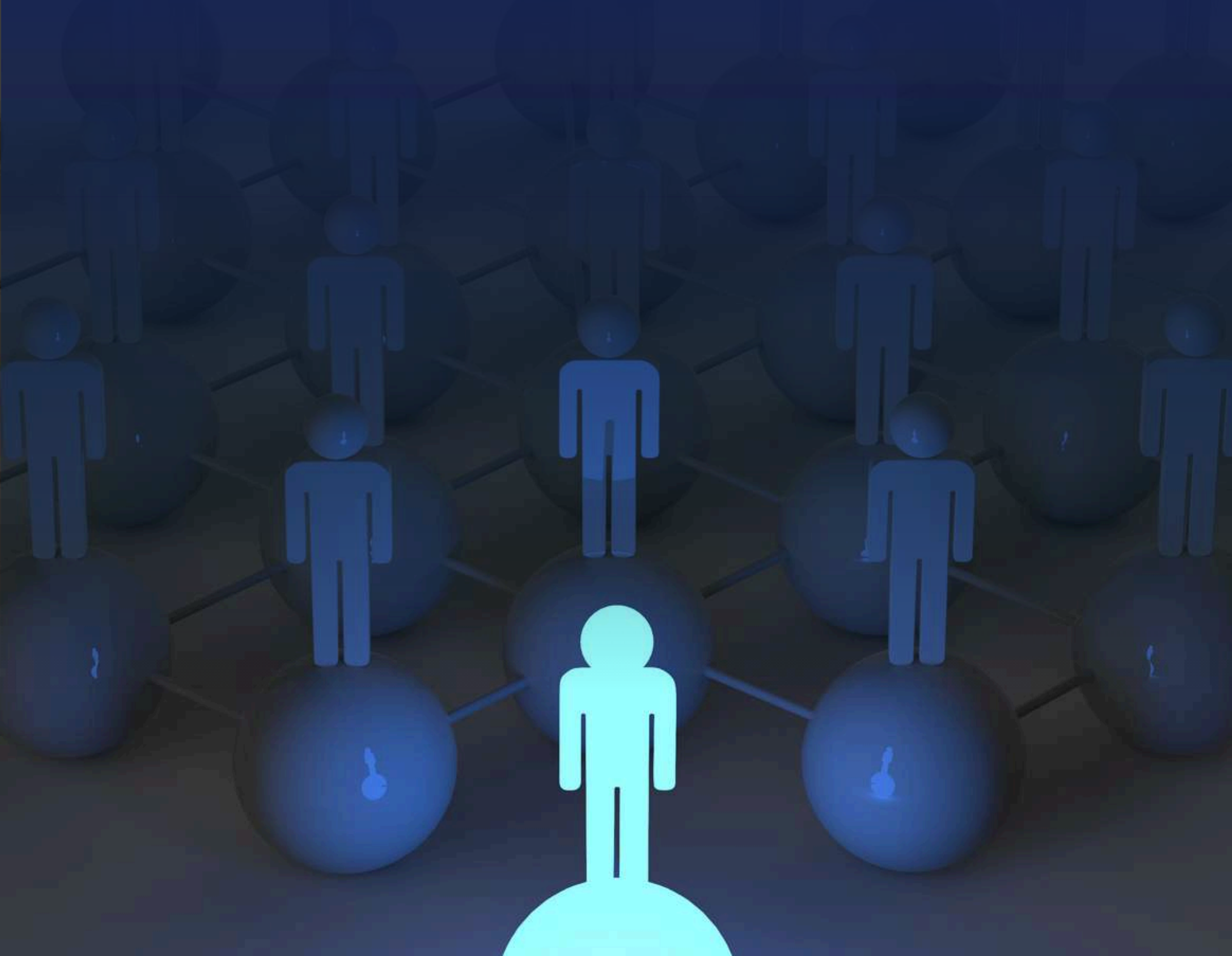
HAB Strategy

GRANTS & FUNDING GUIDE

For agencies, SaaS companies, app developers, designers, and consultants navigating Canada's funding landscape - organized by likelihood of success.



