NorthX

NorthX 2026 University Call for Innovation

Frequently Asked Questions

Developed by: NorthX Climate Tech

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About the Call

What is the NorthX University Call for Innovation?

The NorthX University Call for Innovation is NorthX's direct pathway to early-stage, non-dilutive funding for ventures spinning out of labs at BC's universities. It helps accelerate the commercialization of promising climate hard tech, supporting researchers and founders as they move breakthrough technology from the lab toward market readiness and company formation.

Why is NorthX launching a University Call for Innovation?

Many of the world's most important climate technologies begin as university research, but the pathway from research discovery to a venture with a commercial strategy remains complex and uncertain. Momentum is often lost at the critical stage between lab-based research and field deployment, when funding is hardest to secure. The University Call for Innovation is designed to close that gap with direct, early-stage capital.

What does NorthX mean by "climate hard tech"?

Climate hard tech is physical, not just digital: steel, circuits, and chemistry, rather than an app. It's the infrastructure, machinery, and industrial processes needed to decarbonize BC's largest emitting sectors at scale. NorthX backs this kind of technology because it's capital-intensive and often overlooked by conventional funders.

What types of technologies is NorthX looking to support?

NorthX prioritizes hard technology with a direct relationship to GHG emissions abatement (technology that leads to the direct removal or replacement of emissions). Software-driven technologies that enable direct abatement are also considered. Priority goes to innovation aligned with NorthX's core decarbonization focus areas. Ventures unsure of fit are encouraged to reach out to NorthX directly.

What stage of venture development is this funding intended for?

This call is built for the stage between lab-based research and field deployment: after a technology has left the lab (Technology Readiness Level 4-6) but before it's a fully funded, mature commercial venture. NorthX does not fund research activity or university programs, funding must go to a venture pursuing commercialization as a standalone entity.

Has NorthX run a University Call for Innovation before?

Yes. NorthX ran its first University Call for Innovation in 2024, 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. Since then, NorthX has dispensed $700,000 across seven university ventures, funding solutions ranging from cutting industrial emissions and supplying low carbon fuels to reimagining materials and energy storage.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply?

Eligible ventures must be developing innovation that originated from a lab at a BC-based university, hold a technology at TRL 4-6, and have a clear plan to commercialize independently of the university. Funding is prioritized where the technology shows a direct relationship to GHG emissions abatement. Ventures must also hold clear rights to the underlying IP and be BC-incorporated, or have incorporation imminent, at the time of receiving funding — see below for detail on both.

What counts as a "BC-based university" for this call?

Any post-secondary institution based in BC with an active research lab is eligible under the 2026 call. NorthX's six 2024 university partners — Innovation UBC, Innovation UBCO, the UVic Coast Capital Innovation Centre, SFU VentureLabs, the BCIT Entrepreneurship Program, and UNBC's Innovation Program — offer an established referral pathway, but a formal partnership with NorthX is not a requirement to apply.

What counts as an "active relationship" with the originating lab?

This can take several forms: a formal licensing or IP assignment agreement, an ongoing research collaboration, or continued involvement of the lab's principal investigator or researcher as an advisor or team member. What matters is that the connection back to the lab that produced the underlying IP is documented and current, not that the venture remains physically based on campus.

Can individual researchers apply, or do I need to go through my university?

Ventures can apply directly to NorthX through the application portal, or through their university's entrepreneurship program, both paths are open for the 2026 call. Researchers who haven't yet formed a venture should connect with their institution's technology transfer office or entrepreneurship program to work through incorporation and IP questions before applying, since NorthX funds ventures pursuing commercialization, not research activity on its own.

Do ventures need to be incorporated at the time of application?

Not necessarily at the time of application, but 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. If you haven't yet formed a company at all, connect with your university's technology transfer office or entrepreneurship program early — they can help you work through incorporation and IP questions before you submit.

Are student and researcher-led ventures eligible?

Yes, provided the venture meets the standard eligibility requirements: innovation originating from a BC university lab, a clear commercialization plan independent of the university, and clear rights to the underlying IP.

Can ventures that have previously received NorthX funding apply again?

Yes. 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 holds an active NorthX funding agreement, a new application must be based on distinct core IP from the existing agreement.

Can more than one venture from the same lab apply?

Yes. Multiple ventures originating from the same university lab may each apply, provided each application represents a distinct venture.

