City of Richmond Guest Blog Guidelines

www.businessinrichmond.ca/news

Are you interested in reaching the Richmond business community? If you can provide value to our audience by sharing information about a program, resource, or other useful/interesting topic, then we would welcome your blog submission. These are the guidelines for guest blog posts on www.businessinrichmond.ca.

Audience

Our audience is the Richmond business community. This includes the 14,000+ businesses in our city, the 120,000+ employees who work in Richmond, as well as any prospective business, investor or employee and our partner agencies and industry associations who also provide services to these customers. In addition to being hosted on our website, your blog post will be shared via our other digital channels listed below. You are encouraged to help amplify the post by also sharing it through your own digital channels.

~8,400 followers | @RichmondEDO and @Richmond_BC

~7,500 page likes | @cityofrichmondbc and @RichmondEDO

eNews ~700 subscribers | Business in Richmond

Content Themes

As a municipal government department, we share information about programs and resources available to support the growth and development of the business community and local economy. We will not promote a for-profit business or its product or service, nor will the City entertain any advertising offers or offers of payment to publish content. Please visit our social media channels listed above to view sample content; some examples include:

- **Partner programs** i.e. "Win a $20,000 scholarship from Tourism Richmond."
- **Local business news** i.e. "Canada's first Indigenous woman-owned airline to launch out of Richmond."
- **Online tools & information** i.e. "Find the perfect commercial space for your business using this online interactive property listings tool."
- **Government resources** i.e. 'B.C. producers and processors get government support to enter global markets."
- **Industry updates** i.e. "Agrifoods to lead BC exports in 2017."
- **Business events** i.e. "2018 Small Business BC Awards announced."

Editorial Guidelines

Focus on the first paragraph. You only have a moment to grab the audience's attention so open with an interesting statistic, question or anecdote. Any data or statistics used must cite a source. Ensure the content is relevant, helpful and interesting for the Richmond business community – include a specific business example if possible. Anything that is overtly promotional will not be published.

- 350 – 750 words
- Write using short sentences and brief paragraphs
- Replace jargon with plain language
- Break up large blocks of text with headings and subheadings
- Bullet your major points where possible
- Include an image if you can, otherwise we'll source a stock photo

Submission Process

We welcome all submissions; however, our editors reserve the right to reject contributions at their discretion. We may suggest or make editorial changes, but will ensure the final version is approved by you before it goes live. If your post is time sensitive, please include the date by which you would like it posted and we will do our best to accommodate. Send your completed post to kferland@richmond.ca – we look forward to working with you!

- Sample Blog Post 1 -

10 ways to make it easier for your business to get government funding

Government grants, contributions, and tax credits are a great source of funding for SMEs. Unlike equity investments, grants mean you don't have to give funders a stake in your business to attract this money. However, the volume of funds available and complex application process often overwhelm entrepreneurs. Here are 10 tips to help your business simplify the process and secure money.

1. Venture off the beaten paths.

   While competition is very high for a handful of well-known government funding programs, there are hundreds of others that are less in demand and offer great advantages to applicants. A winning strategy combines applying to both popular and smaller funding programs.

2. Highlight the ways that your business contributes to the economy.

   Demonstrate in your application how the funds you receive will help create new high-value jobs, contribute to the growth of your local economy, or establish your business as a serious competitor in international markets.

3. Collaborate with academic leaders.

   Some government funds that support innovation and R&D require corporate applicants to partner with academic researchers. It's a win-win for both parties.

4. Explore different types of government funding.

   Many businesses are familiar with tax credits, but are not aware of hundreds of grants, wage subsidies, and vouchers available at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels.

5. Present a winning business case.

   A three or five-year strategy is often required to attract more substantial funding commitments. Make sure your financial projections add up and are realistic.

6. Apply to more than one fund.

Companies that are successful at securing government funding year after year apply to multiple funding programs based on a funding strategy that is grounded in facts, data, and analytics.

7. Don't overlook the details.

   About 80% of applications into government funders are rejected at the screening stage because they simply don't meet the basic compliance criteria.

8. Double your money by leveraging successes into capital markets.

   Businesses that come to the table "cashed up" through government funding processes tend to catch the eye of private investors, angels, and venture capitalists.

9. Step back and think like a politician.

   You can dramatically increase your chances of securing funding if you align your application with the objectives of your target funds. Make sure you match your word choice and tone to the funder.

10. Expand your online toolkit.

    Online tools match your business with the best funds for your company. The City of Richmond Economic Development, for example, offers a free funding search tool on its website at ca/services/links-to-funding/.

