

QEW Innovation Corridor Program

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Program Information and Eligibility Requirements

Overview and Benefits

With support from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (“MEDJCT”), OVIN will lead the establishment of a smart innovation corridor on a 40-km section of the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) between Burlington and Toronto. The key purpose of the corridor is to test and/or pilot innovative and advanced mobility technologies, with a focus on smart mobility and connected vehicles applications. The QEW Innovation Corridor Program features an Open Call for Proposal as well as two unique thematic funding streams (Work Zone Safety & Queue Warning) to support diverse projects and initiatives.

The Program will establish a testbed and living lab for innovative technologies and solutions with the vision of “creating a freeway-based smart mobility test corridor that facilitates collaborative innovation and strategic partnerships, to support the safe evaluation of advanced technologies that improve mobility, strengthen sustainability, and drive economic development” that is focused on, but not limited to, the following objectives:

- Support economic development and growth of smart mobility industries, through supporting real world technology testing and providing employment opportunities in Ontario.
- Position Ontario as a healthy, prosperous, and connected province that continues to lead in national and global innovation rankings.
- Identify and evaluate technologies that improve transportation safety, sustainability, efficiency, and accessibility, while integrating innovation into mobility and goods movement.
- Provide opportunity to challenge traditional methods of data collection and analysis to best support user-centric and evidence-based decision making.
- Strategically coordinate public and private sector innovation and post-secondary research through thought-leadership, convening, establishing best-practices, idea-sharing, and data hubs.

Technologies and solutions that can be piloted at the site include, but are not limited to:

- Smart work zones and work zone safety
- Congestion management
- Incidence response management
- Predictive traffic management
- Road hazard warning
- In-vehicle traveler information
- Coordination and dissemination of real time traveler information
- Data analytics
- Cyber security

- Geofencing

Benefits to Applicants and Partners	Benefits to Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloting and deployment of Ontario-made technologies and solutions in real-world environments. • Marketable solutions for new mobility, work safety, and queue end warnings focused technologies. • Access strategic partnership opportunities for collaborative piloting activities. • Support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in commercializing emerging mobility technologies. • Lead the adoption of advanced automotive and smart mobility solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support economic development and provide more employment opportunities in Ontario • Position Ontario as a healthy, prosperous, and connected province that continues to lead in national and global innovation rankings • Improve transportation safety, sustainability, efficiency, and accessibility, while integrating innovation into mobility and goods movement • Challenge traditional methods of data collection and analysis to best support user-centric and evidence-based decision making.

How Co-Investment Works

OVIN Contribution	Reimbursement of one-half (maximum) of total project eligible costs, up to \$150,000, triggered by submission and approval of required reporting.
Matching Requirement	One-half (minimum) of total eligible project costs (i.e., minimum 1:1 match to OVIN contribution) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution match may come from <i>Applicant</i> and/or <i>Partners</i> (if applicable). • Contribution match MUST be in the form of private sector contributions and be unencumbered from other government grant sources.
Example	Total eligible project costs: \$300,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum OVIN contribution: \$150,000 • Minimum Private Sector contribution: \$150,000
Funding Recipient	OVIN funds flow only to the <i>Applicant</i> . The <i>Applicant</i> is responsible for reimbursing <i>Partners</i> , if applicable.

- Refer to the Eligible Expenditures Guide ([Resource Documents - OVIN - Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network \(ovinhub.ca\)](#)) for full details.

- All project activities must be performed within Ontario unless written approval has been obtained from OCI before submission of an application.
- OCI may reimburse expenses incurred after the application approval date. The Funding Agreement must be executed by relevant parties before a project is activated. Until activation is complete, project expenses are incurred at the risk of the participants.
- Collectively, the *Applicant* and any *Partners* must achieve a minimum 1:1 private sector contribution to the project. The contribution must be unencumbered; that is, it cannot be used to leverage other public funds to pay for a portion of the same activity.
- Contributions from public entities (municipalities, transit authorities, academic institutions, local electricity distribution companies, government agencies, provincial and federal departments, and grant programs, etc.) do not constitute eligible sources of matching.
- *Applicants* and *Partners* will be required to disclose all sources of funding being applied for and/or received for the project.

