About the Awards

The Ontario Centre of Innovation (OCI) is proud to be launching 5 brand-new awards powered by AWS Canada to highlight innovative Ontario companies leveraging AI for the greatest impact.

There are five awards in total: one overall AI Innovation Award and one for each of the four key sectors (Mining, Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, and Agri-Food) in OCI's Critical Industrial Technologies (CIT) initiative.

The Award prize amounts to $10,000: $5,000 cash & $5,000 in AWS Cloud Credits.

The 5 Awards:

- 2026 AWS Artificial Intelligence Innovation Award

- OCI Artificial Intelligence Award for Advanced Manufacturing powered by AWS

- OCI Artificial Intelligence Award for Agri-Food powered by AWS

- OCI Artificial Intelligence Award for Construction powered by AWS

- OCI Artificial Intelligence Award for Mining powered by AWS

These awards are designed to recognize top Ontario SMEs leveraging artificial intelligence, one of the future-forward critical technologies supported by the CIT initiative, in significant ways to drive significant impact. Companies can nominate for sector-specific awards or the sector-agnostic, AWS Artificial Intelligence Innovation Award.

Impact can be evidenced through **(1) Innovation**: Introduction of new technologies or products that address unmet critical technology needs or improve existing solutions. **(2) Economic Growth**: Creation/retention of jobs, attracting investment **(3) Disruptive Impact:** Development and commercialization of transformative solutions that integrate/adopt AI into one of the four respective key sectors. **(4) Outcomes:** Record of the development of a new solution, product, or service with strong commercial opportunity in one or more of the four key sectors.

The five winning companies will receive an award recognizing their contributions in the Ontario Critical Industrial Technologies sector, specifically related to AI. The awards will be presented at industry events, with the overall 2026 AWS Artificial Intelligence Innovation Award presented at OCI's Annual DiscoveryX Conference in April. The top innovators will also be featured on OCIs social media.

Nomination Criteria

Eligible companies must be a leading Ontario-based small or medium enterprise (SME, with fewer than 500 staff);

For Advanced Manufacturing, Agri-Food, Construction, or Mining awards the company must exhibit how integration/adoption of AI has had significant, quantitative impact on the company and/or sector, relevant to the respective award sector. SME's do not need to be recipients of CIT support to participate.

The AWS Artificial Intelligence Innovation Award, is sector agnostic.
The company must exhibit how integration/adoption of AI has had significant, quantitative impact on their company.

Note: Ontario or Canadian-incorporated for-profit SMEs headquartered in Ontario.

How to Submit

All nominations must be submitted by midnight on February 8, 2026.

Applications will be reviewed by a panel made up of both internal and external leaders in the Critical Industrial Technologies sector with AI expertise and only the top 3 applications will move forward to the public voting period of the process.

The top 3 companies for each award will be featured on the OCI website for voting, including; company logo, company description, and voting buttons.

Individuals will be able to vote for the companies that they deem have demonstrated the strongest impact with AI based on one or more of the impact areas: (1) Innovation, (2) Economic Growth, (3) Disruptive Impact and/or (4) Outcomes.

Key Timelines

Launch of the award January 26, 2026

Nomination deadline February 8th, 2026

Voting period February 11 – 25th, 2026 (mining award) Feb 11th to April 15th (4 other awards)

About the Critical Industrial Technologies Initiative:

The Critical Industrial Technologies (CIT) initiative is delivered by the Ontario Centre of Innovation (OCI) on behalf of the Government of Ontario. The CIT initiative is available to Ontario SMEs to accelerate the commercialization and adoption of critical technologies— 5G, AI, blockchain, cybersecurity, quantum computing, and robotics —across key sectors including Advanced Manufacturing, Agri-Food, Construction, and Mining.

Focusing on talent development, product innovation, and sector transformation projects, CIT is building the future of industry in Ontario. For more information about the Critical Industrial Technologies initiative and the Technology Development Site partnerships, please visit CITinnovation.ca.

About OCI

The Ontario Centre of Innovation (OCI) brings industry, academic, and government partners together to invest in collaborative R&D, technology development, and commercialization opportunities that generate the highest return on innovation for Ontarians.

As an ecosystem connector, OCI initiates unparalleled partnership opportunities,

develops, and manages successful industry-academic collaborations, supports high potential SMEs in commercializing ground-breaking research, and provides hands-on training and skills development opportunities for the next generation of highly skilled talent.

OCI drives economic growth and job creation through investments in the development, commercialization, and adoption of advanced technologies.

For more information: https://www.oc-innovation.ca