Can I apply if my venture involves co-founders or IP from more than one BC university?

Yes, provided the venture meets the standard eligibility requirements: the underlying innovation originated from a BC university lab, the venture holds clear rights to the IP through licensing, assignment, or an equivalent arrangement, and it maintains an active relationship with the originating lab or labs. Ventures with IP or founders spanning multiple institutions are encouraged to contact NorthX directly to confirm fit before applying.

What are the IP requirements?

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

Funding

How much funding is available?

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.Is the funding equity-based?

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No. Funding through the University Call for Innovation is non-dilutive. NorthX doesn't take equity in exchange for it. Funding is disbursed up front, upon signing a project funding agreement.

Why is this funding disbursed up front, rather than through reimbursement?

NorthX's typical funding model reimburses costs as milestones are completed. The University Call for Innovation works differently: funding is disbursed up front, upon signing a project funding agreement. This reflects the earlier stage of these ventures, where predictable, immediate capital matters more than reimbursement against invoiced costs. Funded ventures remain accountable for how proceeds are used, and use of proceeds may be subject to audit at any time during the term of the agreement.

What would it take to be considered 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 meeting the standard evaluation criteria:

- **Team readiness:** a full-time founder or founding team committed to the business, not solely academic appointments, demonstrating the capacity to deploy a larger amount of capital effectively.
- **Advanced technology validation:** technology at the upper end of the TRL 4-6 range, with a clearly scoped and costed plan to reach the next commercialization milestone.

- **Secured IP position:** IP formally assigned, licensed, or optioned from the university to the venture.
- **External validation:** matching capital, pilot customers, letters of intent, or follow-on investor interest secured or nearly secured.
- **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:** proposed use of funds tied to a defined, higher-cost activity needed to reach the next commercialization stage, rather than general operating costs.
- **Greater emissions impact at scale:** a larger potential GHG abatement impact at commercial scale relative to other applications.

What can funding be used for?

University Call funding is flexible, up-front support for ventures moving from campus to commercial venture. Eligible uses include, but are not limited to:

- Establishment of the venture, including incorporation costs
- Nominal salaries
- Workplan development
- Corporate development and fundraising
- Operating and capital expenses
- Legal and IP-related costs

Can funding support incorporation or founder time?

Yes. Eligible uses include establishment of the venture, which covers incorporation, and nominal salaries for the founding team's time.

Are there restrictions on how funding can be used?

Yes. 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 must 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.

Are there timeline restrictions on how funds are spent?

Funding must be used within one year of receipt, with a report submitted 12 months after signing a project funding agreement to show the use and impact of funds. Activities associated with university call funding must be completed before a venture secures additional funding from NorthX.

Application Process

How do I apply?

All applications are submitted through the application portal at portal.northx.ca. Ventures can apply directly, or through their university's entrepreneurship program.

What is the application and evaluation process?

The process runs in three stages:

- **Stage 1 — Expression of Interest (EOI):** a written submission and a short video, maximum five minutes.
- **Stage 2 — Detailed pitch:** shortlisted ventures sign a confidentiality agreement, submit a pitch deck, and present to NorthX's investment committee.
- **Stage 3 — Funding decision:** successful ventures complete final due diligence and sign a project funding agreement to receive non-dilutive funding.

What does the written expression of interest need to include?

The written EOI 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. NorthX will request:

- **General information and company overview:** company name, incorporation, address, and website; university affiliation and lab origin; project or venture title, short summary, and location; company size; and primary contact details.
- **Innovation-specific data:** technology type; technology readiness level; planned project details, including location, partners, total cost, and ending TRL, if applicable; IP ownership status; regulatory compliance status; commercial readiness level; and diversity and inclusion information.
- **Effect on GHG emissions:** how the project replaces or removes GHG emissions; project-level and scaled-level emissions impact and the period over which each

applies; how the innovation compares to the technology baseline; and how any GHG emissions claims are validated.