Eligibility Requirements

Applicant

- A small- and medium- sized enterprise (SME) with fewer than 500 global full-time employees.
- Applicants that have active projects funded by other OVIN programs will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
 - Applicants for concurrent funding will need to demonstrate a strong rationale for and distinction between projects running in parallel, as well as their capacity to deliver both initiatives
- Must have registered operations (R&D, manufacturing, product management, etc.) in Ontario.
- *Applicants* who have received over \$500,000 of funding from OCI administered programs in their lifetime (excluding TalentEdge) are required to obtain OCI approval before a new application for funding is initiated. Your Business Development Manager (BDM) can guide you through the process.
- The *Applicant* is a co-signatory to the Funding Agreement.

Project

- Project activities are carried out in Ontario.
- Project testing must be conducted on a specific 40-km section of the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) between Burlington and Toronto. Minimum 1:1 contribution match by *Applicants* and/or private sector *Partners*.
- Projects can be up to 12 months in duration.
- This program is not intended for research to prove feasibility or basic technology research. Projects should be at Technology Readiness [Level 7-9](#).
- Typical project activities include technology/product/service, validation, testing, piloting, demonstration, commercialization, and deployment of technologies, products and services focused on innovative and advanced mobility technologies with a focus on smart mobility and Connected Vehicles applications.
- Intellectual Property (IP) arising from a project will be managed by project *Applicant* as OCI does not claim or manage IP rights.
- *Applicant* should demonstrate scalable outcomes with high potential for commercialization,

strong commercial pull, competitive advantage, and alignment with intended program benefits.

- Technology to be piloted cannot collect any personal, identifying information.
- Applicants must adhere to FIPPA (Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act) throughout the duration of their project.
- Funded Applicants are responsible for removing equipment after their pilot is completed.

Partners

Partners are organizations directly contributing matching leverage to the project.

- Partners may participate in multiple concurrent projects.
- For partners providing matching contributions, they become co-signatories to the Funding Agreement
- The partners must achieve a 1:1 private sector contribution to the project. The contribution must be unencumbered; that is, it cannot be used to leverage other public funds to pay for a portion of the same activity.

Partners may be:

- Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)
- National and Multi-National Enterprises (NEs and MNEs)
- Not-For-Profit Organizations (such as industry associations and Not-For-Profit Organizations with non-public sources of funding)

How To Apply

Reference Documents

The OCI Funding Agreement, the Eligible Expenditures Guide, the Application Questionnaire, and the Data and Information Sharing Protocol (DISP) documents are available for your perusal here:

[Resource Documents - OVIN - Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network \(ovinhub.ca\)](https://www.ovinhub.ca)

Application Process

The QEW Innovation Corridor Program offers two unique funding streams (see below) to support diverse projects and initiatives. Both streams require a full application, which can be developed and submitted using OCI's AccessOCI web portal. Applicants should carefully review the details of each option to determine which aligns best with their project's goals. For more detailed information on each funding opportunity, please visit [ovinhub.ca](https://www.ovinhub.ca).

Process:

1. To begin the Full Application submission process for the Open Call or Challenge-Based streams, please complete a client intake form ([Resource Documents - OVIN - Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network \(ovinhub.ca\)](https://www.ovinhub.ca)) or reach out to the Business Development Manager (BDM) if already connected with one.

Please note: Completion of this form does not constitute an application for funding.

An OCI BDM will contact you to discuss the opportunity and assist you with developing your proposal.

2. *Applicants* submit their Full Application for internal and external review.
3. Your BDM must endorse your application for eligibility and suitability prior to submission.
4. External reviewers score your application. Applications which meet a minimum scoring threshold are recommended for funding to the QEW IC Steering Committee.
5. QEW IC Steering Committee, comprised of senior MTO and OCI staff, grants the final decision.
6. Successful *Applicants* will be notified by OCI and provided an outline of conditions and additional information necessary to activate the project (including a detailed design completed and stamped by a RAQS qualified engineering consultant and the installation schedule and plan following the ministry standards within the defined timeline; using the RAQS qualified contactor for the installation and removal of the tested equipment; using the available infrastructure to support the project, among other details will be shared separately in the “Concept of Operation for the QEW Innovation Corridor” document and project inventory files)
7. *Applicants* who are not selected will be notified by OCI. Feedback on the decision can be provided by their BDM.

Applicants should start negotiations with any applicable partners regarding intellectual property (IP), preferably before submission of the application. In addition, applicants must review a copy of the funding agreement with their BDM as part of the application process.

