NorthX 2026 University Call for Innovation

Applicant Guide

DEVELOPED BY NORTHX CLIMATE TECH

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About NorthX

NorthX backs the builders of climate hard tech, pinpointing the critical moment when potential is immense, but capital is scarce — where our strategic investments turn local strengths into global climate solutions.

Rooted in British Columbia (BC) but global in vision, we fund the climate technologies that transform industries and build lasting prosperity. We unite visionaries, investors, and partners to scale solutions that drive deep decarbonization and economic growth for Canada.

NorthX is where the future gets built.

NorthX impact to date

Since its inception in 2021, NorthX Climate Tech (formerly the BC Centre for Innovation and Clean Energy) has become one of the largest Canadian early-stage funders of technology that focus on decarbonizing a majority of BC's largest emitting sectors. In almost five short years, NorthX has generated tangible economic impact in BC and across Canada — funding 74 companies with more than $57 million in capital while catalyzing over $687 million in follow-on investment.

These investments are fuelling the creation of over 900 jobs, more than 75 patents and trade secrets, and the advancement of technologies with the potential to abate 56 megatonnes of emissions per year at scale in 2035. Collectively, they will strengthen competitiveness for industries in BC and support the growth and trade diversification of our core sectors.

NorthX is also ensuring its approach to backing the builders of climate tech brings all our talent to the table. Over 60% of our portfolio companies are led and managed by underrepresented groups, while 28% include Indigenous participation at the core of their company leadership and/or business model. To accelerate commercialization, 38% of our funding has supported university spin-outs, bridging the gap from research to market.

NorthX University Call for Innovation: Program summary

In 2024, NorthX ran its first University Call for Innovation, a pathway to early-stage, non-dilutive funding for entrepreneurial ventures emerging from BC's university entrepreneurship programs (EPs). Delivered in partnership with Innovation UBC, Innovation UBCO, the UVIC Coast Capital Innovation Centre, SFU VentureLabs, the BCIT Entrepreneurship Program, and UNBC's Innovation Program, the call offered up-front funding to nominated ventures advancing direct greenhouse gas (GHG) abatement technologies.

Since 2024, NorthX has dispensed $700,000 across 7 university ventures in BC as part of the university innovation program. The funded ventures are advancing innovative solutions from cutting industrial emissions, supplying low carbon fuels, to reimagining materials and energy storage.

2026 Call for Innovation: Bridging the gap from campus to commercialization

BC's leading universities have built a strong foundation for the province's innovation ecosystem, with cutting-edge research and technology development taking place in university labs, and entrepreneurship programs (EPs) providing the resources and support to help launch that innovation into scalable ventures. Even with this foundation, the pathway from research to a venture with a commercial strategy remains complex and uncertain, and momentum is often lost at the critical stage between lab-based research and field deployment, when funding is hardest to secure.

NorthX seeks to address this through the 2026 University Call for Innovation. As part of the call, NorthX invites companies spinning out of university labs to engage directly with NorthX, or through their university's entrepreneurship program, as they move from campus to commercialization. This direct pathway to early-stage, non-dilutive funding is designed to close the gap between research and field deployment, and we invite interested ventures to apply.

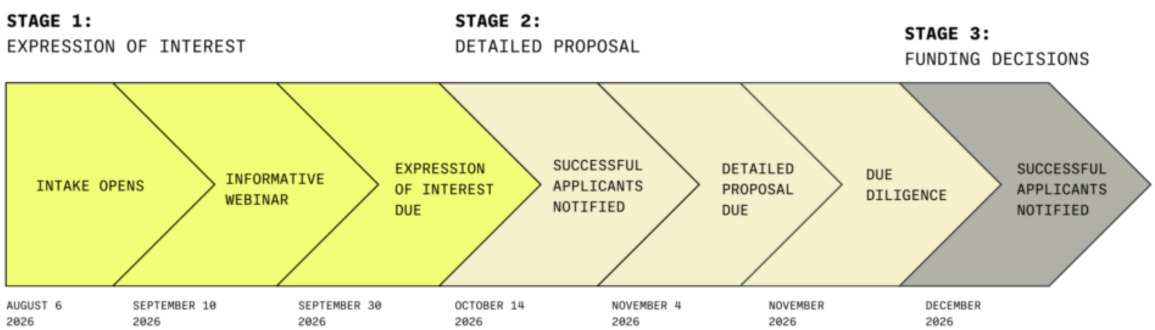
Connecting with university programs

NorthX encourages ventures to connect with their university's technology transfer office and entrepreneurship program for questions specific to their institution, particularly around IP ownership, licensing, or spinout terms. For questions about NorthX's funding opportunity itself, ventures can contact NorthX directly or submit a short Expression of Interest through our website.