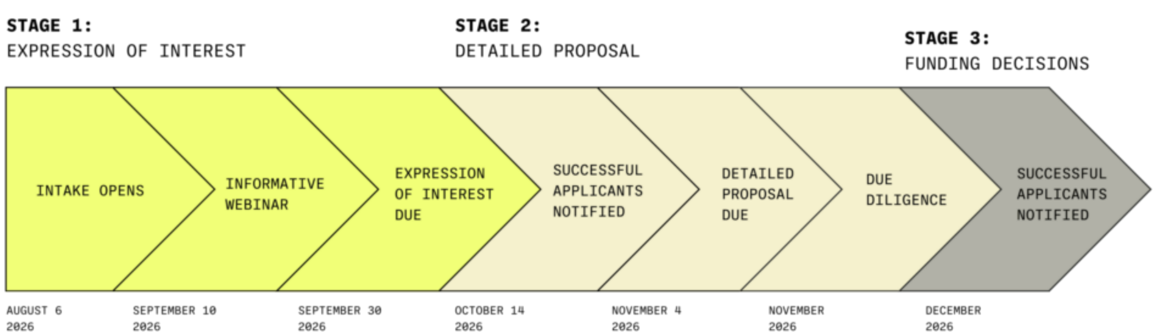
What should the video cover?

Video quality and production elements aren't evaluated or prioritized — NorthX cares about the content. The video should address:

- **Who you are and why this problem:** your journey as a founder and why you're focused on this climate challenge.
- **What you're building:** your technology or innovation, the market gap or problem it solves, and what differentiates your approach from existing alternatives.
- **The current status of your company and technology:** your commercial readiness, any traction such as prototypes, customers, partners, or funding, and your anticipated path to market.
- **What NorthX support would unlock:** the outcomes this funding would unlock over the next 12-18 months, and the measurable climate, economic, or social impacts you expect.

What is the application deadline?

The expected timeline for the first 2026 intake is:



What if I miss the September 30th deadline?

September 30 marks the first review cohort, not the end of the opportunity. NorthX is running the 2026 University Call for Innovation on a continuous basis, with up to $2M CAD available across the fiscal year. EOIs submitted by September 30 will be reviewed with funding decisions communicated no later than December 2026. EOIs submitted after that date will still be reviewed, and will be considered as part of the next funding decision window in February/March

2027. Ventures are encouraged to apply as early as possible, but a missed deadline does not mean a missed opportunity.

What criteria will applications be evaluated against?

Ventures are evaluated by NorthX staff and subject matter experts against five 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.

What makes a strong application?

A strong application shows genuine commercialization potential, a management team with the skills, or a clear plan to build them, to execute, a realistic technology development plan with identified barriers and measurable milestones, and a clear connection between the technology and meaningful GHG abatement. Ventures seeking funding above $100,000 strengthen their case with external validation such as pilot customers or follow-on investor interest, a secured IP position, and a clearly scoped, milestone-specific use of funds.

What happens after I submit an EOI?

NorthX's internal review committee reviews and assesses every EOI. Results are shared directly with each venture, and a shortlist of candidates advances to Stage 2.

Shortlisted ventures sign a confidentiality agreement before submitting further materials, then prepare a pitch deck and present to NorthX's investment committee. All shortlisted ventures undergo a standard review: a technical assessment of the technology or business model, a financial review, and a legal review conducted by 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 amount requested, including a deeper technical or financial review, verification of IP ownership, and a site visit.

Successful ventures move to a project funding agreement that sets out the obligations of both parties and the key activities to be completed within its term.

NorthX Support

What support does NorthX provide beyond funding?

NorthX provides more than capital. Funded ventures gain access to NorthX's network of climate tech investors, industry partners, and fellow portfolio companies across BC, helping accelerate the journey from innovation to impact.

Does receiving funding guarantee future investment from NorthX?

No. The University Call provides early-stage, one-time support and does not guarantee future investment. Activities tied to this funding must be completed before a venture can secure additional NorthX funding , but once they are, NorthX welcomes the opportunity to consider follow-on funding.

Will selected ventures be featured publicly?

NorthX may highlight funded ventures through its own communications channels. Any details around public recognition will be discussed directly with funded ventures in advance.

For University Partners

How can universities participate?

The 2026 call builds on partnerships established in 2024 with Innovation UBC, Innovation UBCO, the UVIC Coast Capital Innovation Centre, SFU VentureLabs, the BCIT Entrepreneurship Program, and UNBC's Innovation Program. Universities interested in a formal partnership can contact NorthX at info@northx.ca to discuss participation.

What role do university entrepreneurship programs play?

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 spin-out terms. Entrepreneurship programs also help identify and support promising ventures through the application process. For questions about NorthX's funding opportunity itself, ventures can contact NorthX directly or submit an expression of interest through the application portal.