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Road to Web Summit Vancouver 2027

Call for Proposals Guide

OVERVIEW

Web Summit, one of the world's leading technology and innovation conferences, will return to Vancouver in May 2027.

To maximize the benefits for B.C. companies, Innovate BC (IBC) is delivering the Road to Web Summit Vancouver (R2WSV), a Sector Development Program that combines IBC-led anchor events and partnered-delivered readiness programming to identify and prepare high-potential B.C. startups for opportunities associated with Web Summit Vancouver (WSV) 2027.

The objective is to help B.C. companies attract investment, generate customer opportunities, and leverage Web Summit as a catalyst for growth.

CALL OBJECTIVES

IBC is looking for delivery partners to:

1. Identify high potential B.C. startups in priority sectors (refer to the Priority Sector Alignment section for details)
2. Prepare companies through readiness programming that addresses one or more of the following startup growth themes:
 - a. Sales & Marketing
 - b. Investment Readiness
 - c. Export Readiness
3. Ensure broad representation, including under-represented groups and communities such as Indigenous, Black and People of Colour (IBPOC), Women, and rural / northern communities
4. Work with IBC to identify and nominate companies from the program for consideration for WSV 2027 showcase opportunities including at the Venture Spotlight and R2WSV Pitch Competition
 - a. It is recommended to support cohorts of 20 companies or more to align with WSV 2027 showcase opportunity slots
5. Align program activities with IBC anchor events in the lead up to WSV 2027, which includes:
 - a. Promoting IBC anchor events to program cohort
 - b. Reducing scheduling conflicts between program activities and IBC anchor events
6. Measure and track program participant outcomes

TARGET PARTICIPANT STAGE

R2WSV 2027 programming is intended to equip B.C. startups with a minimum viable product (MVP) and early market traction with the skills and strategies needed to capitalize on opportunities associated with WSV. Ideal participant companies:

- Qualify for the [Web Summit Startup Program](#)
- Have an MVP to participate in the Venture Spotlight
- Have early traction:
 - Strong user adoption
 - First paying customers or sales
 - Completed pilot projects
 - Early or recurring revenue

PRIORITY SECTOR ALIGNMENT

To align R2WSV 2027 programming with priority sectors identified by the Province for Web Summit Vancouver, priority will be given to applicants that identify and prepare companies operating in the following priority sectors:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Creative Technologies
- Defence and Dual-Use Technologies
- Life Sciences

Priority may also be given to applications that demonstrate increased participation by Indigenous-led technology ventures and other underrepresented founders and communities.

IBC ANCHOR EVENTS

Successful applicants will collaborate with IBC to promote and secure participation for relevant IBC anchor events*, including:

- R2WSV 2027 Kickoff – November 5, 2026
- R2WSV Founder Journey – February 2026
- R2WSV PR & Marketing Training – March 2026
- R2WSV Funding your Growth – April 2026
- R2WSV 2027 Bootcamp – May 19, 2027

*Anchor event content and dates are being finalized and subject to change

KEY DATES

- Application deadline: September 30, 2026
- Successful applicants notified: Early October 2026
- Program delivery period: November 2026 – May 2027
- Pavilion Venture Spotlight nominees identified to IBC: January 2027
- Pavilion R2WSV Pitch Competition nominees identified to IBC: March 2027
- Final reports are due to IBC within 30 days following Web Summit Vancouver 2027

Note that IBC will have final decisions on nominees for the Venture Spotlight and the R2WSV Pitch Competition.

FUNDING

Successful applicants may be eligible to receive up to 50% of total project costs for a maximum of \$40,000 from IBC to support program delivery. Applicants must demonstrate that remaining project costs are covered from non-IBC sources (cash and in-kind).

WHO CAN APPLY

Eligible applicants include B.C.-based organizations, or organizations able to demonstrate a direct benefit to B.C. companies, with experience delivering startup support, training, mentorship, industry development, or related programming.

Eligible applicants may include:

- Industry associations
- Incubators and accelerators
- Post-secondary institutions
- Non-profit organizations
- Economic development organizations
- Other organizations with relevant experience supporting startups and scaling companies
- Consortiums of eligible organizations, with one organization identified as the lead applicant

Applicants must demonstrate:

- A proven track record delivering relevant programs or services
- The capacity to recruit and support eligible B.C. companies
- Alignment with at least one key sector and one startup growth theme
- A clear approach to diversity, equity, inclusion, and regional participation

- The organizational and financial capacity to deliver the proposed program and meet reporting requirements

The following are not eligible to apply:

- Individuals applying in a personal capacity
- Informal groups without a recognized organizational structure
- For-profit companies seeking funding for their own business growth

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES & COSTS

Eligible activities* can include:

- Learning series
- Training programs
- Skills development initiatives
- Workshops and mentorships
- Tailored advisory services

*Activities are encouraged to be delivered through a cohort-based program that may be in-person, virtual, or in a hybrid model.

