B.C. Fast Pilot Program 2025
Program Guidelines for Firms

A program delivered jointly by NRC IRAP & Innovate BC

Pilot-scale demonstration of new technologies operating under real world conditions is an essential and often capital-intensive step for companies to progress from prototype stage to commercialization. The B.C. Fast Pilot Program is designed to support small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through this important step by helping them measure and prove the value of their solution through pilot-scale installation and testing in the field with an early adopter.

Program Objective
The goal of the B.C. Fast Pilot program is to facilitate commercialization of an SME's product or service to achieve sales. Through the program, support is available to B.C.-based SMEs developing technologies that have passed the prototype stage to design, build, and operate their technology at pilot or small demonstration scale in real world conditions. The program objective is to help SMEs prove the impact of their product, measure the value of their solution, and encourage customer adoption. The program is competitive, and selections are made based on the strength of projects and budget availability.

Program Timeline
Deadline for Expressions of Interest — April 3, 2025 at 5:00 PM PST
Notifications & Invites to Full Proposal — Beginning of May 2025
Full Proposal Deadline – May 30, 2025
Notification of Funding — June 2025

Company Eligibility
The program helps B.C. SMEs who have developed a prototype of their technology and are ready to test it at pilot scale. An SME needs to contact its Industrial Technology Advisor (ITA) at the National Research Council (NRC) Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP) and meet eligibility criteria for NRC IRAP financial support including:

- Having separate legal status as an incorporated, for-profit SME in Canada with the objective to grow and generate profits
- Having less than 500 employees
- Operating legally in Canada, and specifically in B.C. for this program

Project Scope & Funding
Projects may receive up to $200,000 in joint funding, depending on available funds. Projects that are at a Technological Readiness Level (TRL) of 7 or higher will be considered. SME's must be prepared to implement the solution and execute on the majority of the deliverables of their project by March 31, 2026.

This program is funded by NRC IRAP and leveraged Innovate BC funding. The exact amount and ratio of funding per project will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Project Description

A typical project will include design, construction, and operation of a pilot installation in the field, at a scale and duration sufficient to prove long-term performance of the technology to an early adopter. Pilot projects should involve physical installations and equipment; be capital intensive in nature and not solely software related. Examples of supportable project activities include, but are not limited to:

- Design and construction of the pilot installation
- Site preparation
- Pilot installation commissioning, testing of sub-systems
- Operation of the pilot installation
- Testing for stability, reliability, durability, components degradation

- Validation of product features and product performance
- Generating data to design a large-scale / commercial installation
- Preparing reports and documentation
- Training of end user on the technology
- Data collection and recording

Early Adopter / Potential Customer

An applicant SME must identify an early adopter — an organization or firm that is a potential customer of the piloted product or service, and has agreed to evaluate it at pilot scale. The SME should secure the early adopter's agreement to operate the pilot-scale installation under real world conditions, either at the adopter's site or at the location in the field, agreed to by the adopter. Preference will be given to projects where the SME provides evidence of the early adopter's support, such as a Letter of Intent (LOI), Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or a written commitment (e.g., email) to host the pilot installation.

Supportable Costs

This is a cost-shared program delivered in partnership with NRC IRAP and Innovate BC. Depending on the needs of the project, B.C. Fast Pilot funding can support SME technical salaries, contractor fees, capital costs, travel and other necessary costs incurred during the project implementation.

For projects selected for funding, NRC IRAP will cover a component of salary and contractor costs, while Innovate BC will cover a component of other project costs (equipment, material, travel). Projects should include both categories of costs, to outline the need for government funding from both agencies in this cost-shared program.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be reviewed for completeness, eligibility, and relevance to program objectives. Failure to provide an application containing all required information by the deadline may result in disqualification of the submission.

