

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR THE DIRECT SUPPORT GRANTS PROGRAMME

Q1: How does one apply for funds under the Direct Support Grants Programme (DSGP)?

A1: Applications are available from Caribbean Export's website at www.carib-export.com. This is the only source for application forms and official documents for the DSGP.

Q2: When is the deadline for Applications?

A2: The deadline for Applications is October 2, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. (Barbados time). The deadline is stated on the Guidelines and Procedures for DSGP and the Application Form. The deadline is final.

Q3: How long is the evaluation process?

A3: The duration of the evaluation process is thirty (30) working days commencing the next working day after the deadline of the Call for Proposal (October 5, 2020). All applications submitted under this Call will be evaluated by Members of the Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation Committee comprises of The Office of the Deputy Regional Authorizing Officer (DRAO) - Barbados and Caribbean Export. Refer to Section 4 of the Guidelines for further details.

Q4: Can goods (e.g. equipment, tools etc.) and services (e.g. consultant, etc.) be purchased from Non-African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), European Union (EU) member countries, the USA and Canada?

A4: Yes, all goods and services can be purchased from suppliers and service providers operating in African, Caribbean and Pacific States, European Union Member countries, and Non-ACP countries such as Canada and the USA. In fact, goods and services may be procured from anywhere in the world.

Q5: Does the DSGP advance funds for projects?

A5: Yes, funds are advanced to beneficiaries of a grant in three tranches:

- **First Tranche Disbursement (30%):** The Beneficiary must submit supporting documents in accordance with Annex IV - Procurement and Disbursement Procedures for the Direct Support Grants Programme, to Caribbean Export for verification and approval in order to receive the first tranche disbursement.

- **Second Tranche Disbursement (40%):** The Beneficiary can only receive the second tranche, if Caribbean Export verifies and approves the utilisation of 100% of the first tranche disbursement, as well as receives supporting documents in accordance with Annex IV. The Beneficiary shall be required to confirm expenditure of funds received from Caribbean Export in accordance with Annex VI - Narrative Report (Tranche 1) and Annex VII - Financial Report (Tranche 1), and submit these documents to Caribbean Export for verification and approval to facilitate the second tranche disbursement.
- **Third Tranche Disbursement (30%):** The Beneficiary can only receive the final tranche, if Caribbean Export verifies and approves all the required reports (Narrative and Financial) for utilisation of 100% of the second tranche disbursement.

Q6: When are applicants notified of Caribbean Export's decision?

A6: On completion of the Evaluation Process, Caribbean Export will inform all applicants of the status of their applications; rejected or approved. Caribbean Export's decision to reject an application or not to award a grant is final. Rejected applicants may request in writing from Caribbean Export their score and the reasons for the application being rejected.

Q7: Do applicants have to incur the cost of their projects directly?

A7: No, applicants do not have to incur the full cost of their project activities up to a maximum of Euro 15,000.

Q8: Does the grant cover activities that have already been undertaken?

A8: No, there is no retroactivity; activities undertaken or costs incurred before the applicant is awarded a grant are not eligible for reimbursement.

Q9: Are the last three (3) years' financial statements required to be submitted with an application?

A9: Yes, eligibility requirements state that all applicants are required to provide the last three (3) years' financial statements to demonstrate their financial sustainability. Therefore, any applicant that does not provide the required financial statements, their application will be rejected.

Q10: Are Start-ups eligible to apply?

A10: No, Start-ups are not eligible to apply. Start-ups are defined as firms that have been in operation less than three (3) years.

Q11: Does the 6-month implementation period occur at any time during the year following funding, or must it come immediately upon receiving a grant?

A11: The implementation period takes effect on the day following the date of the beneficiary's signature on the contract. The 6-month implementation period is the time the Beneficiary has to undertake the proposed project or action for a Grant issued under the DSGP.

Q12: I started this professional service 3 years ago but was focusing on the developmental aspects and was only legally registered as a firm 6 months ago. How will my application be handled?

A12: The DSGP requires your business to be legally registered, which it is, so you satisfy the legally registered criteria. Additionally, all applicants must submit 3 years' financial statements (income statements and balance sheets). Therefore, your company must be operating for at least 3 years, which can be confirmed by the requisite financial statements.

Q13: When are funds disbursed after an applicant has been awarded a grant?