Executive Summary

Canada offers one of the world's most generous mixes of business funding — but most companies leave money on the table because the programs are scattered across federal, provincial, and regional agencies. This guide cuts through that noise.

The twenty programs below are organized into four tiers, ranked by probability of success for service businesses, agencies, and small-to-mid-sized software companies. Tier 1 programs are where most companies should start: high payout, reasonable effort, and broad eligibility. Tier 4 captures emerging or niche opportunities worth tracking.

How to use this guide

- Skim the **Quick Reference Table** on the next page to shortlist three to five programs to pursue.
- Read each program's eligibility carefully — many require Canadian incorporation, CCPC status, or specific employee headcount thresholds.
- Plan to **stack programs** — SR&ED + IRAP + provincial credits routinely return 50–60 cents on every R&D dollar spent.
- Document everything from day one. Slack threads, GitHub commits, and time-tracking are all valid evidence for SR&ED claims.

Quick Reference: Top 10 Programs

A glance-and-go summary of the highest-impact programs in this guide. Full details follow.

#	Program	Benefit	Best Fit	Difficulty
1	SR&ED Tax Credit	Up to $1.05M refundable	SaaS, devs, agencies with R&D	Medium
2	IRAP	$50K–$500K+ non-repayable	Innovation SMEs <500 staff	Med–High
3	Futurpreneur	Up to $75K+ mentorship	Founders aged 18–39	Low–Med
4	Mitacs	$75K research subsidy	Companies w/ university talent	Low–Med
5	Ontario Job Grant	Up to $10K per employee	Any employer training staff	Low
6	EDC Solutions	Insurance, financing	Exporters / US-client work	Low–Med
7	Ontario OITC + ORDTC	Up to 11.5% on R&D	ON companies doing SR&ED	Low

**The information in the guide are related to the 2025-2026 grant programs.*

Tier 1 - Highest Probability

Go after these first. Strong fit for most service and software businesses, with the best ratio of payout to effort.

TIER 1

Highest probability — pursue first

01 SR&ED - Scientific Research & Experimental Development

Canada Revenue Agency

The king of Canadian business tax credits. If you're building software, automating processes, or solving technical unknowns, you likely qualify.

- **Benefit:** 35% refundable credit for CCPCs (up to $3M of expenditures) - up to $1.05M back. 15% non-refundable for larger corporations.
- **Who qualifies:** App developers, SaaS companies, agencies with R&D activity, startups solving technical problems.
- **Key insight:** “Technical uncertainty” is the magic phrase. If you're building something and you don't know at the start whether it will work- that's SR&ED-eligible. Wages, contractor fees, and materials all count.

- **How to apply:** File with your T2 corporate return using form T661.
- **Difficulty:** Medium - documentation matters. Hire a SR&ED consultant on contingency (typically 10–15% of recovery).

INSIDER TIP *Service businesses, consultants, and agencies can qualify if they're developing internal tools or novel methodologies — not just product companies.*

02 IRAP — Industrial Research Assistance Program

National Research Council of Canada

Non-repayable contributions for innovation-driven SMEs. One of Canada's best-kept secrets.

- **Benefit:** $50K–$500K+ in non-repayable funding, covering salaries for employees working on innovative projects.
- **Who qualifies:** SaaS companies, app developers, startups, and agencies building proprietary technology. Must be for-profit with fewer than 500 employees.
- **Key insight:** IRAP pays employee wages while they work on innovation projects — perfect for development teams.
- **Difficulty:** Medium to high. You're assigned an IRAP advisor; the relationship drives the outcome.

INSIDER TIP *IRAP + SR&ED is a popular “stack” — many companies claim both on the same project for compounding returns.*

03 Futurpreneur Canada

IFederal program with private-sector backing

- **Benefit:** Up to $75,000 in startup financing ($20K from Futurpreneur plus up to $40K from BDC), plus two years of formal mentorship.
- **Who qualifies:** Entrepreneurs aged 18–39 operating a business for fewer than 24 months.
- **Difficulty:** Low to medium. Strong mentorship participation is required.

