

# GROW ONTARIO ACCELERATOR HUB

## GUIDELINES

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[Bioenterprise webpage](#)

[Ontario Agri-Food Research Initiative webpage](#)

# Grow Ontario Accelerator Hub Outline

## Objectives

The [Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership](#) (Sustainable CAP) is a five-year (2023-2028) investment by federal-provincial and territorial governments to strengthen competitiveness, innovation, and resiliency of the agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector. This includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion commitment that is cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially/territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by the provinces and territories.

The Partnership supports companies in the following key priority areas, with research and innovation continuing to be a focus across all programming:

- Productivity and growth in the agri-food and agri-based product sectors.
- Environmental stewardship to enhance water quality and soil health.
- Protection and risk resilience to reinforce the foundation for public trust in the sector through improved assurance systems in food safety and plant and animal health.
- Crosscutting whereas businesses adopt innovations and best practice tools, practices, and technologies.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), through the Ontario Agri-Food Research Initiative (OAFRI) under Sustainable CAP, offers support to innovative companies to advance more solutions and technologies to market by providing mentoring and advisory services in agri-food business acceleration, growth planning, and investment readiness, as well as to provide supports to businesses across the agri-food supply chain with respect to adoption of innovation. The Grow Ontario Accelerator Hub supports the [Grow Ontario Strategy](#) which aims to increase the creation and adoption of innovative technologies to enhance competitiveness, grow market opportunities and strengthen the sector against future disruptions. The Grow Ontario Accelerator Hub is comprised of two components; The Advisory Services Initiative and the Resource Hub. The objective of this Initiative is to provide a suite of advisory services and mentorship to innovative companies as well as a resource hub.

OMAFRA is committed to the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. To meet this commitment, the ministry has developed actions that ensure research and innovation programs are more open, accessible, equitable, and respectful of a variety of needs and expectations for all Ontarians. All companies applying for advisory services and mentorship should be equipped to consider impact(s) on equity and representation of deserving groups if appropriate to the context of their business activities seeking support.

OMAFRA is committed to supporting the success of Indigenous food systems and businesses. Participation by First Nations, Métis, Inuit and other applicants is strongly encouraged.

The Grow Ontario Accelerator Hub will engage Ontario-based companies with promising discoveries to support the advancement of their solutions and technologies into the marketplace by entering into a Mentorship and Advisory Services Agreement which will include 25 hours of assistance from a designated mentor / advisor matched to your company based on industry, stage, and operational needs.

[OMAFRA key priority areas](#) listed below:

**1. Food Safety:**

- Enhance public confidence in the sector to deliver on food safety, animal health, plant health, emergency management, and animal welfare expectations and demands.
- Anticipate, detect, mitigate and/or reduce food safety hazards along the supply chain.

**2. Animal Health & Welfare:**

- Enhance public confidence in the sector to deliver on food safety, animal health, plant health, emergency management, and animal welfare expectations and demands.
- Anticipate, detect, mitigate and/or reduce animal health hazards and antimicrobial use along the supply chain.

**3. Plant Health & Protection:**

- Enhance public confidence in the sector to deliver on food safety, animal health, plant health, emergency management, and animal welfare expectations and demands.
- Help strengthen the agri-food sector's sustainability and social license through increased utilization of integrated pest management (IPM) and other pest mitigation strategies.
- Anticipate, detect, mitigate and/or reduce plant hazards along the supply chain, and improve plant resilience and resistance.

**4. Soil Health:**

- Protect and enhance soil health and water quality, supporting improved public confidence in the sector to deliver on sustainability expectations.
- Improve soil health and conservation to support agricultural productivity.

**5. Water Quality and Quantity:**

- Protect and enhance soil health and water quality, supporting improved public confidence in the sector to deliver on sustainability expectations.
- Strengthen the agri-food sector's sustainability and social licence through improved water use and water quality.

**6. Sustainable Production Systems:**

- Strengthen the sustainability of the agri-food sector through (1) Soil health and conservation, (2) Improved water quality (e.g., reduced phosphorus runoff and pesticides), (3) Increased water/waste/energy efficiency and reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and (4) Increased utilization of 4Rs of Nutrient Stewardship (right source, right rate, right time, and right place).

**7. Productive Land Capacity:**

- Reduce the rate of loss of farmland through improved land use planning to support agricultural viability.

**8. Competitive Production Systems:**

- Improve production efficiency, productivity, competitiveness and public trust efforts through technology adoption and innovation and technology development such a labour-saving technology or practices, automation, waste reduction, recycling, and increased water/waste/energy efficiency and reduced GHG emissions.

**9. Innovative Products & Product Improvements:**

- Enhance competitiveness, profitability, and growth of the agri-food sector through new or improved products.

**10. Trade Market & Targeted Sector Growth Opportunities:**

- Growth of the overall agri-food sector through expansion of existing and access to new domestic and international markets.
- Improve economic performance of identified priority sub-sectors and increased production of niche and/or value-add products.
- Priority areas include dairy goats, hazelnuts, greenhouse, maple syrup, processed vegetables, processed meats, baked goods, and cannabis/hemp.

