

Advancing Northern Maple Program

The **Advancing Northern Maple Program** is a partnership with the **Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN)**, a division of Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC), the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association (OMSPA), Algoma Maple Syrup Producers Association and Algonquin Maple Syrup Producers Association to expand the maple sector by encouraging increased production and the advancement of innovative maple products. The project will have the following objectives:

- Expand maple sap & syrup production in northern Ontario,
- Adopt technologies and processes to increase productivity,
- Create innovative maple products for a domestic or export market,
- Increase marketing opportunities for the sector, and
- Increase partnerships with Indigenous people and communities to expand the sector.

This project will enable producers who want to grow to serve domestic and foreign markets to expand, invest in new technology, reach new markets and access capital for expansion. The project includes the launch of the **Advancing Northern Maple Fund** to encourage maple syrup and product expansion through projects that adopt technologies to increase productivity and create innovative new products.

Advancing Northern Maple Fund

The Advancing Northern Maple Fund will encourage maple syrup and product expansion through projects that adopt technologies to increase productivity and create innovative new products.

Program In-take 1: Nov 18th 2019 – Feb 28th 2020 – all projects approved under in-take 1 must be completed before June 30th, 2021. Program Applications will be received during specified in-takes.

Who is Eligible?

- Eligible applicants must be a legal person with the authority to enter into a legal agreement. Examples of a legal person could include corporations, co-operatives, not-for-profit, primary producers (with Farm Business Registration #), processors, First Nations, Metis and Inuit.
- Applicants must have at least one component of their business located in northern Ontario, and the project activity must occur in northern Ontario. For this Fund, northern Ontario is defined as the extended federal and provincial administrative region that includes Muskoka District and Parry Sound District.
- Both start-up and existing businesses are eligible. Start-up (in first three years of operation) businesses are expected to provide a business plan with their application. A business plan template can be made available to applicants by contacting the RAIN.

Project Activity Streams: Eligible projects may fall under the following streams:

1. **New Product / Product Development** – Projects that enable producers or processors to create processed products that are new to the business or to expand production of products that have been tested, but not produced at a significant scale. Projects that emphasize the following attributes will be prioritized by the fund:
 - a. A strategy to capture a large consumer market segment through online, retail, wholesale or food service channels
 - b. Development of products that are not common or non-existent in northern Ontario, Ontario or Canada
2. **Productivity Enhancement & Scale-up** – Projects that enable producers or processors to scale-up their production and increase efficiencies in their operation through the adoption of new technologies. Projects that emphasize the following attributes will be prioritized by the fund:

- a. A business plan that outlines business objectives and action plan to develop knowledge of best management practices (required for start-up businesses)
- b. A substantial increase of syrup to market or process
- c. A substantial expansion of sugarbushes
- d. Value for dollars invested given technology available
- e. Achieving environmental benefits through energy-savings

What is Eligible?

All costs shall be limited to purchases that directly allow eligible project activities to occur. Used equipment is eligible but must be sold from a business that focuses on equipment sales. Examples may include remote pumps, evaporators, reverse osmosis equipment, remote sensor technology, building materials and food processing equipment.

What is Not Eligible?

Equipment installation or servicing, rolling stock (such as vehicles), purchase or lease of lands or buildings, gifts or incentives, inventory or consumables, computer software, labour costs, HST. Any costs incurred before the in-take start date will not be deemed as eligible. Any project that develops maple products that are not in compliance with O. Reg 119/11 (syrup received/products destined for Ontario) and/or compliant with Maple Products Regulations and CFIA pertinent policies and guidelines (syrup received/products destined outside of Ontario) will not be deemed as eligible.

Funding

The project will assist agri-food businesses in adopting new technologies to expand production or develop new products in the maple syrup/products sector. Fund assistance will be in the form of a conditional contribution up to \$20,000 at 50% cost share towards the purchase of equipment or materials for eligible activities (resulting in technology adoption for expanded production or product development).

