Next Generation Networks Demonstration Program

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Program Information and Eligibility Requirements

Overview and Benefits

The Next Generation Networks (NGN) Demonstration Program is one of three Advanced Technology Platform (ATP) Demonstration Programs. Other ATP Demonstration Programs include the IBM Innovation Incubator Project Customer Demonstration Program and ENCQOR 5G Demonstration Program. Applicants can apply for more than one demonstration program if they meet the program-specific eligibility criteria.

The NGN Demonstration Program is designed to support Ontario based small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to use the CENGN testbed to further develop proof-of-concept or demonstrations that could lead to new technologies, products, processes and/or services. Funding is available for stand-alone SME projects or SME collaborations with industry partners and/or public sector organizations such as municipalities, healthcare facilities or public utilities. Proof-of-concept project activities can include, but are not limited to, technology adoption demonstration, start-up or scale-up support, prototyping, product testing and applied research and development ("R&D").

Program objectives

- Advance innovation in Next Generation Network technologies;
- Increase economic impact for Ontario-based SMEs and Ontario;
- Enhance productivity, competitiveness and skills development;
- Identify and bridge barriers to adoption of NGN technology.

The NGN program provides an opportunity for innovative SMEs to prove or showcase the value of their technology and accelerate their path to market. In addition to project funding, successful applicants will have access to business services and support via the Innovation Hubs.

The Next Generation Network program is delivered by OCI on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Benefits to the Applicant
- Accelerate time to market by demonstrating hardware and software commercialization capability through access to state-of-the-art network and cloud platform   - Third-party interoperability validation and support   - Exposure and connection to CENGN partner members

How Funding Works

OCI Contribution	50 per cent (maximum) of total eligible project costs, up to $50,000
Applicant Contribution	50 per cent (minimum) of total eligible project costs (i.e. minimum 1:1 match to OCI contribution)

Example	Total eligible project costs: $100,000
	- Maximum OCI contribution: $50,000 - Minimum industry partner contribution: $50,000 cash
Funding Recipient	SME applicant company
Institutional Overhead	N/A

Eligibility Requirements

Applicant

- An Innovation-Driven Enterprise (IDE), using or developing technology innovation or innovative processes for competitive advantage in provincial, national and/or global markets
- For-profit, incorporated in Ontario or Canada, and has a valid CRA business number
- A small- or medium-sized enterprise (SME - less than 500 employees), with a validated innovative product/service
- Has operations with R&D in Ontario related to the project
- Has the intent and potential to apply, exploit and/or commercialize the results of the project for the economic benefit of Ontario
- Has the necessary expertise and resources to put the project into effect within an appropriate time frame
- In good financial and reporting standing with OCI
- Companies with over $500,000 of OCI funding in their lifetime (inclusive of current application), will be required to obtain OCI approval before a new application fur funding is initiated.
- Awardees must agree to cooperate with OCI in the development of case studies

Strategic Partner

- SME applicant companies may choose to apply in collaboration with a strategic partner company, but it is not mandatory
- A strategic partner could be a private industry partner and/or public sector organizations such as a municipality, a healthcare facility or a public utility
- The strategic partner company should represent a significant potential commercial partner/strategic client for the proposed innovative product/service
- The SME and strategic partner must have an arm's-length business relationship

Project

- Projects must support technology adoption demonstration, prototyping, product testing and/or applied research and development ("R&D")
- Solution should be **highly innovative or disruptive**, by providing a novel, or radically different approach to solve a problem for the intended customer segment, industry sector or partner

- Solution MUST be the basis for a highly competitive business and MUST offer good return on investment and benefits to Ontario (e.g. new revenues, job creation/retention, productivity improvement)
- Solution MUST already have all necessary certifications, if required, for a project to be executed

How to Apply

Application Process and Timelines

Program Status: Open for applications (accepted on a rolling basis)

1. Applications MUST be initiated in AccessOCI by an OCI Business Development Manager (BDM). Once initiated, the Applicant will receive login information to begin completing the application. Companies that wish to be connected with an OCI Business Development Manager should submit a Client Intake Form.

   Please note: completion of this form does not constitute an application for funding. A BDM will contact you within two business days to discuss the opportunity. If you are already working with a BDM, please indicate this in the form.

2. Once the BDM confirms that the opportunity is suitable for the program, you will be sent a link to OCI's online application system, AccessOCI.
3. Complete the online application form and upload the required supporting documents
   - Required supporting documents:
     - Résumés/CVs from relevant team members
     - Letter of support from strategic partner company (to be included only if a Strategic Partner is engaged with the project)
     - Company profile from strategic partner company (to be included only if a Strategic Partner is engaged with the project)
4. Request your BDM to provide an endorsement of the application. **The endorsement must be requested at least one week prior to submission.** Once the endorsement is provided, the applicant or BDM will then be able to submit the application.
5. OCI will internally review the application within approximately one week for eligibility, completeness and financial compliance. A list of any deficiencies will be sent to the applicant for revision.
6. When the application is endorsed as eligible and complete by OCI's internal team, the application will be sent for review by external, subject matter experts as well as the ATP Review Committee, which includes program partner organizations Ciena, Ericsson Canada, Thales, CENGN and IBM Canada.
7. Applicants will be notified of OCI's decision regarding funding by email.
8. Once the application is approved for funding, the applicant will be forwarded a copy of OCI's standard funding agreement, with an embedded copy of the submitted application and Schedule D, for execution. This funding agreement must be signed, via OCI's online electronic signature function, by the applicant and returned to OCI.