A13: Funds are only disbursed to a beneficiary to undertake activities during the implementation period of the signed grant contract. Additionally, costs will only be eligible for disbursement when Caribbean Export has officially approved an application, signed a grant contract with the applicant (the beneficiary), and the beneficiary submits supporting documents in accordance with Annex IV - Procurement and Disbursement Procedures for the Direct Support Grants Programme to Caribbean Export for verification and approval.

Q14: If I am purchasing a piece of equipment that is €15,000, and the supplier requires 50% down payment, how do I pay for this if I am receiving money from Caribbean Export in tranches?

A14: Beneficiaries purchasing equipment that is equal to or less than €15,000, are encouraged to arrange with the vendor to have the terms aligned with our three (3) tranche disbursement process. If this is not possible, the beneficiary would have to request the first disbursement from Caribbean Export and pay the difference to the vendor, which can be claimed for in another tranche (taking the form of a reimbursement).

Q15: What exchange rates should be used to calculate the budget?

A15: The Exchange Rates published by the European Commission should be used to prepare your budget and facilitate the conversion from your jurisdictions' currency to Euros. The website is: <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/inforeuro/index.cfm?fuseaction=countries&Language=en>

Q16: What is contribution in kind?

A16: Contributions in kind (payments made in the form of goods and services, rather than cash) made by the beneficiary do not represent actual expenditure and are not eligible costs.

Q17: Are taxes (e.g. VAT, GCT, etc.) paid by the DSGP?

A17: No. Taxes are not eligible project costs.

Q18: Are non-registered firms, individuals, companies eligible to apply for assistance under the Direct Support Grant?

A18: No, only legally registered individuals, companies, firms in a CARIFORUM Country are eligible to apply. CARIFORUM Countries are Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, Saint. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

Q19: Can applicants request their scores if they are not successful?

A19: Applicants may request their scores in writing from Caribbean Export if they are not successful.

Q20: If my application is not successful, can I apply to the next Call for Proposals?

A20: Yes, you can submit a revised or new application when the next Call is published.

Q21: Can a group of companies or a parent company submit financial statements for a subsidiary?

A21: No, the subsidiary must submit their financial statements.

Q22: Can a Business Support Organisation (BSO) apply?

A22: No, BSOs are not allowed to apply. Refer to Section 2.1 of the Guidelines for further details.

Q23: How many applications can an applicant submit?

A23: Firms can submit one application per Call for Proposals.

Q24: Are the grants processed and approved on a first-come, first-serve basis or are all the applications held to be processed after deadline?

A24: No, all applications submitted for a Call will be evaluated after the deadline at the same time by Members of the Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation Committee comprises of the Deputy Regional Authorizing Officer (DRAO) – Barbados and Caribbean Export.

Q25: Can equipment and software used for an engineering practice be included?

A25: Yes.

Q26: If I want to purchase a piece of equipment that exceeds €15,000, can I still apply?

A26: Yes. However, beneficiaries will be required to submit all the requisite documents to Caribbean Export for approval. Once approved, beneficiaries will be required to make the initial payment of the excess amount and submit the proof of payment before the grant funds are disbursed. For equipment purchases that are materially higher than €15,000, beneficiaries have the option to fully purchase the equipment after approval by Caribbean Export and submit the proof of purchase to Caribbean Export, who will then reimburse 100% of the grant.

Q27: Is in-house training by an external expert also eligible?

A27: Yes.

Q28: Is a Justice of the Peace stamp and signature on copy of registration OK?

A28: No, a copy must be notarized by a Notary Public.

Q29: Should Applicant Declaration be certified by a Justice of the Peace?

A29: No.

Q30: Does it matter whether the goods or services originate from the USA or Canada or any other non-ACP or EU member country?

A30: No, the Rules of Origin do not apply.

Q31: My project calls for two people to travel to another country. Are claims for two plane tickets eligible?

A31: No, air travel and per diem are ineligible expenses. Refer to Section 2.4 Ineligible Projects/Costs of the Guidelines & Procedures of the DSGP.

Q32: Will the grant cover courses offered by certification agencies in Canada such as Forensic Accounting?

A32: Yes, training for certification courses is an eligible activity, but note individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses are not eligible. Refer to Section 2.4 Ineligible Project Expenses of the Guidelines & Procedures of the DSGP.

Q33: Business name was changed in 2017. Would it be ok to send a certificate of the change of name or do you need the original and the change of name certificate?

A33: You will be required to submit the current certificate of registration or incorporation and the certificate with the name change.

Q34: Would the purchase of a new building and retrofitting it qualify for the grant?