Guidelines

- Applicant(s) will be required to attach a copy of their Articles of Incorporation, Farm Business Registration No., Master Business License, or Business Name Registration, whichever is applicable (some exceptions may apply). Sole proprietors, partnerships, corporations, not-for-profit organizations, co-operatives or a First Nations community are eligible to apply.
- Business start-ups (in first 3 years of operation) must submit a business plan with application form (a business plan template can be made available).
- Approved applicants will be required to submit a completed Client Intake Form
- All projects approved under this program must be completed and invoice(s) submitted to SSMIC: Intake 1 by June 30, 2021. Approved applicants may submit ONE claim only per project.
- Clients are to refer to the reporting requirements stated in the application terms and conditions info sheet before applying.
- Applicants are eligible to submit one application per intake period. Successful applicants can receive a maximum of \$20,000 in funding throughout the entirety of the program. All approved projects must be completed and closed prior to the applicant submitting a new application.
- Successful applicants must pay an administration fee that will be calculated as 1% of the awarded grant amount.
- A completed Final Results Report will be due six months after the Project Completion Deadline (June 30, 2021 for Intake 1). The final 5% of funding will be remitted after this report is submitted.
- Project grants that are approved will have a contract between the business and SSMIC that sets out the terms of the funding. Invoices and proof of payment will be required.
- Government funding towards the Eligible Costs should not exceed 75% of the total Eligible Costs.
- All applications received will be reviewed for a funding decision after the in-take period has ended.



Where needed, staff will provide referrals to Community Futures Development Corporations and Small Business Enterprise Centres throughout northern Ontario for business counselling. Templates for a business plan, marketing plan and labour productivity plan can be made available upon request.

How are applications reviewed, and against what criteria?

When applications are submitted, the Project Coordinator will work with applicants to ensure the application is fully complete. Applications that are regarded as being a strong fit for the program will then be sent to the Application Review Committee (ARC) for evaluation. Applications are rated by ARC on the following criteria:

- How novel the products to be developed are relative to Northern Ontario (New Product Stream)
- The degree to which new efficiencies will be implemented to increase production and decrease operating expenses (Productivity Enhancement Stream)
- The appropriate use of equipment or materials given scale of production and resource use.
- The scalability of the project (ability to expand production/sales)
- The economic or sales impact of the project on the business and on Northern Ontario
- Use of best management practices in production methods, quality standards and food safety requirements
- A clear marketing plan for product development given the regulatory environment for where the product will be sold
- A sound business plan and plan to utilize best management practices (start-ups only)
- Application completeness
- The degree to which the project achieves environmental benefits through energy savings or a more efficient resource use
- The use of innovative equipment or processes

To receive a copy of the application, contact David Thompson dthompson@ssmic.com 705-942-7927 x3027

Other Program Information

Retail and Food Service Trade Shows – The project will create opportunities for northern Ontario maple syrup producers and businesses to attend trade shows so that they can connect with new customers retail or food service trade shows. The project will partially cover the cost for producers to travel and have a booth setup at trade shows at 50% cost share. Trade shows of interest that RAIN will be focused on include the Grocery Innovations Canada and Restaurants Canada Show.

Indigenous Partnerships – Indigenous people and communities are active maple syrup producers in northern Ontario and there is much potential for further activity. The project would collaborate with First Nation communities and organizations to identify projects that are in planning, underway or are scaling up that can be accelerated to expand production and adopt new technologies.

Workshops and Tours – The project will provide opportunities for businesses and organizations to learn new skills and exchange knowledge. RAIN will support producer-led workshops in Algoma and Algonquin that will encourage partnerships, technology adoption and mentorship between producers, entrepreneurs, Indigenous communities and companies. Workshops will encourage adoption of technologies and will include hands-on activities. RAIN and OMSPA will coordinate a tour (charter bus) for producers to travel to Quebec (tentatively May 2020) to visit maple open houses, syrup/sap/water bottling facilities, R&D facilities and manufacturers. Producers that are interested in receiving more information about these activities can contact David Thompson, RAIN Project Coordinator 705-942-7927 x3027 dthompson@ssmic.com

For more information about best management practices, producers are encouraged to visit OMAFRA's website at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/maple/intro.htm> and Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association website at: <https://www.omspa.ca>.