

Small Business Digital Adaptation Program

Program summary

On 13 September 2020, the Victorian Government announced the *Small Business Digital Adaptation Program*, a \$20 million initiative to help Victorian sole traders, micro and small businesses adapt to a digital operating environment. The program is open to Victorian businesses from all industry sectors and places are limited.

Businesses must register for this program online via the Business Victoria website. Registered businesses may then access selected products for trial and view the workshops and training calendar.

Registered businesses can attend free digital adaptation workshops offered via the Business Victoria website. Workshops will be delivered across Victoria in face-to-face (subject to COVID restrictions) and online formats.

Registered businesses can trial the digital products on offer via the Business Victoria website. Available digital products include online website, e-commerce, finance and business management tools.

Registered businesses must purchase a digital product available under this program before applying for a program rebate.

Registered businesses will be invited to apply for a rebate and will be asked to provide evidence of purchase.

Applicants will be contacted six weeks after applying for a rebate to ensure their business has established product use and begun its digital adaptation journey.

Applicants who confirm continued use will receive a purchase rebate of \$1,200 to cover 12 months' access to their chosen product. Businesses will pay the ongoing costs of access to their digital product after fully utilising the rebate.

How the program works

Businesses that participate in this program will progress through three key steps:

Step 1 – Register for the program to participate in product trials and workshops

Step 2 – Sign up for their preferred digital product available under this program

Step 3 – Apply for a purchase rebate of \$1,200¹ to cover 12 months' free access.

¹ Purchase rebate is equivalent to at least 12 months' access to a mid-range digital product available under this program. Access costs for foreign currency and sales percentage products will vary depending on exchange rates and use.

1 Step 1 – Register for the program to participate in product trials and workshops

- 1.1 Businesses must register to participate in this program.
- 1.2 Businesses will complete an online registration at the Business Victoria website, that will ask questions relating to program eligibility.
- 1.3 Businesses will receive an email confirming their registration that provides a dedicated Business Victoria website link. This page will include the digital products available for trial and a training and workshops calendar.
- 1.4 Registered businesses can trial digital products, including online website, e-commerce, finance and business management tools. Available products are offered through the selected digital product suppliers listed on the Business Victoria website (business.vic.gov.au).
- 1.5 An initial suite of products for trial will be available from 15 November 2020. More products for trial may be added to the Business Victoria website over time.
- 1.6 Registered businesses can trial products between 15 November 2020 and 28 February 2021. Products can be trialled free for up to one month, depending on the trial offered by each supplier.
- 1.7 Registered businesses can participate in free digital adaptation workshops and seminars shown in an events calendar available at the Business Victoria website.
- 1.8 Workshops will be delivered online and face-to-face (subject to COVID restrictions) from 15 November 2020 until 31 March 2021. Businesses will need to register for workshops of their choice.
- 1.9 Product specific support and training will be provided by participating digital product suppliers.

2 Step 2 – Sign up for their preferred digital product available under this program

- 2.1 Businesses must register at Step 1 before purchasing a digital product.
- 2.2 Registered businesses must purchase a digital product available under this program before applying for a purchase rebate.
- 2.3 Inclusions in the product purchase (example: number of licences) will vary between digital products and suppliers.

3 Step 3 – Apply for a purchase rebate of \$1,200 to cover 12 months' free access

- 3.1 Businesses that have registered at Step 1 will be invited to apply for a purchase rebate from 1 December 2020.
- 3.2 Businesses must complete an online application for a purchase rebate of \$1,200 to cover 12 months' access to an available digital product.

- 3.3 Evidence of an available product purchase will be required at the time of application for a rebate.
- 3.4 All application form questions must be completed to ensure timely assessment.
- 3.5 Businesses will be notified of the outcome of their rebate application by email.
- 3.6 Businesses will be contacted six weeks after applying for a rebate to confirm they have begun to adapt their business to a digital operating environment and established product use.
- 3.7 The Victorian Government will pay the business within ten working days of receiving its confirmation of continued product use.
- 3.8 Businesses will pay the ongoing costs of access to their digital product after fully utilising the rebate.
- 3.9 Rebate applications will be open from 1 December 2020 until 11.59pm on 31 March 2021, or until funds are exhausted.