A34: The purchase of a new building would not be eligible. However, retrofitting a building or structure would be an eligible activity. Refer to Section 2.3 Eligible Project Expenses of the Guidelines & Procedures of the DSGP.

Q35: Is training for individual staff in the US eligible under the program?

A35: No, individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses are not eligible. Refer to Section 2.4 Ineligible Project Expenses of the Guidelines & Procedures of the DSGP.

Q36: Can you please provide some urgent feedback as it relates to whether the financial statements which should be provided in the application process should be audited statements?

A36: Financial Statements do not need to be audited. We accept audited financial statements, as well as unaudited financial statements and financial reports prepared by an accountant or accounting software. However, all unaudited reports are required to be certified by the owner/director/CEO/senior financial officer of the company

Q37: Could you clarify, if I had a project that was €22,860 and I applied for the grant of €15,000. Is this OK?

A37: Yes, this amount would be accepted because the maximum amount to be awarded under the DSGP is €15,000. However, beneficiaries would be required to cover the difference of €7,860 before the €15,000 is disbursed by Caribbean Export.

Q38: We are a locally registered Caribbean Consulting Company. However, on the project in question, we may employ/consult with another Caribbean consulting company that has Canadian specialist/consultants for their opinion in certain areas. They will not be working directly for our company that is applying for the grant. Would this be considered buying services from Canada?

A38: No, however beneficiaries are allowed to purchase goods and services from outside of ACP States and European Countries.

Q39: Should pro forma invoices for any equipment to be purchased be scanned and attached?

A39: No, not to the application.

Q40: Is there a specified font size and paper type? Say A4 versus letter?

A40: No.

Q41: Would software with hardware solutions supplied by a local service provider but who in turn sourced online from a supplier in the United States qualify as project activity for funding?

A41: Yes, goods and services may be purchased from suppliers anywhere in the world.

Q42: Does DSGP consider the provision of services through tour operators as an export of services even though much of it is administered in and around host country but being enjoyed by international visitors?

A42: Yes, Caribbean Export considers the provision of services through tour operators as an export of services even though much of it is administered in and around the host country but being enjoyed by international visitors.

Q43: We do not have a Notary Public in Jamaica. We Have Justices of the Peace (JP). However, the Guidelines indicate that this not acceptable. What do I do?

A43: As stated in Section 4 of the application form, Notarized copies of the Certificate of Registration or Incorporation are required. Yes, there are Notary Publics in Jamaica; you may wish to contact a local law firm to recommend one. Documentation verified by Justices of the Peace are not acceptable.

Q44: The first question is about training of our film crew. We are embarking on the production of a new film. However, we have 6 film industry professionals from the USA who we would like to come to Barbados to do some hands-on training on our film set while we are in production. This, we believe will greatly improve our project. Would this be an eligible project under DSGP?

A44: Yes, Training of the film crew would be an eligible activity under the DSGP. All goods and services (e.g. training) may be purchased from suppliers anywhere in the world. However, please note that expenses such as airfare, hotel accommodation, and per diem are not eligible project costs.

Q45: The next question has to do with Film Production Costs. Can we seek to get assistance for the production of the entire film production through DSGP since we are manufacturing a product (the film) that will be exported throughout the Caribbean, USA, and England etc?

A45: Yes. Refer to Section 2.3 Eligible Project Expenses of the Guidelines & Procedures of the DSGP.

Q46: Can we apply for more than one project?

A46: A project may have multiple activities, but each applicant may submit only one application per Call for Proposals.

Q47: Is the procurement of packaging materials such as bottles and labels eligible?

A47: Yes.

Q48: Seeing that we have 25 years' experience in the export business, we will not be hiring consultants to visit new markets for the market penetration exercise, but will be doing the work ourselves. Are staff salaries an eligible expense given that we will not be hiring a consultant?

A48: No, an employee's salary expense is ineligible.

Q49: Is it possible to apply for funds under the DSGP if we are an agriculture business operating in the tourism sector and have separate projects which require funding?

A49: No, applicants can only submit one application for this Call for Proposals.

Q50: Can my company apply for grant funding if we have an open grant under the last Call in 2019?

A50: Applicants that have an open Grant contract under the last 2019 Call (EDF11-19-01) are not eligible to apply. i.e. applicants who have not submitted their final reimbursement claims to Caribbean Export by July 31, 2020, are not eligible to apply.

Q51: Do applicants have to complete the Diagnostic Assessment Tool?

A51: No, applicants do not have to complete the online SME Diagnostic Assessment.