Popular Funds for September 2018

- National Research Council Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC-IRAP): Open to all industry sectors, this program helps SMEs to undertake innovative R&D projects.
- SD Tech Fund: This national program provides grants to businesses in the cleantech sector.
- CanExport: This program provides grants to businesses seeking to export their products and services to new international markets.
- BC Tech Co–op Grants Program: This fund helps companies in the tech sector by providing up to $2700 towards a co-op student's salary.
- Strategic Innovation Fund: This program provides grants and contributions for large-scale innovation projects ($10M+ in requested contribution).

Posted September 10, 2018
Guest post by Fundingportal.com

Fundingportal.com is a Canadian funding services and solutions provider that helps companies and organizations get funded.

- Sample Blog Post 2 -

How this Richmond company is solving a $2 million research challenge

There's no shortage of tools to help businesses of all sizes grow in today's world: accelerators and incubators host start-ups, blockchain technology helps businesses track transactions and keep records securely, and social media enables companies to reach global markets in mere seconds. But how does a company find that most crucial – while perhaps least tangible – tool: expertise? For Richmond-based biotech company Applied Biological Materials Inc. (abm), a chance encounter at an industry event has led to a series of promising collaborations with the University of British Columbia, brokered through Mitacs.

Mitacs, much more than your middle-man

Mitacs is a national, not-for-profit organization with programs aimed to increase Canadian innovation through research collaborations. For years Sherry Zhao, account manager at Mitacs, has been connecting local companies and academic researchers on projects of mutual interest and helping them find the right Mitacs programs to co-fund their projects.

During this first conversation, Sherry learned that abm was looking to design a diagnostic test to improve the detection and diagnosis of bladder cancer. With no comparable product on the market, abm was in position to make a significant impact on BC diagnostics (and their own bottom line). In a meeting with abm management at their Richmond headquarters, Sherry was able to get a strong understanding of abm's research needs, and their discussions resulted in a successful application to Mitacs' Accelerate program.

$420,000 project grows into 14-person research team

Accelerate is a highly flexible internship program that brings academic researchers into a company to collaborate on pre-determined projects. In addition to project assistance from Mitacs representatives like Sherry, participating companies see their contribution leveraged with Mitacs funding. abm's initial Accelerate application proposed a 36-month project with five postdoctoral fellows and a supervising faculty member from UBC, budgeted at $420,000 and cost-shared equally between Mitacs and abm. With the progress and promising completion of the initial project, the company has since submitted another Accelerate project proposal valued at nearly $1.5 million and enlisting 14 UBC postdoctoral researchers and a faculty supervisor.

But what if my company's not in biotech?

Mitacs isn't just for biotech companies like abm. Its programs are open to for-profit businesses (including international companies with Canadian offices) and eligible not-for-profit organizations, and can be customized to accommodate various innovation interests, goals, and budgets.

Mitacs representatives like Sherry bring a large network of contacts and help connect businesses with researchers at institutions in the Lower Mainland and across Canada.

Whether you have a research project in mind or just want to discuss how Mitacs can work with your Richmond-based company, Sherry Zhao would love to connect with you! (szhao@mitacs.ca or 604.679.3198).

Posted on November 2, 2018

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Guest post by Mitacs

Fast facts about Mitacs

- Mitacs is a national, not-for-profit organization that has designed and delivered research and training programs in Canada for more than 19 years.
- Working with more than 60 universities, thousands of companies, and government partners, Mitacs builds partnerships that support industrial and social innovation in Canada.
- 92% of participating companies recommend the Mitacs Accelerate program, and 66% of the program's projects have been or will be commercialized

-Sample Blog Post 3-

Scaling up your food business with a co-packer

With the vacancy rate for industrial space at an all-time low and the market for space and employees extremely competitive in Metro Vancouver, it has become increasingly important for food manufacturing businesses to carefully evaluate the different production models available to them. Building a custom commercial kitchen or leasing a space might make sense for some while for others partnering with a co-packer can be an excellent way to scale up.

On November 29 our friends at the BC Food Processors Association hosted a seminar in Richmond for an audience of 60+ food businesses from the region. Speaking from personal experience, the seasoned (pun intended!) experts shared their insights about different production models including co-packing, where the manufacturing and packaging process is outsourced to another company.