Bioenterprise is delivering and administrating this Initiative. Bioenterprise brings more than 20 years of industry experience and a national and international network of research institutions, academia, mentors and experts, government, and industry to help small and medium-sized businesses in the sector nationwide connect, innovate, and grow. Through its experienced service partner network, Bioenterprise offers a wide range of expertise and support to its clients, and partnerships with other industries help open doors to new technologies and platforms to help food-tech and agri-tech businesses innovate and grow.

The Advisory Services Initiative invites Ontario-based eligible applicants to apply to receive mentorship and advisory services support to advance their innovative agriculture, agri-food, and agri-based products, solutions and technologies to market. These efforts aim to enhance competitiveness and the leadership position of Ontario in the agriculture and agri-food sectors.

**Note:** Organizations operating in the aquaculture sector are not eligible to receive funding through this Initiative.

## Overview

**Duration:** up to 12 months

**Start Date:** Anticipated start dates will be on or after **April 1, 2024**. Start and end dates may vary.

**Mentorship and Advisory Services Support Available:** Bioenterprise will provide mentorship and advisory services support to companies on a contracted basis. The mentorship and advisory time will be dependent on the companies needs, up to a maximum of twenty-five (25) hours.

## Eligible Applicants

- For-profit SME's incorporated in Canada with less than 50 employees
- For-profit SMEs with technologies at / or beyond Technology Readiness Level 3 (TRL-3+) stage of development
- Must be located in Ontario
- Must have eligible business activities that:
  - take place in Ontario
  - that address the OMAFRA key priority areas and the Initiative objectives as referenced below
- Must have a product/technology/service that is unique to Ontario and does not displace existing Ontario products
- Must be operating in the agriculture, agri-food, and agri-based products sectors, including technology or equipment suppliers to the sector

## Recipients

Recipients are applicants who have been selected to receive mentorship and advisory services under the Advisory Services Initiative and will be notified via email. Providing services is contingent on the applicant agreeing and complying with:

- The Bioenterprise Terms and Conditions document for Grow Ontario Accelerator Hub and
- The terms and conditions outlined in the Grow Ontario Accelerator Hub Mentorship and Advisory Services Agreement with Bioenterprise

## Advisory Services Available

Advisory Services may include but are not limited to:

- Business strategy services
- Financial services
- Graphic design
- International/export development
- Investment preparation
- Marketing and communication services
- Mentorship and coaching
- Project related legal & intellectual property

- Regulatory services
- Technology and product validation
- Translation services
- Web development

## How to Apply

### Call for Applications

A call for applications will be announced on the Bioenterprise website and our social media channels.

On an annual basis Bioenterprise will launch an open call for applications. Calls will remain open until the maximum number of applicants have been selected and approved under each call.

### Application Form

Companies are encouraged to apply for the Advisory Services Initiative by completing an online application form.

**Step One:** Sign Into the Bioenterprise Website:

- Companies that have existing accounts with Bioenterprise must sign into the Bioenterprise website by following [this link](#).
- Companies new to Bioenterprise must first create a free account by following [this link](#).

**Step Two:** Apply for the Initiative through the Bioenterprise Member Portal:

- Once Step one is completed and the user is signed in, they must click on the button that states: “Apply for the Grow Ontario Accelerator Hub” to submit an application.

All application forms submitted will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility and will be evaluated by Bioenterprise. For a full list of eligibility criteria, refer the [Grow Ontario Accelerator Hub Terms and Conditions](#).

Applications must be submitted online through the Bioenterprise website. **Email, mail, in-person, and facsimile (fax) submissions will not be accepted.**

Upon submitting an application, a confirmation email will be provided. Applicants are encouraged to retain a copy of their completed submission for ease of reference until decisions are made.

Applicants with additional questions can contact: [theengine@bioenterprise.ca](mailto:theengine@bioenterprise.ca).

## Application Review

### Application Process

Applications received will be submitted to a Review Panel for evaluation. All reviewers are bound by Bioenterprise's conflict of interest and confidentiality policies.

The Review Panel will evaluate the applications according to the following criteria:

1. The company's fit within the OMAFRA priority areas
2. the objectives of Bioenterprise
3. key priorities under Sustainable CAP.

### Selection and Notification

All complete applications received within an open call will be reviewed and assessed. Bioenterprise will review all applications received on a semi-monthly basis. Awards for mentorship and advisory services under the Advisory Services Initiative will be announced at the completion of each semi-monthly review process. Successful applicants enter into a Mentorship and Advisory Services Agreement with Bioenterprise.

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified of acceptance within fifteen (15) business days after the decision has been made via email.

## Mentorship and Advisory Services Agreement

A Mentorship and Advisory Services Agreement will be in place with successful applicants outlining, at a minimum:

- The duration and timeframe of the agreement
- A general understanding of what services will be provided
- A schedule to address the company's needs
- Reporting requirements, including final reports and an annual client survey
- Retention of data requirements (if any)

The agreement is considered approved and agreed to upon applicants' acceptance to join the Advisory Services Initiative.

## Reporting Requirements

The Mentorship and Advisory Services Agreement outlines the reporting requirements for the final report and annual client surveys.

## Intellectual Property

Bioenterprise and OMAFRA make no claim to ownership of IP resulting from activities supported through this Initiative. Refer to the [Grow Ontario Accelerator Hub Terms and Conditions](#) and Mentorship and Advisory Services Agreement.