INSIDER TIP *Best suited to younger founders launching agencies, design studios, or SaaS products.*

04 Mitacs Accelerate

IFederal / university partnership

- **Benefit:** Up to $75K in subsidized research partnerships with university talent. Company contributes 50%, Mitacs covers 50%.
- **Who qualifies:** Any Canadian company partnering with a university student or postdoctoral researcher on a defined project.
- **Key insight:** Hire an intern or researcher to build your AI product, automate workflows, or run market research at half the cost.
- **Difficulty:** Low to medium if you already have a university connection.

INSIDER TIP *Ideal for SaaS and app developers who need technical R&D talent without paying full market rates.*

Tier 2 -
Good Fit, Moderate Effort

TIER 2

Solid programs with broader eligibility

05 Ontario Job Grant

Provincially delivered, federally funded

- **Benefit:** Up to $10,000 per employee for training. Government covers 50–100% of training costs.
- **Who qualifies:** All employers. Use the funds to upskill your team in new software, certifications, or AI tools.
- **Difficulty:** Low. Apply through your provincial portal (in Ontario, SkillsAdvance Ontario).

INSIDER TIP *Frequently overlooked. If your team is training on new tools anyway, claim it.*

06 Export Development Canada (EDC) - Solutions for Exporters

Crown corporation

- **Benefit:** Financing, accounts-receivable insurance, and bonding. Not a grant, but it materially reduces the risk of cross-border work.
- **Who qualifies:** Any Canadian business earning revenue from US or international clients.
- **Key insight:** EDC's A/R insurance pays out if a US client defaults - protecting cash flow on contracts of any size.
- **Difficulty:** Low to medium.

INSIDER TIP *Highly relevant for agencies and SaaS companies with US clients. Protects revenue you've already earned.*

07 Ontario Innovation Tax Credit (OITC) + Ontario R&D Tax Credit (ORDTC)

Government of Ontario

- **Benefit:** Up to 8% refundable (OITC) plus 3.5% non-refundable (ORDTC) on Ontario SR&ED expenditures — stacks on federal SR&ED.
- **Who qualifies:** Ontario-based companies conducting eligible R&D.
- **Difficulty:** Low. Filed alongside the provincial return if you're already claiming SR&ED.

INSIDER TIP *If you're in Ontario and doing SR&ED, these provincial credits layer on automatically - more money back with essentially zero additional effort.*

08 BDC — Entrepreneurs with Disabilities and Newcomer Loans

Business Development Bank of Canada

- **Benefit:** Up to $50K for newcomer entrepreneurs; up to $150K for entrepreneurs with disabilities — at favourable rates.
- **Eligibility:** Newcomers in Canada fewer than five years, or entrepreneurs with documented disabilities.
- **Difficulty:** Low to medium.

INSIDER TIP *Underused programs with faster approval timelines than mainstream BDC products.*

Tier 3 - Worth Knowing, Niche Fit

TIER 3

Specialized programs — check fit carefully

09 Canada Media Fund (CMF)

CRTC and Canadian Heritage

- **Benefit:** Funding for digital media content and interactive projects — $200M+ deployed annually.
- **Who qualifies:** App developers and digital studios creating interactive content (games, learning apps, digital storytelling).
- **Difficulty:** High. Competitive, and broadcaster involvement is typically required.

INSIDER TIP *Niche but enormous for the right developer building content-driven products.*

10 Creative Export Canada

Canadian Heritage

- **Benefit:** Up to $500,000 for Canadian creative businesses expanding internationally.
- **Who qualifies:** Creative industries — design firms, agencies, content creators — with export ambitions.
- **Difficulty:** Medium to high.

INSIDER TIP *Underused by design agencies and creative consultants exporting services to the United States.*

11 Canada Council for the Arts — Digital Strategy Fund

Federal

- **Benefit:** $1M–$3M for arts organizations digitizing or building digital platforms.
- **Who qualifies:** Arts organizations and design studios with a cultural mandate.
- **Difficulty:** High.

INSIDER TIP *Niche, but relevant if you serve arts and cultural clients or run a creative studio.*

12 Innovative Solutions Canada (ISC)

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

- **Benefit:** Federal departments pay Canadian startups to solve real government problems. Phase 1 contracts ~$150K; Phase 2 can exceed $1M.