Call for Innovation Details

General information

Timeline



Application and evaluation

- Stage 1: Applications include a short video (maximum five minutes) and a written expression of interest
- Stage 2: Successful applicants advance to Stage 2, submitting a pitch deck for competitive evaluation through NorthX's existing systems and processes, and pitch to NorthX's investment committee.
- Stage 3: Projects undergo final due diligence. Those approved sign project funding agreements and receive non-dilutive funding from NorthX.

Funding amount and intake summary

NorthX's goal through the 2026 University Call for Innovation is to provide $100,000 to $250,000 CAD in non-dilutive funding per venture, with the funding amount determined through evaluation against NorthX's criteria, for a total disbursal amount of up to $2M CAD across the fiscal year. NorthX will accept EOIs on a continuous basis throughout the call. EOIs submitted by September 30, 2026 will be reviewed as part of the first cohort, with funding decisions communicated no later than December 2026. EOIs submitted after September 30 will continue to be reviewed and will be considered as part of the next funding decision window in February/March 2027. As funding is limited, ventures are encouraged to submit as early as possible. Funding will be disbursed up front, upon signing a project funding agreement.

Eligibility

Eligible ventures must be developing innovation originating from a lab at a BC-based university, with a clear plan to commercialize independently of the university. NorthX does not fund research activity or university programs — funding must go to a venture pursuing commercialization as a standalone entity.

Ventures must maintain an active relationship with the originating university lab, regardless of how far along the commercialization pathway the venture has progressed. Ventures must hold clear rights — through licensing, assignment, or equivalent arrangement — to the underlying IP.

Ventures must be BC-incorporated at the time of receiving funding. Applications are welcome from ventures where incorporation is imminent (expected within calendar 2026), with BC incorporation confirmed as a condition of funding disbursement. Funding decisions will prioritize ventures demonstrating strong BC benefit, including BC-based operations, employment, and continued economic activity in the province, beyond incorporation alone.

Eligible ventures must hold a technology or innovation at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4-6. Funding is prioritized where the underlying hard technology or innovation aligns with NorthX's core decarbonization focus areas and shows a direct relationship to GHG emissions abatement, leading to the direct removal or replacement of emissions. Technologies that are software-driven and enable the direct abatement of GHG emissions will also be considered.

Multiple ventures originating from the same university lab may each apply, provided each application represents a distinct venture. Ventures that have previously applied to a NorthX Call for Innovation are welcome to apply again, provided the application meets current call criteria. Where a venture has an active NorthX funding agreement, a new application must be based on distinct core IP from the existing agreement.

Funding details

How NorthX funds are used

University Call funding is intended as flexible, up-front support for ventures moving from campus to commercial venture. Eligible uses include, but are not limited to: establishment of the venture, nominal salaries, workplan development, corporate development and fundraising, operating and capital expenses, and legal and IP-related costs.

Use of proceeds is outlined as part of the written application and informs NorthX's funding decisions. Funding may not be used to cover university overhead, lab access fees, sponsored research agreements, or other payments to the originating institution for research activity. As a completion milestone, funded ventures are required to provide NorthX with a full commercialization plan, and use of proceeds may be subject to audit at any time during the term of the funding agreement.

Timeline restrictions on NorthX funds

Funding must be used within one year of receipt, with a report submitted 12 months after signing a PFA to show use and impact of funds. Activities associated with university call funding must be completed prior to securing additional funding from NorthX, upon completion of activities, NorthX welcomes the opportunity for consideration of follow-on funding.

Evaluation criteria

General

The University Call for Innovation is evaluated by NorthX staff and subject matter experts. Ventures are eligible for $100,000 in non-dilutive funding based on the following major decision criteria:

- **Commercial readiness**: the venture shows potential for commercialization, has a plan for business development with a clear understanding of the cost requirements to reach the commercialization stage, and the technology or innovation leads to significant GHG abatement.
- **Team strength:** the management team holds the academic, financial, and/or operational skills required for venture development, and can identify where the team needs to grow to meet commercialization needs.
- **Technology viability:** the plan for technology development is realistic, barriers have been identified with clear and measurable plans to overcome them, and regulatory, permitting, and IP ownership issues are addressed to enable implementation.
- **Regulatory compliance:** the proposal is feasible within existing regulatory frameworks in the venture's planned operating jurisdiction.

