

Northern Ontario Regional Technology Development Site (RTDS) – Call for Proposals

Background

The 2021 Ontario budget ([2021 Ontario Budget | Chapter 1B](#)) stated the province's renewed commitment to invest in the future of transportation through the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN). Building on the success of the Autonomous Vehicle Innovation Network (AVIN), OVIN's expanded mandate includes accelerating the development of next generation electric, connected and autonomous vehicle and mobility technologies and supporting Ontario's role as the manufacturing hub of Canada.

A key component of OVIN is providing a network of Regional Technology Development Sites (RTDS) across Ontario, with the following purpose:

1. Act as a regional network that entrepreneurs, start-ups, and SMEs can use for the development of automotive technology and mobility solutions, including testing, validation, and prototyping;
2. Provide access to specialized equipment, hardware, software, business and technical advisory services, and co-location spaces for start-ups and SMEs in the automotive technology and mobility sector that will reduce barriers to innovation;
3. Support regional commercialization of intellectual property from post-secondary institutions, entrepreneurs, start-ups, and SMEs to scale Made-in-Ontario technologies and solutions; and
4. Support regional testing and piloting of technologies and solutions that will lead to adoption and deployment.

Each regional site focuses on a unique aspect of the automotive and smart mobility sector, such as hardware, security, data analytics.

With the expansion of OVIN's mandate, OVIN now seeks to establish a new RTDS in Northern Ontario. This site's focus will be on battery technology and electrification, with the site's activities oriented around the development and nurturing of Ontario's Battery and Electric Vehicle (BEV) supply chain from initial critical minerals refining to downstream battery cell design, electric vehicle (EV) powertrain, manufacturing, and other related EV technologies.

This new RTDS will leverage Northern Ontario's existing talent, mining and mineral expertise, and leadership to provide Northern and BEV SMEs with support under the RTDS model.

Call for Proposals

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, OVIN seeks proposals from interested parties to form the new Northern Ontario Regional Technology Development Site.

Please connect with our Sector Managers to receive a copy of the full application form.

A summary of the scope and application process is provided below.

Eligibility

The Applicant must be a not-for-profit or consortium of not-for-profits operating in Northern Ontario with a successful track record supporting Northern Ontario's innovation economy. Established Research Innovation Centres, academic institutions, economic development corporations, not-for-profits, and industry associations may apply.

The Applicant may include sites in multiple locations across Northern Ontario to form the Regional Technology Development Site. Consortium models are encouraged, however there should be one Lead Applicant organization who will lead and coordinate all RTDS activities.

Northern Ontario is defined as "all areas north of, and including, the districts of Parry Sound and Nipissing".

Scope of Work

The Northern RTDS (NRTDS) will support SMEs to develop BEV and EV technologies across the value chain, from critical minerals extraction to EV technology manufacturing.

The Northern RTDS will serve as a location to test and validate technologies, support prototyping, and provide access to equipment and services to support the development and commercialisation of technologies. Typical project activities include technology development, product/service validation, testing, proof of concept, demonstration. Projects can also include advisory, networking, education, and financing activities.

The site will be collaborative, sharing best practices, networking opportunities and other services with the other Regional Technology Development Sites across Ontario.

It is expected that the site will act as a resource hub for OVIN in the region, coordinating activities among and engaging with stakeholders across the ecosystem.

Potential NRTDS activities include but are not limited to providing:

- Space for entrepreneurs, start-ups, and SMEs to co-locate
- Space to test, validate & prototype technologies
- Access to specialized equipment to be used for the testing, development, and demonstration of new products and technologies
- Business and technical advisory services
- Networking and collaboration opportunities

The new Northern RTDS will use an Open Innovation Ecosystem Model (sharing of knowledge) to ensure SMEs (including start-ups and entrepreneurs) retain intellectual property. The site should bring resources and partners within the innovation ecosystem together to create collaborative spaces and an environment that enables innovation to thrive.

Use of Funds

The maximum contribution from OVIN to NRTDS's budget is \$4M over a period of 3 years; April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2025. Funding will flow from OCI to the Lead Applicant organization. If the application is made by a consortium, the Lead Applicant will be responsible for coordination and oversight of delivery plans, regular reporting, and distribution of funds to partner organizations.

Required Private and Public Sector Contributions

A minimum of 1:1 in private sector contributions is required to be secured over the contracted funding period. Private sector contributions can be comprised of direct funding, value of staff time, operations, and value of equipment or services provided to the site. To be eligible as a matching contribution, private sector contributions must be unencumbered from other public funding sources.

Other non-private sector sources of funding, such as from municipalities and academia, are valued and will be measured separately. There is no minimum matching requirement for public funds. These do not contribute to the private sector match requirement.

As part of the agreement, OCI reserves the right to revise the approved funding amounts based on the evaluation of the business plan, or failure to achieve the private sector match requirements.

Contributors to the RTDS may include industry (SMEs, NEs and MNEs), publicly-funded academic institutions, economic development corporations, not-for-profits, indigenous communities, municipalities, transit authorities, road and railroad operators, or utilities.

Operating Period and Reporting Expectations

The Northern RTDS will be operating from December 1, 2021 to March 31, 2025. All final reporting will be due by April 30, 2025.

The NRTDS will report on progress semi-annually. Funding disbursements are made on approval of semi-annual reports. Funding is provided on reimbursement basis and an initial advance upon activation.

Refer to the eligible expenditures guide in the Business Plan Template for a list of allowable expenses. Eligible expenses include salaries and benefits of staff, operating costs, travel and living costs, and lease and facilities improvements. Note that funding is intended to support clients through the site's resources and facilities. It is not meant to be used to seed clients or directly fund client projects.

Evaluation Criteria

Your proposal will be evaluated on the following categories:

- Lead applicant organization and partners' background, experience and track record of success
- Description of proposed NRTDS area(s) of focus: unique value proposition and overall potential impact and expected outcomes, including the expected number of SMEs to be supported
- Description of proposed NRTDS site: physical space(s), technology platforms, facilities and specialized equipment, other infrastructure and compliance to standards
- Quality, effectiveness and diversity of proposed activities, and how these activities will support Ontario SMEs to achieve the above stated RTDS objectives

- Proposed budget and use of funds, ensuring realistic forecasts and demonstrating value for money
- The secured and potential private sector leverage from private and public sector sources (minimum 1:1 match for private sector sources)
- Strength, diversity, and value of partnerships (including private sector partners and partnerships with other organizations) and their contributions, roles, leadership, and commitment to the site
- Sustainability, including expected impact to the region and to Ontario
- Intellectual Property policies enabling open innovation
- Quality and strength of the site's proposed governance structure
- Quality and strength of the outreach and marketing plan to effectively engage with organizations across the region
- Risk-mitigation strategy
- The secured and support from contributing organizations, as demonstrated through letters of support.

Application & Award Process

The application template is available upon request from the Sector Managers.

Your proposal must be submitted through email to ovinteam@oc-innovation.ca by 23:59 on January 25, 2022. Please include "Northern RTDS Business Plan" in the subject line.

An internal review will be conducted. Only complete applications meeting the requirements above will be approved and advanced for external review.

External review consists of a panel of experts who will score your proposal.

A presentation to the panel will be carried out before OCI makes a final decision.

A decision is expected in the first week of **March 2022**.

The winning proposal will undertake a contracting process with OCI outlining the terms and conditions of the NRTDS project.

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