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About the Author: Bev Cline is a Toronto-based freelance writer and book author

If you're looking for company financing, don't necessarily think only of your bank or credit union. Think "geography".

Whether your company is in Cape Breton or Victoria, there may be government programmes designed to boost the local economy by investing in small and medium-sized companies.

Trout River Industries (<http://www.troutriverindustries.ca>), in Coleman, Prince Edward Island, reaped the benefits of looking for startup financing close to home. Founded in 2002, the 11-employee company develops and manufactures conveyor-bottom trailers designed to safely unload asphalt and other earthen products.

"We received a loan of close to \$100,000 from West Prince Ventures Ltd., the local Community Business Development Corporation (CBDC)," says local resident Matthew Brown, who launched the company with area neighbour Harvey Stewart.

"We are not replacing existing jobs. We are creating new ones in our area, which has typically suffered from high unemployment. This is an area with an agricultural history and dependence on fishing. Development hasn't tended to come to western P.E.I, like it has to the urban areas."

In rural Atlantic Canada there are 41 CBDCs, sponsored by the federal government. "Local decision-making is the cornerstone of the programme," says Basil Ryan, Chief Operating Officer, Atlantic Association of CBDCs. "The impact on the community is a prime consideration, along with basic business planning criteria in the lending decision."

He notes that the CBDCs are "patient lenders, often funding companies who may not have equity or security, but whose potential success will have a really beneficial effect on their area.

Over at Trout River Industries, Mr. Brown forecasts that his company - which currently sells its units throughout Atlantic Canada and has recently broken into the Ontario market - has the potential to ramp up to 16 or 20 employees in the next two years. "We're not talking big numbers in the short term, " he admits, "but in a rural area like ours another handful of jobs means a lot."

Don't be shy: ask about "geographical" funding

"When entrepreneurs call in and ask about financing, one of the criteria we use is definitely geography," confirms Eugene Sandhu, Contact Centre Manager, Canada-Ontario Business Service Centre in Toronto.

"If your company is located in Northern Ontario, for example, I might direct you to a programme that specifically serves your area. Or I might direct you to your local municipality which may have money to help with expansion financing. Sometimes we can direct you to a number of sources from many levels of government and these could possibly be combined with private financing."

In some cases, accessing financing may hinge on pulling up stakes and moving to a new locale. "If you are flexible about where you locate your company, there may be sources of financing that are not available in your present location," advises Mr. Sandhu.

Surf the web for financing sources

Each of the following web sites is available in English and in French.

<http://www.strategis.gc.ca/sources>

Billed as the "Sources of Financing" web site, this site provides a great number of listings and links to financing for startup or expansion funds. Sources range from large-scale investments to micro-financing. This is an easy-to-use site that lets you access many geographically-specific sources (federal, provincial and municipal). It also provides links to private and private/public initiatives geared to specific communities.

<http://www.cbsc.org>

The Canada Business Service Centres site lets you click on your provincial or territorial flag to visit the appropriate Canada Business Service Centre for your company. Then you can do a combined search of federal, provincial and/or territorial information. The "Talk to Us Live!" feature lets you talk with a business information officer by phone as you search the web together. You can easily search other communities, even provinces, for financing. This is an important feature if you are able to be flexible as to where you locate your company to secure financing.

<http://www.communityfutures.ca>

This web site of the Pan Canadian Community Futures Network provides a "gateway to nearly 300 Community Economic Development Centres across Canada." There are links from this site to every province and territory. For example, it links to the Community Business Development Corporations in Atlantic Canada and the Community Futures Development Corporations in Western Canada.