Challenge-Based Stream

Applications to the QEW Innovation Corridor Challenge-based streams will be accepted in one intake round. Application details and dates are posted on ovinhub.ca.

Two priority areas have been identified for targeted, thematic calls for proposals.

- **Work Zone Safety:** Undertake test/pilot to evaluate and showcase innovative application of technologies to better manage and improve safety in work zones. This may include, but is not limited to, elements of real-time tracking of lane closures, detecting activities in work zone areas, and providing enhanced information to motorists and potentially workers in the zone.
- **Queue Warning:** Undertake test/pilot to evaluate and showcase innovative application of technologies, beyond traditional MTO queue warning system (QWS) experiences, for the purpose of providing advanced warning of a downstream queue. This may include, but is not limited to, elements of alternative queue detection technologies, predictive algorithms, edge computing, and alternatives for motorist advisories.

Open Call Stream

We invite applications to our Open Call, which provides funding opportunities without thematic restrictions and a focus on smart mobility and connected vehicles applications. We encourage creative and impactful proposals from diverse sectors and fields. Applications to the QEW Innovation Corridor Program Open Call Stream will be accepted in one intake round. Application details and dates are posted on ovinhub.ca.

Assessment Process and Criteria

The QEW Innovation Corridor Program is a discretionary, non-entitlement program with limited funding. OCI will fund qualified projects with potential for the greatest economic benefits and contribution to transportation and mobility advancements in Ontario. Not all eligible applications can be funded.

All eligible applications are assessed on their merit and reviewed against program objectives and evaluation criteria. Full Applications are internally reviewed for eligibility, completeness, and financial compliance, prior to evaluation by our independent external reviewers with domain and sector expertise. All reviewers are bound by Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs). The final funding decision is made by the QEW Steering Committee.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Clarity of the proposed solution, significance of the market opportunity, expected economic benefit to the companies and Ontario (e.g., new revenues, job creation/retention, productivity improvements) and potential benefit/contribution to transportation safety, sustainability, efficiency, and accessibility as it relates to mobility and goods movement in Ontario.
- Technical merit, novelty, and ability of the innovation to address market opportunities, as well as relevance and applicability to the challenges issued (if applicable)
- Expertise and experience of the team members, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and evidence of collaboration.
- Potential impact and outcomes to the automotive and smart mobility sector, social, environmental, and/or other benefits (i.e., leading to globally competitive business and market opportunities).
- Clarity, feasibility and appropriateness of the project plan and budget, and how the QEW Innovation Corridor will be leveraged.
- A clear strategy and capacity to bring the results to market and/or implement proposed solutions.
- Overall quality and completeness of the application.

Participation Requirements

- **Maintain QEW Operations:** The QEW operation, including the COMPASS operation, is critical to the movement of people and goods in Ontario. The QEW IC testing and piloting shall not negatively affect operations.
- **Permitting:** Participants shall follow the highway corridor management process for Permits and Approvals. Permit access information can be found at: <https://www.hcms.mto.gov.on.ca/PermitWizard>
- **Encroachment Permit documentation:** Participants shall retain a qualified transportation consultant experienced in the preparation of a Traffic Impact Study (TIS). MTO requires that a TIS shall be undertaken by a firm approved under MTO's consultant Registry, Appraisal and Qualification System (RAQS) under the Traffic Impact Analysis Specialty category. The TIS shall be signed and stamped by a Professional Engineer registered in the Province of Ontario, who shall take responsibility for the TIS contents, as required.
- **Pre-consultation meeting:** Participants shall engage in a pre-consultation meeting with MTO to prepare a document package that meets the requirements of the corridor management process.
- **Design:** Participants are required to utilize a RAQS qualified designer for any design drawings who must be registered on the government RAQS registry under the Advanced Traffic Management

Systems category of "ATMS Product, Process and Strategic Development", and "Electronic Subsystem Design Construction Contract Administration and Specialized Inspection Services."

- Installation: Participants shall utilize an RAQS-qualified contractor for installation work and follow the RSS process to access the highway.
- Maintenance impact: Participants shall contact MTO maintenance teams to notify them of any new installations that may impact maintenance activities.
- Operational impact (traffic): Participants shall deliver a pilot design, installation, testing and removal that do not adversely impact the operation of the affected section of the IC; this includes any negative impact on traffic flow (e.g. congestion) or on-road operations.
- Safety impact: Participants shall demonstrate that the pilot will not adversely impact motorists' safety.