Eligible costs for IBC funding include:

- Staff/contractor fees
- Speaker fees
- Venue fees
- AV equipment and other direct costs tied to program execution

INELIGIBLE COSTS

Ineligible costs for IBC funding include:

- Hospitality costs including food and beverage
- Travel
- Costs associated with the week of Web Summit 2027, including tickets, booth space, and activations

ADJUDICATION

Collaborative delivery models are encouraged, including **consortiums** of partners able to deliver **province-wide**.

Category	Key Criteria	Weight (%)
Program Design & Outcomes	Clear problem/opportunity being addressed, quality and relevance of curriculum/content to startup growth themes, cohort design and participant journey, strength of objectives and outcomes	30
Recruitment & Strategic Alignment	Alignment with priority sectors, ability to recruit sector-relevant companies, support for equity-deserving groups and underrepresented communities, accessibility across BC regions	30
Delivery Capability & Track Record	Organizational experience delivering startup programs, demonstrated outcomes from previous initiatives, qualifications of instructors, strength of ecosystem partnerships	25
Budget & Value	Reasonableness of budget, leverage of other funding sources, cost per participant/venture supported, overall value-for-money proposition	15

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants must submit a virtual application to IBC:

- Organizational background
- Description of program, including alignment with key sectors and startup growth themes
- Description of program diversity, equity and inclusion strategy
- Description of program participant identification and selection process
- Expected program outcomes
- Program budget and timeline
- Data and reporting strategy

REPORTING

Following the completion of the R2WSV program and Web Summit 2027, successful applicants must report on the following to IBC:

- Key activities delivered and overall program learnings
- Project financials including matching funds, total expenses, and allocations
- Participant baseline data, including company stage, company size, annual revenue, investment raised, region, and founder demographic information
- Participant outcome data related to program objectives, including satisfaction, key business outcomes, major wins, and testimonials

APPENDIX A - Frequently Asked Questions

About the Call for Proposals

Is a proposed program required to address all three startup growth themes?

No. Applicants must align their proposed program with at least one startup growth theme: sales and marketing, investment readiness or export readiness.

Applicants should explain why the selected theme or combination of themes is relevant to the companies they intend to support.

Does a proposed program need to serve all four priority sectors?

No. Applicants must demonstrate alignment with at least one priority sector. Proposals that serve more than one priority sector may also be considered where the program design, expertise and recruitment strategy support that approach.

Applicant eligibility

Can organizations located outside British Columbia apply?

Yes. An organization located outside B.C. may apply if it can clearly demonstrate that the proposed program will directly benefit eligible B.C. companies.

Can for-profit organizations apply?

For-profit companies seeking funding to support their own business growth are not eligible.

Organizations applying to deliver startup-support programming should clearly demonstrate that the funding will be used to benefit participating B.C. companies and not to finance the applicant's own business growth.

Can an organization participate in more than one application?

The CFP does not prohibit organizations from participating in more than one proposal. However, each application should clearly explain the organization's role, capacity and contribution, particularly where it is involved in multiple proposed programs.

Eligible program participants

What types of companies should the proposed program serve?

R2WSV 2027 programming is intended for B.C. startups that have developed a minimum viable product and are demonstrating early market traction.

Relevant traction may include:

- Strong user adoption
- First paying customers or sales
- Completed pilot projects
- Early or recurring revenue

Participating companies should also be capable of benefiting from readiness programming connected to Web Summit Vancouver 2027.

12. Do participating companies have to qualify for the Web Summit Startup Program?

Applicants should recruit companies that qualify, or are likely to qualify, for the Web Summit Startup Program. Applicants are responsible for reviewing the Web Summit Startup Program requirements when designing their participant recruitment and selection process.

Qualification for the [Web Summit Startup Program](#) does not guarantee selection for an WSV 2027 showcase opportunity.

Can programs support companies at the idea or pre-MVP stage?

The primary target for R2WSV 2027 is companies with a minimum viable product and early evidence of market traction. Programs focused primarily on idea-stage or pre-MVP companies may not align as strongly with the objectives of this CFP.

Do all program participants be based in British Columbia?

Yes. IBC funding through this CFP is intended to benefit B.C. companies. Applicants should describe how they will confirm participant eligibility and collect the required baseline information.

Is there a required number of companies in each cohort?

This Call does not prescribe a fixed cohort size. It is recommended that applicants propose a cohort size of 20 or more to align with Web Summit Showcase opportunities.

The application should demonstrate value for money, including the proposed cost per participant or venture supported.

Inclusion and regional participation

Are programs required to be delivered province-wide?

Province-wide delivery is encouraged but is not mandatory. Applicants should clearly identify the regions and communities their proposed program will serve and explain how the delivery model will support accessible participation.

Collaborative or consortium-based proposals may be used to extend a program's geographic reach.

How should applicants address diversity, equity and inclusion?