All projects will be scored and evaluated on the following criteria:

- Meets all company and project eligibility requirements

- Financial and operational capacity to execute the pilot project and commercialize the technology
- Strength of market opportunity and size

- Strength of technology innovation (IP strategy, differentiation from competitors)
- Strength of commercialization outcomes (sales & profit potential, jobs created, and other benefits to B.C. and Canada)
- Quality of the early adopter (e.g., credibility in the market, financial capacity to become a customer)
- Quality of project structure (goal, scope, budget)
- Alignment with Priority Focus Areas

Priority Focus Areas

Strong, quality projects that meet one or more of the following Provincial priorities will receive a preference — although funding is **not** guaranteed. The overall strength of the project (ability to meet all evaluation criteria) will be key to submitting a competitive proposal.

- Regional B.C. SMEs and pilot implementations/sites in B.C., especially outside the Lower Mainland.
- Pilot initiatives in the cleantech sector defined as processes, products, or services that reduce negative environmental impacts through significant energy efficiency improvements, sustainable use of resources, or environmental protection activities.
- Pilot initiatives involving Indigenous communities or organizations.

Review and Decision Process

Innovate BC and NRC IRAP will appoint a Joint Review Committee (JRC) to evaluate and provide recommendations for funding, consisting of individuals with broad perspectives and wide range of expertise pertaining to the research, development, and commercialization of emerging technologies. This may include internal and external evaluators with academic, industry, business, and/or government expertise. Technical and business assessments are then conducted by NRC IRAP on those invited to submit a full proposal. Members of the Committee are obligated to follow the confidentiality and conflict-of-interest policies of Innovate BC and/or NRC IRAP.

Funding decisions are based on the recommendations by the Committee, the successful submission of the full proposal, and the level of funding available. As the resources available might not allow for the support of all meritorious applications, a certain percentage can be recommended by the committee but will not receive funding. Those applications recommended but not funded could be eligible for support if additional funding becomes available.

How will the Project success be measured?

Baseline data will be collected as part of the application process and projects will be expected to report on critical metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) after the pilot-scale demonstration to assess success. Examples include but are not limited to whether the pilot implementation resulted in a purchase agreement, key benefits to the early adopter / potential customer, jobs created, new investments and revenues created for B.C. SMEs.

General Inquiries or Support

All general inquiries and/or requests for B.C. Fast Pilot support should be directed to SME's IRAP ITA or Innovate BC's email, programs@innovatebc.ca. Eligible companies without an ITA should contact IRAP to find an appropriate advisor in their region.

How to Apply

1. SMES's without an IRAP ITA must first connect with IRAP to get assigned an ITA. For more information on finding an ITA, visit: https://nrc.canada.ca/en/support-technology-innovation/nrc-irap-advisory-services or contact IRAP Client Engagement Advisors at 1-877-994-4727. SMEs should allow 2-3 weeks to undergo an evaluation to get assigned an ITA.

2. SMEs should request an "Expression of interest for B.C. Fast Pilot" form from their local IRAP ITA. It is highly recommended that SMEs work with their ITA to fill out the form to ensure all requirements are met. Completed forms will be reviewed and submitted by the ITA to the B.C. Fast Pilot Joint Review Committee (JRC), which consists of representatives from both IRAP and Innovate BC. Submitted applications will be screened, evaluated, and selected by the JRC for next steps.

3. Successful applicants will be invited to submit a full IRAP project proposal. The SME will work with their ITA to develop a full proposal according to standard IRAP practices.

Project Eligibility Checklist

- ☐ B.C.-based company that meets company eligibility
- ☐ Innovation that is market ready (TRL 7 or higher), and clearly outlines readiness
- ☐ Includes a physical installation of equipment, and is not solely software related
- ☐ A demonstrated need to test/de-risk/validate the innovation at pilot scale, and not solely for marketing purpose
- ☐ Justification for funding from both government funding agencies
- ☐ Strong overall market opportunity, with benefits to B.C. (economics, jobs, IP, etc.)
- ☐ A pilot site at an industry / early adopter / potential customer location, ideally in B.C.
- ☐ All or majority of project objectives can be achieved by March 31, 2026.
- ☐ Evidence of support or interest from the early adopter / potential customer is important.
- ☐ Alignment with priority focus areas is preferred but does not guarantee funding. The overall strength of the project is key.