Manufacturing and brand-building are very different – know your strengths

Catherine Anderson built her business Hidden Garden Foods, from scratch. When she first started producing her vegetables-disguised-as-cookies she hired a co-packer, freeing up time to focus on building her brand. When the time came to scale-up, Anderson decided to invest in her own production facility. Over time she dialed in all aspects of manufacturing and production and realized she could outsource this hard-earned expertise by co-packing for others' brands, helping save them from some of the headaches and growing pains she experienced. Anderson's advice for food start-ups? Be honest with yourself and know whether your skills lie in building a brand, or manufacturing operations – and outsource what you're not great at.

> *"Be honest with yourself and know whether your skills lie in building a brand, or manufacturing operations – and outsource what you're not great at." – Catherine Anderson, Hidden Garden Foods*

Owning your own production facility isn't always the holy grail

After founding Granola Girl in 2008, owner April May Bellia started by working with a co-packer. As her business grew and she landed several big contracts including Whole Foods, Bellia got to work on what she considered the natural next step: buying and building her own commercial production facility. But order volumes fluctuated and she had difficulty adjusting staffing and production levels to match orders. Bellia decided to hire a financial analyst to crunch the numbers and it became clear that if she wanted to scale up her business she needed to bring down her overhead costs. She decided to switch production models and started working with a co-packer again, allowing her to focus on building her brand and growing the company. Bellia's words of wisdom? The path to growing a food business is not always linear, and numbers don't lie. Hire a good financial analyst and adjust your production model when it makes sense.

> ***"The path to growing a business is not always linear, and numbers don't lie. Hire a good financial analyst and adjust your production model when it makes sense." – April May Bellia, Granola Girl***

Some pros and cons of co-packing

Both Anderson and Bellia will tell you that the choice about whether to manage your own production or work with a co-packer to manufacture and package your product is a very individual one. Also on the seminar panel were Gurpreet S. Rai of KPMG, Ally Bharmal of Fasken, and Chantal Keely of Farm Credit Canada. Together they offered the following pros and cons of using a co-packer.

Pros:

- **Access to better equipment** – you can find a co-packer that has the next-level equipment that you're looking for, without a massive capital injection of your own. Bellia was able to find a co-packer with an automated heat sealing machine, streamlining her production process.
- **More time to build the business** – when you're not worrying about sourcing ingredients, repairing equipment or managing labour, your time is freed up to build your brand and get the orders you need to grow your company.

Cons:

- **Limited control** – when you outsource your production you have to step back and give up some control. This can be tough for an entrepreneur but open communication, clear quality control measures and product tracking can help you retain the right level of control.
- **Risks to intellectual property** – trusting someone with your secret sauce is not to be taken lightly, and things can go wrong. One way to mitigate this risk is to sign a Non Disclosure Agreement as soon as you start exchanging key business intelligence. You can also keep that secret sauce recipe to yourself and provide it pre-made to the co-packer as an ingredient input.

Know these key business aspects before you approach a co-packer

The panelists all agreed that you shouldn't go to a co-packer with a half-baked idea, and there's a lot of legwork you have to do as an entrepreneur and business owner before you're ready to take that step. Some co-packers will help with product development, but for the most part you want to have a shelf-stable and fully developed product before you approach a co-packer. Here are some other pieces of information you should have at the ready when approaching a potential co-packing partner.

1. **Minimal viable production.** Crunch the numbers on what it takes to produce your product at different scales and know what a minimal viable production run would be.
2. **How many other SKUs they produce.** You want a partner that is actively and successfully producing other products, but if they have multiple SKUs, find out where you'd fit in their priority order.
3. **Sales forecast and cash flow projections.** Your co-packer will want to plan out the production well in advance so have a good sense of your order pipeline.
4. **Product recipe and production process.** Like all the other points in this list you shouldn't share these details in the early stages of business discussions, but when you're ready to sign a deal you'll want to be very clear and specific on your product recipe and production process so the final product is exactly what you want.

Where to look for co-packers

If you've decided that co-packing is the best way to help you scale up your food businesses, you now need to find one! There are a couple options to help you do this. While not a comfortable option for some, you can approach makers of similar products to see if they can take on your manufacturing. You never know, the product might be different enough where this makes sense. Another great resource for British Columbia-based food companies is the BC Food Connection. Developed by the BC Food Processors Association, the Province of BC, and the Small Scale Food Association, this online database can help match you to a local co-packer based on your specific requirements. Once you've found your perfect match, make sure to engage legal and financial professionals to structure a deal that will protect you while freeing you up to do what you love – grow your food business!

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Posted on December 17, 2018

In Partnership with the BC Food Processors Association