

Pathways to Possibility Program

Program Guidelines

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Project Requirements:

<p><u>Eligible Applicants</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-profit organizations that serve underrepresented communities • Indigenous communities • Post-secondary institutions
<p><u>Available Funding</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to \$50,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Applicants can seek up to \$50,000 to develop and implement career education, mentorship, networking, and job search support programs for at least 100 participants over the age of 18, including at least 50 from groups underrepresented in Ontario’s automotive and mobility workforce. • Up to \$100,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Applicants may be awarded up to \$100,000 if they propose developing at least four inter-connected programs that collectively serve at least 400 participants, including at least 200 from underrepresented groups in Ontario’s automotive and mobility workforce.
<p><u>Program Components</u></p>	<p>Each program must include at least one of the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Speed Networking with Industry Partners:</i> A dynamic opportunity for participants to engage with industry professionals in timed, 1-1 sessions to build connections and discuss career opportunities. • <i>Mentorship Opportunities:</i> Structured programs pairing participants with experienced professionals for personalized career guidance and professional growth. • <i>Fireside Chats or Panel Discussions with Industry Leaders:</i> Informal discussions or panels featuring insights, experiences, and advice from seasoned professionals to inspire and inform participants about career progression and industry trends. • <i>Interactive Workshops with Industry Experts:</i> Hands-on sessions led by industry leaders to teach practical skills and problem-solving relevant to the automotive and mobility workforce. • <i>Virtual Reality (VR) or Simulation-Based Experiences:</i> Immersive VR or simulation tools that allow participants to explore careers, practice skills, and engage in realistic industry scenarios. • <i>Professional Development Bootcamps:</i> Intensive, multi-day workshops focused on key skills such as leadership, technical expertise, project management, or entrepreneurship tailored to the automotive and mobility sectors.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Industry-Specific Career Summit:</i> Providing direct access to talent teams and hiring managers, where participants can engage in one-on-one interviews, resume workshops, and other activities to enhance their job search and employment outcomes.
Matching Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One full-time employee’s salary for the duration of the program • Matching contributions from the applicant’s private sector partner(s) worth at least 50% of OVIN’s requested contribution
Application Deadline	February 5th 2025, at 12 PM EST

Background Information:

In early 2022, OVIN launched the [Talent Strategy and Roadmap](#), which outlined 4 key strategies to grow and prepare Ontario’s automotive and mobility workforce for the future of the sector as it undergoes transformation: collaboration and coordination across the province; talent attraction and sourcing; workforce development and retention; and equity, diversity, and inclusion. To deliver on these strategies, OVIN has launched multiple programs and initiatives.

In 2022, OVIN launched the Regional Future Workforce (RFW) program to provide STEM skills development and career education programs to students across the province. The program reached over 66,000 students, nearly half of whom came from underrepresented groups, and forged 225 partnerships among academic, industry, government, and community stakeholders. OVIN built on the success of this program by launching two iterations specific to underrepresented groups and to the critical minerals segment of the sector in 2024.

In 2024, OVIN piloted an Experienced Hire Pilot Initiative through which underrepresented adults in the automotive and mobility sector visited industry workplaces for day-long learning and networking experiences.

Based on this pilot’s success, OVIN is now expanding this initiative into a program: the Pathways to Possibility program. This program aims to promote careers in automotive and mobility by engaging communities underrepresented in the sector through career education, mentorship, networking, and job search support. The program will engage underrepresented adults directly, including engaging parents of underrepresented youth. In the Pathways to Possibility program, non-profit organizations, Indigenous communities, and post-secondary institutions will collaborate with one or more industry partners in Ontario’s automotive and mobility ecosystem to coordinate a program that helps underrepresented community members over the age of 18 learn about and access in-demand career opportunities in the sector.

The success of Ontario’s automotive and mobility sector hinges on its ability to cultivate talent and adapt to evolving demands. Through strategic investments and collaborative efforts aimed at

engaging talent and promoting diversity and inclusion, the province's automotive and mobility sector is poised to chart a course towards sustained growth and global leadership.