- **Social impact:** the venture demonstrates environmental, social, and governance impact benefits, including impact on Indigenous communities and the enhancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Considerations for funding above $100,000

Ventures may be considered for funding up to $250,000 where they demonstrate one or more of the following, in addition to the criteria above:

- **Team readiness**: the venture has a full-time founder or founding team committed to the business (not solely academic appointments), demonstrating the operational capacity to deploy a larger amount of capital effectively.
- **Advanced technology validation**: the technology sits at the upper end of the TRL 4-6 range, with a clearly scoped and costed plan to reach its next commercialization milestone.
- **Secured IP position**: IP has been formally assigned, licensed, or optioned from the university to the venture, reducing legal and ownership risk to execution.
- **External validation**: the venture has secured, or is close to securing, matching capital, pilot customers, letters of intent, or follow-on investor interest.
- **Clear commercialization potential:** a defined customer need with demonstrated willingness to pay, evidenced through customer discovery, letters of intent, or early revenue.
- **Milestone-specific capital need**: the proposed use of funds is tied to a defined, higher-cost activity required to reach the next commercialization stage (e.g., pilot-scale testing, specialized equipment, third-party validation), rather than general operating costs.
- **Greater emissions impact at scale**: the technology demonstrates a larger potential GHG abatement impact at commercial scale relative to other applications.

Application process

Stages of application

A staged application process funnels ventures from initial expression of interest to final evaluation, as outlined below. All applications will be submitted to NorthX through the application portal, found at portal.northx.ca.

Stage 1 — Expression of Interest ("EOI")

The expression of interest includes both a written and video component. The written component is a short summary of the company, covering the technology or innovation, its climate effect, the business opportunity, a company overview, and the proposed use of proceeds.

The accompanying video submission has a maximum length of five minutes. Video quality and production elements are not evaluated or prioritized in the decision process.

Questions to be addressed in the video include:

1. **Who are you and why this problem?**
   - Introduce yourself and your company and tell us about your journey as a founder. Why did you decide to focus on this climate challenge?
2. **What are you building?**
   - What is your technology or innovation, what specific market gap or problem does it solve, and what clearly differentiates your approach from existing alternatives?
3. **What is the current status of your company and technology?**
   - Please describe the current stage of your company and the commercial readiness of your technology. Highlight any traction such as prototypes, customers, partners, funding, and your anticipated path to market. What will differentiate your product economically and competitively from existing options?
4. **What would NorthX support unlock?**
   - What outcomes will this funding unlock over the next 12-18 months? What measurable climate, economic, or social impacts do you expect, and how does the venture's commercialization model align with NorthX's mandate?

Information for the written expression of interest

To help you and your team prepare for the online submission, the following information will be requested as part of the written EOI.

General information and company overview

- Company name, incorporation, address, website
- University affiliation / lab origin
- Project/venture title, short summary, and location
- Company size
- Primary contact and details

Innovation-specific data

- Technology type
- Technology readiness level
- Planned project (if applicable), including location, partners, total cost, ending TRL
- IP ownership status
- Regulatory compliance status
- Commercial readiness level
- Diversity and inclusion

Effect on GHG emissions

- How does the project replace/remove GHG emissions?
- What is the project-level GHG emissions impact, and over what period?
- What is the scaled-level GHG emissions impact, and over what period?
- How does this innovation compare to the technology baseline on emissions?
- Indicate how GHG emissions claims are validated, if any validation.

The EOI is reviewed and assessed by NorthX's internal review committee. Results are shared directly with applicants, and a shortlist of candidates advances to Stage 2.

Stage 2 — Detailed pitch

Shortlisted ventures are subject to due diligence and are required to sign a confidentiality agreement before submitting any further materials to NorthX. This stage includes the preparation of a pitch deck, using a provided template, covering key aspects of the company's technology, impact, and planned path to commercialization, along with a presentation to NorthX's investment committee.

All shortlisted ventures undergo a standard review, including a technical assessment of the technology or business model, a financial review of the venture, and a legal review, conducted by both external partners and NorthX's internal due diligence team.

Ventures being considered for funding above $100,000 may undergo additional due diligence proportional to the requested amount, including a deeper technical or financial review, verification of IP ownership status, and a site visit to see the technology or innovation in person.

NorthX concludes Stage 2 by communicating with shortlisted ventures on whether their application advances to Stage 3.

Stage 3 — Funding decision

Successful ventures work with NorthX to finalize any outstanding due diligence and move toward a project funding agreement, which sets out the obligations of both parties as a binding agreement governing the relationship between NorthX and the venture. The project funding agreement identifies key activities to be completed within the term of the agreement.

As a completion milestone, all funded ventures are required to submit a full commercialization plan to NorthX, along with the actual use of proceeds from the funding received. Use of proceeds may be subject to audit at any time during the term of the agreement.

Thank you for your interest. For inquiries, please contact info@northx.ca.