   - **Please note: the OCI Funding Agreement is non-negotiable.**

Reference Documents

- Eligible Expenditures Guide
- OCI Funding Agreement
- Reporting Instructions
- Proposal Questions - (Note: this sample application template is for informational purposes only. Applications are only accepted through OCI's online system where full application requirements are listed).
- Letter of Support Template - (Note: Letter of Support is only required if an application includes a strategic partner. Applications with no strategic partner are not required to submit a Letter of Support.)

Innovation Hubs

- Communitech
- Invest Ottawa
- MaRS

Assessment Process and Criteria

The Next Generation Networks Demonstration program is a discretionary, non-entitlement program with limited funding. All eligible applications undergo a review process where the applications are evaluated against program objectives and other assessment criteria. Not all eligible applications will be approved for funding.

Applications are internally reviewed for eligibility, completeness and financial compliance, prior to evaluation by external reviewers with domain expertise from academia and industry, including representatives from the ATP Program partners (CENGN/5G ENCQOR/IBM). All reviewers are bound by Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs). The final funding decision is made by OCI.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated against assessment criteria including, but not limited to:

- Clarity of the company challenge, significance of the opportunity, and expected economic benefit to the company and Ontario (e.g. new revenues, job creation/retention, productivity improvements)
- Ability of the innovation to address the company challenge
- Expertise and experience of the team members, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and evidence of collaboration
- If a receptor/strategic partner is involved, their potential role and impact on accelerating the innovation's path to market
- Clarity, feasibility and appropriateness of the project plan and budget
- Evidence of next steps, and clear strategy and capacity to bring the results to market and/or implement at the company
- Overall quality and completeness of the application

Project Activation, Funds and Reporting

Project Activation

- Upon execution of the funding agreement, OCI will activate the project in the AccessOCI system.

Flow of Funds

- Upon activation, OCI will release a payment equal to 25 per cent of project funding. 65 per cent of project funding will be released on a claims and reimbursement model via interim reports. The remaining 10 per cent of the OCI award will be held back until project completion. For example:

OCI award amount	$50,000
Applicant contribution	$50,000
Funds released upon project activation	$12,500
Funds released via claims and reimbursement process	$32,500
Holdback	$5,000

  o OCI will not release any funds until the project is activated and will not be held responsible for any expenses incurred for the project prior to activation. If, for any reason, the requirements for activation are not met within thirty (30) days from the date of release of the approval notification, the funding offer may be retracted.

- The holdback will be released upon project completion and receipt of the following: applicant final progress and financial reports.

Project Reporting

The following project reports will be required.

Please note that to receive funding from OCI, the applicant MUST complete all required reports as a contractual obligation.

Interim Progress and Claims Report(s)

Interim report(s), including progress, proof of expenditures, financial attestation, and a request for reimbursement may be submitted up to twice per fiscal year – by applicant company only.

Copies of detailed Reporting Instructions will be sent to successful applicants at the time of contracting. The report must be received and approved by OCI prior to release of funds for eligible claims.

Note: Applicants MUST retain all proof of purchases, receipts, and other relevant documentation relating to eligible expenses. These should be included in the Interim Progress and Claim Report.

Final Results

A final report, including progress, proof of expenditures, financial attestation, and a request for reimbursement, will be required at the end of the project. Forty-five (45) days prior to the scheduled completion date, the Applicant will receive a notification of the project end date from OCI's AccessOCI system, with a link to the Final Project and Claims Report should the Applicant wish to begin entering data.

- Applicants are required to report on project milestones, success stories, deviations, financials, and commercialization + economic outputs

If an extension to complete the project is required, the Applicant must request it prior to the scheduled project completion date, using the Project Administration tab in their AccessOCI project file. A maximum extension of three months will be allowable.

On the scheduled project completion date, the Applicant will receive notification and a link to complete a Final Project Report (including progress, financials and metrics) from OCI's AccessOCI system. Reports must be received and approved by OCI within thirty (30) days of project completion.

All required final reports by all partners must be submitted within thirty (30) days of project completion in order to release the holdback and maintain good financial standing with OCI.

If early reporting is required, the applicant MAY request it by emailing the Program Manager.

Project Metrics

If the project continues past a fiscal year end (March 31), the Applicant will be required to complete an annual Metrics survey each April, for the part of the project that has been completed since the previous March 31. This annual report is mandatory for OCI to fulfil its contract with its funding Ministries. Required metrics reports from all partners must be submitted in order to maintain good financial standing with OCI.

Retrospective Survey

At one, two, and three years after project completion, the applicant will be sent a link to complete a retrospective survey to collect data on commercial outcomes from the project. This information is required by OCI for assessment of program impact and continuous improvement.

Project Changes

- The applicant must contact the Program Manager for any material change in the project, including, but not limited to, changes related to the project's principal investigator, the industry partner, scope of work or eligible expenses, when they are identified.

- For any variances to the OCI budget of $5,000 or greater, or extensions to the project end date, the applicant must complete a Project Change Request form prior to the project end date, using the Project Administration tab in their AccessOCI project file.

- For any other material change to the project, including, but not limited to, changes related to the project's principal investigator, the industry partner, scope of work or eligible expenses, the applicant must contact the Program Manager as soon as the changes are known.

Contacts

Search OCI's Knowledge Base of Frequently Asked Questions.

For further questions regarding program guidelines, eligibility, and submitting the online application, please contact your OCI Business Development Manager

For other inquiries, please contact:

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