Program Overview:

The Pathways to Possibility program is designed to foster inclusion in the automotive and mobility sector by reducing barriers to entry for equity-deserving groups and engaging communities that are underrepresented in the sector by providing career education, mentorship, networking, and job search support. Accordingly, we invite **Indigenous communities, post-secondary institutions, and non-profit organizations that serve underrepresented communities** to work in partnership with industry to apply for one of the funding tiers described below:

1. Up to \$50,000:

Applicants can seek up to \$50,000 to develop and implement career education, mentorship, networking, and job search support programs for at least **100 community members** over the age of 18, including at least **50 participants from groups underrepresented** in Ontario's automotive and mobility workforce.

2. Up to \$100,000:

Applicants may be awarded up to \$100,000 if they propose developing at least **four inter-connected programs** that collectively serve at least **400 community members**, including at least **200 participants from underrepresented groups** in Ontario's automotive and mobility workforce.

Applicants will identify the underrepresented community or communities they wish to engage and whether they wish to engage underrepresented adults (over the age of 18) or parents of underrepresented youth. Applicants will work with at least one industry partner to coordinate a program for participants to learn about and connect with in-demand career opportunities in the automotive and mobility sector. More direction on the type of components programs should contain is outlined below.

Program Objectives:

The goals of OVIN's Pathways to Possibility program are:

- To engage communities that are currently underrepresented in the sector in learning about the myriad career opportunities available within it;
- To engage underrepresented adults and reduce the barriers to career opportunities in the sector by connecting participants to career education, mentorship, networking, and job search support opportunities;

- To engage parents of underrepresented youth and demonstrate the range of career opportunities in the sector that their children could pursue; and
- To build sustainable connections and access to ongoing support between community members and Ontario’s automotive and mobility sector.

Benefits:

For Eligible Applicants	For Industry Partners	For Participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of relationships with industry stakeholders in Ontario’s growing automotive and mobility ecosystem. • Opportunity to position organization as a leader in innovative, industry-aligned community engagement programs. • Opportunity to develop a community of future participants for other programs and initiatives your organization leads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of relationships with organizations serving underrepresented communities. • Development of a talent pool with a keen awareness of your company and its needs. • Opportunity to position the company as a leader in diverse talent engagement and innovative methods of employer brand-building and recruitment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to participate in innovative, engaging programs. • Exposure to career opportunities in Ontario’s growing automotive and mobility sector. • Access to learning and development opportunities, including potential visits to industry workplaces and/or networking with industry professionals and talent teams in a high-growth sector.

Program Structure:

Under the Pathways to Possibility program, selected applicants will develop and deploy programs between early March and late April 2025.

- All programs must be developed in partnership with **at least one** industry partner.
- Each program must contain at least one of the following components:
 - *Speed networking with industry partners:* A fast-paced opportunity for participants to meet industry professionals in short, timed sessions. This format allows attendees to make quick connections, discuss opportunities, and expand their professional network efficiently.
 - *Mentorship opportunities led by industry partners:* Pairing participants with experienced industry mentors for personalized guidance over the course of the

program and potentially beyond. Mentors offer advice on career development, skills, and industry trends, helping mentees grow professionally and navigate their career paths.

- *Fireside chats or panel discussions with industry leaders:* Hosting informal discussions or panel sessions with seasoned professionals and thought leaders, where they share their experiences, future industry trends, and lessons learned, can provide deep value. These sessions allow for participants to ask questions and gain insight into career progression, industry challenges, and innovation.
- *Interactive workshops with industry experts:* Hands-on workshops in which industry leaders guide participants through relevant skills or real-world problem-solving tasks, providing participants with the opportunity to gain practical insights and try new techniques directly from industry.
- *Virtual Reality (VR) or simulation-based experiences:* Using cutting-edge technology like VR to simulate real-world industry scenarios or challenges where participants can practice skills, make decisions, or engage in complex problem-solving under realistic conditions. These technologies can immerse participants in industry roles and help them visualize different career paths.
- *Professional development bootcamps:* A series of intensive, multi-day workshops or bootcamps focused on key professional skills such as leadership, technical, project management, or entrepreneurial skills with relation to the automotive and mobility sector. This type of programming would provide high-value learning experiences led by industry professionals who offer actionable advice and techniques.
- *Industry-specific career summit with direct access to talent teams and hiring managers:* Summits that bring talent teams and hiring managers from top industry companies together with job seekers to facilitate direct connections. Participants can engage directly with industry, have one-on-one interviews, resume workshops, and potentially receive immediate feedback from decision-makers, making their job search more targeted and efficient.
- Programs must provide opportunities for participants – either underrepresented adults or parents of underrepresented youth – to learn about and access in-demand career opportunities in Ontario’s automotive and mobility sector.
 - Note: All participants must be 18 years of age or older.
- Applicants must demonstrate a plan for how they will design programs that meet the needs of the underrepresented community/ies they plan to engage.
- Applicants must demonstrate a plan for how they will encourage community members to register for and fully participate in their programming.
 - Applicants applying for up to \$50,000 must aim to engage a minimum of 100 participants, including at least 50 participants from underrepresented groups.