Project Activation, Funds and Project Reporting

Project Activation

- The *Applicant* must execute the OCI Funding Agreement, within 30 days of the announcement of award.
- The executable agreement with schedules specific to the approved proposal will be generated through our online management system AccessOCI and sent to all contracting parties.

Review of the detailed design and the installation plan is carried to out by the Ministry to ensure all related ministry standards are followed. When required, comments will be provided to the applicant. Applications which fail to produce acceptable design and installation plans will not be approved. [Flow of Funds](#)

- OCI funds flow only to the *Applicant*. The *Applicant* is responsible to reimburse *Partners*, if applicable.
- Reimbursements are triggered by the submission and approval of claims and reports.
- Reimbursement claims from the *Applicant* to OCI are made when submitting interim and final reports and paid following approval.
- An advance payment of up to 10 per cent, at the sole discretion of OCI, is released upon activation of the project.
- 10 per cent hold-back remitted upon submitted and approved final report.
- Payments are based on the total OVIN award project value.

Project Reporting

A major component of OVIN is the generation and analysis of data and information to support Ontario's automotive and mobility ecosystem (e.g., governments, broader public-sector organizations, industry, post-secondary institutions, transportation authorities, etc.).

OCI will not be collecting, analyzing, or otherwise handling and disseminating data and information considered by applicants to be proprietary, commercially sensitive, or publicly sensitive. OCI will work with applicants to ensure that the collection of information reflects specific project design or business needs and supports their interests.

Reporting instructions and templates will be sent to successful parties at the time of reporting. Reports must be received by reporting deadlines and approved by OCI prior to release of funds for eligible claims.

Notes:

- Applicants **MUST** retain all proof of purchase, receipts, and other relevant documentation relating to eligible expenses.
- Completion of all required reports, surveys, and the demonstration is a contractual obligation to receive funding from OCI. Overdue or incomplete deliverables can lead to the termination of a project.

The following project reports will be required:

Interim Progress Report(s)

Quarterly reports, including progress, project metrics, [data and information](#) requirements, proof of expenditures and partnership contributions, financial attestation, and a request for reimbursement must be submitted by the *Applicant*. The reports are due no later than 30 days following the end of the fiscal quarter.

The Report form is accessed directly on the AccessOCI system from the Report Tab.

Final Report

A final report, including progress, project metrics, data, and information requirements, claim form, proof of expenditures and partnership contributions, financial attestation, and a request for reimbursement is required at the end of the project. Forty-five (45) days prior to the scheduled completion date, the *Applicant* and all contributing *Partners*, if applicable, will receive an email notification of the project end date from the AccessOCI system, with a link to the Final Report should the parties wish to begin entering data.

- *Applicants* can request early reporting by emailing the Program Manager.
- On the scheduled project completion date, the *Applicant* will receive another notification and a link to complete the Final Report from OCI’s AccessOCI system.
- *Applicants* must submit their Final Report within 30 days of project completion to be reimbursed for eligible expenses and maintain good financial standing with OCI.

Project Metrics

If a project crosses an OCI fiscal year end (March 31), the *Applicant* will be required to complete an annual metrics survey each April, for the part of the project that has been completed since the previous March 31. This annual report is mandatory for OCI to fulfil its contract with its Ontario funding ministries. Required metrics reports must be submitted to maintain good financial standing with OCI.

Retrospective Survey

At one, two and three years after project completion, the *Applicant* will be sent a link to complete a retrospective survey to collect data on commercial outcomes from the project. This information is required by OCI for assessment of program impact and continuous improvement.

Project Changes

If required, *Applicants* MUST request project extensions, milestone variances, and/or variances to the OVIN budget exceeding 10% of any budget category value, using the Project Change Request form in the Project Administration tab in their AccessOCI project file. Such requests must be made at the earliest possible opportunity and approved before any planned changes are implemented. Applicants are encouraged to reach out to their Program manager for further guidance on project change requests. Changes will only be considered if the applicant is up to date with their reporting.

Contacts

For inquiries related to application initiation, submit a client intake form ([Resource Documents - OVIN - Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network \(ovinhub.ca\)](#)).

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