- **Who qualifies:** Innovative Canadian companies with novel solutions.
- **Difficulty:** High. Competitive RFP process.

INSIDER TIP *Best fit for SaaS companies that can pivot toward GovTech or offer AI and data solutions.*

13 Quebec - CRIQ, PRIMA, and Investissement Québec

Province of Quebec

- **Benefit:** Varies widely — up to 40% R&D refunds and $50K–$500K+ for innovative companies.
- **Who qualifies:** Quebec-based companies doing R&D or innovation work.
- **Difficulty:** Medium.

INSIDER TIP *Quebec is the most generous province for technology grants. Quebec-based clients are routinely leaving money on the table.*

14 Alberta Innovates

Province of Alberta

- **Benefit:** $25K–$1M for early-stage innovation projects.
- **Who qualifies:** Alberta-based companies in technology, digital, or applied innovation sectors.
- **Difficulty:** Medium.

Tier 4 -
Long Shots and Emerging

TIER 4

Watch and track — selective fit

15 Canada Growth Fund (CGF)

Federal

- **Benefit:** Massive $15B fund.
- **Fit:** Primarily cleantech and deep tech — not typical agencies. However, investee companies routinely need financial and advisory support, which is a sourcing opportunity for consultants.

16 Regional Development Agencies

FedDev Ontario, PacifiCan, ACOA, PrairiesCan

- **Benefit:** Each region administers $50K–$500K+ in non-repayable grants for economic development.
- **How to engage:** A cold email to your local RDA is worth the ten minutes it takes to send.

17 CEBA Successor Programs

Federal (forthcoming)

- **Status:** Watching the federal budget cycle for any new SME bridge-financing programs that succeed CEBA.

Key Principles

01. Stack programs aggressively

SR&ED plus IRAP plus Ontario credits can return 50–60 cents on every R&D dollar spent. Treat funding as a portfolio, not a single application.

02. Document everything from day one

The biggest mistake companies make is doing the qualifying work and failing to track it. A project journal, Slack threads, GitHub commits, design files, and time entries all count as SR&ED evidence.

03. Service businesses are not excluded

Consultants, agencies, and designers can qualify whenever they're developing proprietary methodologies, tools, or processes that carry genuine technical uncertainty. The eligibility criteria are about the nature of the work, not the industry label.

04. Hire specialists on contingency

Most SR&ED consultants work on contingency at 10–15% of what they recover. There is essentially zero downside risk to engaging one, and they typically uncover claims you would miss on your own.

90-Day Action Checklist

If you do nothing else after reading this guide, work through the following in order:

Weeks 1–2: Foundation

- Confirm your corporate status — CCPC eligibility unlocks the highest SR&ED rate.
- Audit the last 18 months of work for SR&ED-eligible projects (anything involving technical uncertainty).
- Set up project journals, Slack channels, or GitHub repos that document technical decisions in real time going forward.

Weeks 3–6: Tier 1 Outreach

- Contact two SR&ED consultants for free contingency-based assessments and compare their estimates.
- Identify a defined innovation project and request a meeting with a regional IRAP advisor.

Weeks 7–12: Stack and Expand

- File SR&ED with your next T2 return; layer in provincial credits automatically (OITC + ORDTC in Ontario).
- Submit a Canada Job Grant application for any planned team training.
- Reach out to your Regional Development Agency to introduce your business and ask what's currently funded.
- If you have US clients, open an EDC account and quote A/R insurance on your next material contract.

> ***INSIDER TIP*** *Most companies that successfully claim multiple programs treat funding as a routine operational function — like bookkeeping — rather than a one-off project. Build the habit early.*

Disclaimer: *Funding amounts, eligibility criteria, and program availability change frequently. Verify current details with the relevant agency or a qualified advisor before relying on any figure in this guide. This document is informational and does not constitute legal, tax, or financial advice.*

Turn funding opportunities into sustainable growth.

While grants can help accelerate your business, they are best paired with the right financial strategy.

HAB Strategy helps founders navigate funding decisions, strengthen cash flow, and build the financial foundation needed to scale confidently.

Book a complimentary call to discuss what's possible for your business.

→ **Schedule a Consultation**