- Applicants applying for up to \$100,000 must aim to engage a minimum of 400 participants, including at least 200 participants from underrepresented groups.
- The type of programs offered – including details such as format, length, and locations – will be determined by the applicant and their industry partner(s).
- Applicants must commit to sharing the impact of their work at a virtual showcase that will be held during the first week of May and that will feature all accepted projects.
- Programming must be fully developed, delivered, and closed by April 30th, 2025 – and all reports must be submitted by May 16th, 2025.

Key Components:

- **Design, development, and implementation of programming**
 - Description of the community/ies applicants aim to engage, including whether applicants will underrepresented adults or parents of underrepresented youth in the identified community/ies
 - Description of how participating in this program will increase community members' awareness of and access to career opportunities in Ontario's automotive and mobility sector
 - The number of participants expected to participate in each component of the program
 - Elements of the proposed program structure that make it engaging, innovative, and responsive to the automotive and mobility sector's future demand for talent
 - Note: Programs should be offered to participating community members at no cost to them.
 - Note: OVIN must approve the proposed program before the implementation stage.
- **Detailed program logistics and administration plan – applicants must establish a plan for the successful deployment of the Pathways to Possibility program, and this plan must be approved by OVIN prior to the implementation stage. This plan must include:**
 - Staffing requirements for the program
 - Number of staff required to run the program
 - The contact information of the staff member who satisfies OVIN's matching contribution requirement (as described below in the Matching Contribution section)
 - Each staff member's:
 - Respective area(s) of expertise
 - Role title and responsibilities
 - Materials required for the program – see [Eligible Expenses Guidelines](#) (linked below) for a detailed breakdown of what materials are eligible for OVIN funding
 - Detailed timeline for developing and deploying the proposed program

- A Letter of Support from each industry partner outlining their commitment to the program and how they will contribute to its operations and success
- **Marketing, promotion, and outreach strategy**
 - Description of how applicants will encourage community members to register for and participate fully in each component of the program
 - Note: In all publications, communications, and products of any kind, written or oral, that refer to the Project and that the Applicant offers to the public, the Applicant shall obtain OVIN's prior approval.
 - Note: Any marketing and promotional materials that use images and videos of people (including program participants) must have a process and documentation for obtaining informed consent of those shown.
- **Program Monitoring and Evaluation**
 - Each successful applicant and their partner(s) will be expected to evaluate their programming, and to submit their evaluations as part of their reports to OVIN
 - Evaluations should assess the extent to which programs have met the following key measures of success:
 - Demographic information such as each participant's age, gender, academic program and level/year of study (if applicable), and whether they live in a rural or remote community
 - Participants' awareness of career opportunities in the automotive and mobility sector
 - Participants' knowledge of career opportunities in the automotive and mobility sector
 - Participants' interest in pursuing a career in the automotive and mobility sector
 - Evidence of this program's impact on participants' awareness of, knowledge of, and interest in pursuing a career in the automotive and mobility sector
 - The strength of participants' professional network in the automotive and mobility sector
 - Depth of industry involvement in and contributions to the program
 - Perspectives on the program's success not otherwise captured
 - Detailed program design and implementation
 - Overall program focus and strategy
 - Number of industry partnerships created through the program
 - Number of mentorship opportunities created through the program and hours of industry mentorship provided to participants
 - Number of regions reached

Eligible Applicants:

- Non-profit organizations based in Ontario that serve underrepresented communities
- Indigenous communities based in Ontario
- Post-secondary institutions based in Ontario

Eligible Partners:

- All applicants and their industry partners must be based in Ontario
- Industry partners must be Ontario-based automotive and mobility companies or organizations, including but not limited to:
 - Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs);
 - Tier 1 suppliers; and/or
 - Relevant start-ups or SMEs operating in the automotive and mobility space.

