

# Guidelines

## Early Stage Commercialization Fund

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### 1. Program Objective

Invest Nova Scotia's Early Stage Commercialization Fund ("ESCF") helps move Nova Scotia university, college and university-affiliated research to market.

ESCF:

- promotes and accelerates technology transfer activities in Nova Scotia post-secondary institutions
- provides the opportunity to assess the commercial potential of intellectual property
- narrows the gap in funding that exists at the beginning of the commercialization process
- enables projects to move closer to industry collaboration or a spin-out opportunity

If you're a researcher engaged in information technology, life sciences, clean technology, ocean technology, or other technology development with market potential, this opportunity is for you.

Up to \$50,000 CAD in funding is available per project.

#### **Low Carbon Technology Stream:**

Nova Scotia's Department of Natural Resources and Renewables (NSDNRR) and Invest Nova Scotia are partnering to offer the Low Carbon Technology Stream of ESCF and will work together on the evaluation process and curriculum.

### 2. Eligible Applicants

Nova Scotia university and college faculty members, staff, clinicians and researchers in university-affiliated institutions can apply.

Applications from graduate students and post-docs will be considered, provided a faculty member is a co-applicant. The lead applicant (or principal investigator) must be the faculty member who holds the research account.

Invest Nova Scotia portfolio companies and Accelerate program companies (past or present) are ineligible for this opportunity.

### 3. Program Criteria

ESCF has two rounds: Fall 2025 and Winter 2026. Each round has two types of funding: Phase One and Phase Two.

**Phase One** is for first-time projects with technologies in the initial stages of development with an identified opportunity for commercialization.

**Phase Two** is for projects that have:

- received Phase One funding for the same project in the past; and
- identified an opportunity for commercialization, target markets and potential revenue streams; and
- initiated discussions with potential customers; and
- established a collaboration with a commercial partner or identified a spin-out opportunity\*

*\* Through ESCF, Invest Nova Scotia seeks to find and build technologies with the potential for venture capital investment. Although we welcome ESCF applicants who might consider licensing their technology, preference is given to projects with the potential for a high growth spin-out company.*

In both phases, funds can be used to cover up to 100 per cent of a project to a **maximum of \$50,000 CAD**. Past ESCF recipients are ineligible for Phase One with the same technology; however, they may apply for Phase Two if the project has further advanced and meets the requirements described above. Past Phase One recipients wishing to apply for Phase Two must submit the final report before the application deadline.

### **Low Carbon Stream Applicants:**

If your project is applying for the Low Carbon stream, it is essential to clearly identify this in your application materials. This applies to both **Phase One** and **Phase Two** applications.

### **Operating companies:**

This funding is not intended to support research and development of new products for operating companies. Examples:

- An applicant develops a new medical device and intends to start a new Company A to commercialize it. This project IS eligible.
- An applicant develops another medical device with the intention to commercialize through Company A. This project IS NOT eligible to receive ESCF funding
- An applicant develops another medical device with the intention to commercialize through a new Company B or a partner company that is arm's length from the applicant. This project IS eligible.
- An applicant develops another medical device with the intention to commercialize through, license or assign to a partner company that the applicant holds a paid position or shares. This project IS NOT eligible.

If an applicant has already registered Company A or B (usually for the purposes of funding applications), the project may still be eligible for ESCF. For Phase One projects, the applicant must demonstrate that the project is still in the process of moving out of the university or institution and most efforts are on research and development. Intellectual property should not yet be assigned to the company. Exceptions may apply.

#### 4. Application Process

The **deadline** for winter round submissions is **Monday, February 9, 2026, at 5:00 pm AT**.

Applicants are asked to use our **Application Form**, complete the table and project description sections and sign the applicant authorization. [Submissions are made online](#) via our application portal. Applicants will need to sign up for a new account using the portal link. During the application process, applicants will be asked to attach the following documents: the completed proposal form (PDF), along with the CV(s) of the principal investigator(s), highlighting any previous experience in research commercialization.

Phase two applicants must submit their final phase one report prior to the application deadline.

There is no application fee for this Program.

#### Winter 2026 TIMELINE:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Monday, February 9, 2026 | Proposals due   |
| Monday, March 2, 2026    | Shortlist notified  |
| Tuesday, March 10, 2026  | Shortlist reviewed and researchers meet with evaluation committee |
| Monday, March 16, 2026   | Recipients notified   |

#### 5. Funding and Eligible Costs

1. Funds can be used for intellectual property development; assessment of market potential; development of go-to-market strategies, business plans and strategic plans; development of intellectual property protection strategies; proof-of-concept or prototype development (can cover cost of students and post-doctoral researchers but not the principal investigator); technology design and optimization; pre-clinical testing; clinical validation; and leveraging other funds.
2. Eligible costs are limited to labour, direct materials and expenses, and business consulting. Patent costs are limited to 10 per cent of the overall funding request.

Equipment and other costs difficult to attribute directly to an individual project are generally ineligible, but may be considered. Company development activities such as website creation, marketing materials and conferences are generally ineligible, but may be considered. Note: Overhead and administration costs are not eligible.

3. In Phase Two, the maximum amount for legal costs is \$10,000. Note: Any third-party support is mutually agreed upon by the awarded applicant and Invest Nova Scotia.
4. A submission that is considered to significantly understate the costs necessary to accomplish the tasks outlined will not be considered. An approved project should commence and be completed within the allowable timeframe.
5. Individual project duration is limited to 12 months from the date of authorization, with all costs incurred and paid within that time. Projects can be completed in a shorter time than the maximum duration permitted.

## **6. Reporting Requirements**

1. A final report (month 12) detailing tasks and outcomes achieved is required. A final project account printout from an institution's financial services office must be included with the report.
2. Quarterly progress meetings are required with an Invest Nova Scotia advisor and must be attended by the principal investigator. Follow-up contact after project completion may occur and is intended to determine long-term outcomes from the program and gather recommendations for improvement.
3. Failure to provide the necessary reports may disqualify future applications from the affiliated institutions.

## **7. Other Pertinent information**

### **a) Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**

Information collected in connection with this program is subject to, and will be treated in accordance with, the [Nova Scotia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#).

### **b) Public Announcements and Disclosure of Information**

Approved applicants must consent to:

- Participate in any public announcement or public ceremony relating to the awarding of the Name of Program funding to the applicant and related accomplishments, at a mutually agreeable time; and
- The release of project information (applicant/institution name, sector, region, and total Program funding amount approved) to the media and general public.

### **c) Contact Information**

For more information, reach out to Grant Ruffinengo at 902.424.8670 x 1406 or [via email](#).