Applicants should explain how their program will identify, recruit and support founders and companies from equity-deserving and underrepresented communities. This includes Indigenous, Black and People of Colour founders, Women, as well as companies located in rural and northern communities.

Applicants should provide a practical approach to inclusive outreach, participant selection, program accessibility and delivery—not only a general statement of commitment.

Funding and eligible costs

How much funding is available?

Successful applicants may receive an IBC contribution of up to 50% of total project costs for a maximum of **\$40,000**.

Applicants may request less than the maximum amount and should ensure that the request is proportionate to the proposed activities, anticipated outcomes and number of companies supported.

Is matching funding required?

Yes. Applicants must demonstrate additional funding or in-kind support sourced outside the funding request to IBC.

Applicants should identify the source, amount, status and intended use of each cash or in-kind contribution in the program budget.

Can matching support be provided in kind?

Yes. In-kind support may form part of the applicant's leveraged contribution. In-kind contributions should be directly related to program delivery, reasonably valued and clearly described in the application budget.

Examples could include contributed staff time, facilities, professional expertise or other program resources.

Program delivery and Web Summit participation

When must programs be delivered?

The anticipated program delivery period is November 2026 through May 2027.

Applicants should submit a realistic delivery schedule that allows participants to develop and apply relevant skills before Web Summit Vancouver 2027 and meet the nomination deadlines for showcase opportunities.

Are successful applicants required to participate in IBC anchor events?

Successful applicants will be expected to collaborate with IBC and support their program participants in attending relevant anchor events, which are anticipated to include:

- R2WSV 2027 Kickoff – November 5, 2026
- R2WSV Founder Journey – February 2026
- R2WSV PR & Marketing Training – March 2026
- R2WSV Funding your Growth – April 2026
- R2WSV 2027 Bootcamp – May 19, 2027

Events and dates are subject to change. IBC will provide additional information to successful applicants as plans are confirmed.

Will every participating company receive a Web Summit ticket or showcase opportunity?

No. Participation in a partner-delivered R2WSV program does not guarantee a Web Summit ticket, Pavilion booth, Venture Spotlight placement or participation in the R2WSV Pitch Competition.

Delivery partners will nominate companies for consideration and IBC will select participants for the available showcase opportunities.

What is the Venture Spotlight?

The Venture Spotlight is a three-day initiative hosted at the BC Pavilion on the Web Summit Vancouver exhibition floor. It will feature up to 72 B.C. companies nominated by delivery partners and selected by IBC.

Each selected company will receive one conference ticket and Pavilion booth space for one morning or afternoon block during the three-day conference.

What is the R2WSV Pitch Competition?

The R2WSV Pitch Competition is a three-day competition hosted at the BC Pavilion. Up to 12 B.C. companies from R2WSV 2027 partner-delivered programs will compete for a non-dilutive cash prize.

Being nominated by a delivery partner does not guarantee selection for the competition.

When must delivery partners submit their nominations?

The anticipated nomination deadlines are:

- Venture Spotlight nominees: January 2027

- R2WSV Pitch Competition nominees: March 2027

IBC will provide successful applicants with additional instructions, criteria, and confirmed deadlines.

What is the BC Pavilion?

A curated hub located on the Web Summit Vancouver exhibition floor that hosts stage programming and company spotlights such as the R2WSV Pitch Competition and the Venture Spotlight

Application and assessment

What information must be included in the application?

Applicants will be asked to provide:

- Organizational background
- A description of the proposed program
- Alignment with priority sectors and startup growth themes
- The program's diversity, equity and inclusion strategy
- The participant identification and selection process
- Expected outcomes
- The program budget and timeline
- The data collection and reporting strategy

Will preference be given to previous R2WSV delivery partners?

All applications will be assessed against the published evaluation criteria. Previous experience delivering relevant programming may help demonstrate an applicant's track record, but it does not guarantee funding.

When will applicants be notified?

IBC expects to notify successful applicants in early October 2026.

Can applicants contact IBC with questions before applying?

Applicants may submit questions using the contact information identified in the Call for Proposals. IBC may publish responses to frequently asked questions where they would be useful to all applicants.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their application is complete and submitted by the deadline.

Reporting requirements

What reporting will successful applicants be required to complete?

Reporting must be submitted directly to IBC and will include:

- Activities delivered and overall program learnings
- Project financial information, including matching contributions, total expenses and allocations
- Participant baseline information
- Participant outcomes related to the program objectives
- Participant satisfaction
- Key business outcomes and major wins
- Testimonials

Report templates are to be developed by IBC and will be shared to delivery partners in advance of the reporting deadline. IBC may also require updates or data collection during program delivery to support coordination and outcome tracking.

What participant information must be collected?

Required participant information is expected to include:

- Company stage
- Company size
- Annual revenue
- Investment raised
- B.C. region
- Founder demographic information
- Program satisfaction

Successful applicants will be expected to use appropriate consent, privacy and data-management practices when collecting and sharing participant information.