How Funding Works:

OVIN Contribution	<p>Funding Tiers:</p> <p>1. Up to \$50,000 Applicants can seek up to \$50,000 to develop and implement career education, mentorship, and job search support programs for at least 100 community members over the age of 18, including at least 50 participants from groups underrepresented in Ontario’s automotive and mobility workforce.</p> <p>2. Up to \$100,000 Applicants may be awarded up to \$100,000 if they propose developing at least four inter-connected programs that collectively serve at least 400 community members, including at least 200 participants from underrepresented groups in Ontario’s automotive and mobility workforce.</p>
Matching Requirement	<p>One full-time employee for the duration of the program, whose salary is paid wholly by the applicant, and additional matching contributions from industry partner(s) in the private sector worth at least 50% of OVIN’s requested contribution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching contributions must be unencumbered from other government grant sources.
Example	<p>Total eligible project costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVIN Contribution = \$50,000 • Matching Contribution (one full-time employee’s salary for the program): \$10,000

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional Matching Contribution from Private Sector Partner(s): \$25,000 worth of program space, technology, staff time, etc.
Funding Recipient	OVIN funds flow only to the Applicant. The Applicant is responsible for reimbursing their Partner(s), if applicable.

Eligible Expenses:

- Under this program, expenses incurred by the applicant under the following categories are eligible for OVIN funding:
 - Operating expenses
 - Salaries
 - Travel
- Please refer to the [Eligible Expenses Guidelines](#) for more information.

Matching Contribution Requirements:

Applicant organizations are required to support the program through matching contributions. Applicants must contribute to the program by having at least one full-time employee whose salary for the program’s duration is paid wholly by the applicant. This employee must be dedicated to the development and implementation of the program. This employee’s role within the applicant’s organization and this employee’s expertise must be described in the applicant’s proposal. This employee will also be OVIN’s point of contact.

This matching contribution must be unencumbered from other government grant sources – in other words, it cannot be used to leverage other public funds to pay for a portion of the same activity – and must come directly from the applicant organization’s own budget. This must be clear in the applicant’s budget justification. Applicants are responsible for meeting their commitment to the matching contribution. Underspensing will result in an equal amount deducted from OVIN’s contribution.

Applications are also required to demonstrate additional matching contributions from their industry partner(s) in the private sector worth at least 50% of OVIN’s requested contribution. Industry contributions can include program venues, technology and materials, staff time expertise, opportunities for participants to engage with their company, and/or other appropriate resources. Applicant organizations’ industry partners are required to submit a Letter of Support articulating their commitment to be part of this initiative, including an outline of the matching contributions they will make.

Flow of Funds:

- Only eligible expenses will be reimbursed to successful applicants. Please refer to the Eligible Expenses Guidelines document linked under the Eligible Expenses section above.
- OVIN will start disbursing approved funding to the successful applicant after the funding agreement has been executed by all parties.
- An advance payment of up to 50% of the total OVIN award project value, at the sole discretion of OVIN, will be released upon activation of the project.
- Applicants will provide an interim presentation mid-way through the program to demonstrate their progress in developing the program and indicate whether they are on track to spend the OVIN funds they have been awarded.
 - Subsequent payment of 50% will be released upon receipt of the final report and proof of financial spending. The report should describe the status of program milestones and financial spending. All reports must be accompanied by the receipts of expenses incurred towards the program, and attestation from the applicant regarding the use of funds.

How to Apply:

Full Application Submission Due Date: Wednesday, February 5th, 2025 at 12 PM EST

- Once ready to apply for the Pathways to Possibility program, the applicant should connect with their Ontario Centre of Innovation (OCI) Business Development and Commercialization Manager (BDCM) to initiate an application.
- If new to OCI, the applicant should complete the [Program Enquiry Form](#) to connect with an OCI BDCM to discuss their eligibility and the application process for OVIN funding.
 - Once the Program Enquiry Form has been completed, an OCI BDCM will contact you to discuss the opportunity and, if required, assist in initiating the application.

A full application proposal includes the following sections:

- **Background:** The applicant organization's background and experience managing similar program deployments.
- **Program Design, Development, and Implementation:** Details about how the applicant will plan and lead the program. Please use the questions provided above, in the Key Components section, as a guide. Applicants should also include how they plan to meet key milestones, and their timelines for doing so.
- **Logistics and Administration:** A draft of the program's logistics plan, following the questions provided in the Key Components section above.
- **Program Marketing and Promotion:** Applicants are required to outline what marketing materials they plan to develop, and what channels they will use to share these materials and promote the program to potential participants.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** How the applicant plans to measure program outcomes and impact, including what data they would like to collect and how.
- **Budget Breakdown and Justification:** How the approved funds will be used.