4 Eligibility criteria

- 4.1 The *Small Business Digital Adaptation Program* is designed for sole trader, micro and small businesses. To be eligible for the program an applicant must:
 - a) operate a business located in Victoria
 - b) hold an Australian Business Number (ABN) and have held that ABN on 13 September 2019
 - c) be registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST) on 13 September 2020².
- 4.2 Applicants must meet the eligibility criteria and attest that they are currently operating and intend to adapt their business to a digital operating environment.
- 4.3 To qualify for a purchase rebate the business must purchase a digital product available under the program.
- 4.4 An eligible business, as defined by its ABN, can only receive one purchase rebate of \$1,200 to cover 12 months' access to a digital product available under this program.

5 Eligible activities

- 5.1 Program support under the *Small Business Digital Adaptation Program* will assist businesses adapt to a digital operating environment by trialling and adopting digital

² Non-for-profit entities that are not registered for GST and are registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission are eligible to apply. Businesses that are not required by relevant taxation legislation to be registered for GST are eligible to apply.

tools. The products available under this program are listed on the Business Victoria website.

- 5.2 Products chosen by eligible businesses must include:
- a) a new product that is not currently used by the business, or
 - b) upgrading an existing product with additional product features that provide specific digital adaptation capability (example: upgrading an existing website to an e-commerce site), or
 - c) a product available under the program that has been used by the business before (more than one year ago) that it would like to resume using.
- 5.3 The *Small Business Digital Adaptation Program* will not cover the cost of:
- a) renewals of existing product or software licences, or
 - b) minor updates to existing products (example: software version update), or
 - c) products that are not available under the program.
- 5.4 Registered businesses can participate in free training and workshops shown in the training calendar published to the Business Victoria website to be run across metro and regional locations.
- 5.5 Businesses that have existing products and software purchased outside of this program are also able to attend workshops promoted via the Business Victoria website.

6 Assessment process

- 6.1 Evidence of product purchase and other business information provided by applicants will be subject to validation with other government agencies (example: Australian Business Register).
- 6.2 Businesses that have received assistance through the initial Business Support Fund, the Business Support Fund expansion, Round 3 of the Business Support Fund, Sole Trader Support Fund, payroll tax rebate/waiver, or other COVID-19 programs (including hospitality programs) can also apply for support under this program.
- 6.3 Any of the following circumstances may be considered when approving applications:
- a) any adverse findings by a government agency regarding the business
 - b) a business is placed under external administration
 - c) there is a petition to wind up or deregister a company or business
 - d) the business is or becomes deregistered or unregistered (including cancellation or lapse in registration).

7 Compliance with laws and regulations

- 7.1 Businesses registering to participate in the program must comply with all Commonwealth and State financial regulations, privacy laws and consumer laws and regulations.
- 7.2 Applicants agree that relevant information, including name and contact details, may be shared with the training providers they select for the purpose of participating in this program.

8 Program duration and key dates

- 8.1 The *Small Business Digital Adaptation Program* will operate from 15 November 2020 to 30 June 2021.
- 8.2 Registrations for digital product trials and workshops will be open from 15 November 2020 to 28 February 2021.
- 8.3 Applications for purchase rebates of \$1,200 to cover 12 months' access to available digital products will be open from 1 December 2020 to 11.59pm on 31 March 2021, or until funds are exhausted.
- 8.4 Further information may be found at business.vic.gov.au or through the Business Victoria Hotline at 13 22 15.

9 Post project evaluation

- 9.1 All rebate recipients agree to comply with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions' performance monitoring and evaluation regime including participating in evaluation surveys.
- 9.2 Evaluation surveys to assess the effectiveness/impact of the program will be required at six and 12 months following payment of the purchase rebate. This is a non-negotiable requirement for all program participants. Non-compliance could impact future applications to the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions' programs. Program outcomes and participant experience may be used in program evaluation reviews and departmental marketing material.

10 Compliance and audit

- 10.1 Businesses will be ineligible for the program if any information in their application is found to be false or misleading.
- 10.2 If any information in the application is found to be false or misleading, or funds are not applied for the purposes of the business in accordance with the terms of funding as set out in these guidelines and the application, the rebate will be repayable on demand.

11 Other information about this program

- 11.1 The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions reserves the right to amend these guidelines and application terms at any time.
- 11.2 The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions will endeavour to notify all businesses of the outcome of their application within 10 business days.
- 11.3 Rebate recipients agree that de-identified statistical information will be shared by digital product suppliers to enable the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions to measure program success.