Assessment:

- The Pathways to Possibility program is a discretionary, non-entitlement program with limited funding. OVIN will fund qualified projects with potential for the greatest economic benefits and contribution to transportation sector workforce advancements to Ontario. Not all eligible applications can be funded.
- All eligible applications are assessed on their merit and undergo a review process in which the applications are reviewed against program objectives and evaluation criteria.
- Full applications are internally reviewed for eligibility, completeness, and financial compliance prior to evaluation by independent external reviewers with domain and sector expertise.
 - Each application will undergo a written external review by three subject matter experts. All reviewers are bound by Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs).
 - The External Review Panel will review the submitted applications and make the funding recommendations to OVIN. OVIN makes the final funding decisions.
- Applicants may be invited to present their proposals in person or by video conference to OVIN’s External and Internal Review Panels.
- OVIN will notify successful applicants and provide any additional information necessary to activate the project.

Timeline:

Action Item	Due Date
Applications open	Week of January 13, 2025
Applicant information session	January 21, 2025
Full application due	February 5, 2025
Internal initial review of applications for eligibility	February 6, 2025
Applicants to address elements flagged from Eligibility Check	February 7, 2025
Final Eligibility Check	February 11, 2025
External Review Panel evaluation period	February 12-18, 2025
Selected applicant presentations to OVIN	February 21, 2025
OVIN response to confirm contact info. with applicants AND OVIN Final Decision - Award and Decline letters sent	February 25, 2025

Signed Funding Agreement due	March 4, 2025
Project activation (Note: this triggers the release of OVIN funds. The day this milestone is reached is the day the applicant can begin incurring project-related expenses. Any expenses incurred prior to this date cannot be reported and claimed).	Upon signing the agreement (March 6, 2025 at the latest)
Interim presentations due	Last week of March
Project close	April 30, 2025
Virtual showcase for all funded partners	First week of May
Final reports due	May 16, 2025

Evaluation Criteria:

- Applicant’s previous experience running successful programs for underrepresented communities
- Applicant’s demonstrated ability to support people from underrepresented groups
- Clarity around the community/ies that applicants plan to design their programs
 - If applying for up to \$50,000, feasibility of attracting and retaining 100+ participants in the program, 50+ of whom would be from underrepresented groups
 - If applying for up to \$100,000, feasibility of attracting and retaining 400+ participants in the program, 200+ of whom would be from underrepresented groups
- Strength of partnership(s) with industry stakeholder(s), demonstrated through industry’s proposed level of engagement in the project and the ways in which their involvement will enhance participants’ experiences and outcomes
- Segment(s) of the automotive and mobility sector that the programs touch on, to ensure that the programs we fund reflect the breadth of the sector
- Innovation of proposed program design, including thoughtful use of one or more program formats described in the Program Structure section above
- Sufficiency of proposed data collection methods
- The region(s) of Ontario where applicants plan to implement their program
 - **Note:** To ensure that OVIN’s work is representative of diverse audiences across the province, OVIN will prioritize funding one applicant per region (as appropriate based on applications received)

Project Administration:

Project Activation:

- Upon approval of a project for funding, the selected applicant will receive a copy of the funding agreement with schedules specific to the approved proposal. This funding

agreement must be signed via OVIN's online electronic signature function by all contracting parties within 5 days of notification of the award.

- The purpose of the funding agreement is to define roles and obligations for the program partners regarding OVIN's guidelines and funding contribution only.
- The program will be activated upon receipt of the signed funding agreement. The start date will by default be the date of activation and cannot be changed.

Links to Important Documents:

- [Funding Agreement - Template](#)
- [Eligible Expenses Guidelines](#)
- [Application/Proposal Questions](#)

Contacts:

For further questions regarding program guidelines, eligibility, and the online application process, please contact your OCI Business Development and Commercialization Manager (BDCM) or you can contact Rodayna Abuelwafa, Project Lead on OVIN's Talent Strategy and Workforce Planning team at rabelwafa@oc-innovation.ca for further information.