

Mission from MaRS

Food and Agtech Demonstration Initiative

APPLICATION GUIDE



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada



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1. Introduction

1.1. About this initiative

The Food and Agtech Demonstration Initiative is led by MaRS, and supported by funding from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), as part of its Agricultural Clean Technology (ACT) Program. With a total of \$2 million available, the funding will be allocated to selected pilot projects to accelerate the adoption of venture technologies across the food and agriculture sector. All selected projects must demonstrate a clear and justified value proposition for reducing the environmental footprint of the food and agriculture industry and providing economic and public benefits for Canada.

This initiative is associated with the Mission from MaRS: Food and Agtech program.

1.2. Purpose of this guide

This guide provides participants with essential information on rules, eligibility, funding, timelines, application procedures and evaluation criteria. It is designed to help participants prepare comprehensive, competitive submissions and to ensure consistent understanding of the initiative's objectives, requirements and post-award obligations.

Note: Participants who have questions about the initiative are invited to email corporateinnovation@marsdd.com

2. Project overview

2.1. Objectives

By targeting critical focus areas (described in section 2.2), this initiative aims to enable participating cleantech ventures to secure strong Canadian demonstration projects that deliver measurable environmental benefits, strengthen the competitiveness and resilience of Canada's food and agri-tech sector, and provide public and economic benefits such as job creation and regional economic growth. This, in turn, will boost the capacity of participating cleantech ventures to attract follow-on capital and secure the ecosystem support needed to thrive. All projects supported through this initiative must demonstrate a clear and justified value proposition for reducing the environmental footprint of the food and agriculture industry and providing economic and public benefits for Canada.

This initiative aims to deploy a minimum of three clean technology solutions over a two-year period in Canada, collaborating directly with food and agriculture companies operating domestically. *This guide pertains to the first round of funding available for distribution.*

2.2. Technology focus areas

Eligible projects must focus on clean technologies ready for full deployment ([TRL 6–9](#)) falling into one of the following priority categories:

- **Low-carbon or efficient energy systems:** Low-carbon energy/fuel systems or technologies that enhance energy efficiency along the food and agriculture supply chain.
- **Waste reduction:** Technologies that reduce or reuse agricultural or food waste.
- **Methane reductions:** Technologies that reduce methane emissions.
- **Fertilizer efficiency:** Technologies that reduce emissions from fertilizer use.
- **Emissions quantification:** Measurement and verification technologies.

3. Eligibility

3.1. Eligible applicant teams

This initiative is open to project teams consisting of one (1) eligible startup, acting as the lead applicant, who applies on behalf of both the startup and the client organization.

The proposed pilot project must be between a technology provider and a client organization in the food and agriculture sector, where at least one of the partners is a participant in the [MaRS Food and Agtech Mission](#) (either a startup in the venture accelerator and/or a participant in the corporate adopter cohort).

The lead applicant must meet these minimum criteria to be considered eligible:

- Be incorporated in Canada, majority-owned by Canadian shareholders and not a subsidiary of a larger parent company that does not meet the definition of a startup.
- Be developing technology aligned with MaRS Discovery District's definition of climate and resilience technology.
 - "Climate and resilience technology" refers to physical or digital technologies that: (i) Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of agri-food production or other ongoing contributors to climate disruption; (ii) Increase efficiency, transparency or responsiveness in the food and agriculture supply chain; and/or (iii) Strengthen the resilience and adaptability of food systems in the face of climate impacts and operational disruptions.
- Be classified as a small and mid-sized enterprise (SME) as defined by [Innovation, Science and Economic Development \(ISED\) Canada](#).
- Have been operational for at least 12 months prior to the application start date.
- Have generated revenue in the last 12 months or plan to in the next 12 months.
- Own the intellectual property behind the climate and resilience technology solution.

- Ensure the solution is, in MaRS Discovery District's opinion:
 - Focused on reducing emissions, improving supply chain efficiency and security, optimizing logistics and traceability, enhancing waste management and/or increasing labour cost efficiency to build resilience in Canada's food and agriculture systems
 - Proprietary and/or patentable
 - Scalable and capable of delivering significant impact and public benefit
- Ensure that the solution falls within TRL6 and TRL9 on the nine-point Technology Readiness Level spectrum, as defined by [ISED Canada](#).
- Is a MaRS member company or has [applied for MaRS membership](#).

Each lead applicant is required to appoint one (1) authorized representative, who must hold an executive or officer-level leadership position, to register on behalf of the project team.

The client organization must meet these minimum criteria to be eligible:

- Is defined as a large-scale enterprise, corporation or major national entity with operations post-farm gate across the Canadian food, beverage and/or agricultural value chain.
- Possesses the structural capacity, technical readiness and dedicated resources to adopt and scale venture technologies across their enterprise.
- Is not a subsidiary of a larger parent company that would otherwise not be eligible for the program.

3.2. Eligible projects

Pilot readiness: The technology solution must be fully ready to be deployed at the time of submission (TRL 6–9 in accordance with [ISED Canada](#)).

- **TRL 6:** Product and/or process prototype demonstration in a relevant environment: Represents a major step up in a technology's demonstrated readiness. Examples include testing a prototype in a simulated operational environment.
- **TRL 7:** Product and/or process prototype demonstration in an operational environment: Prototype near or at planned operational system and requires demonstration of an actual prototype in an operational environment.
- **TRL 8:** Actual product and/or process completed and qualified through test and demonstration: Innovation has been proven to work in its final form and under expected conditions. In almost all cases, this TRL represents the end of true system development.
- **TRL 9:** Actual product and/or process proven successfully: Actual application of the product and/or process innovation in its final form or function. Technology has been fully proven in operational environments and is actively deployed under real-world conditions.

Partnership commitment: Roles for project team members should be clearly delineated, along with clear monetary and/or in-kind contributions to the proposed project. Applications must include an official letter of intent (LOI) stating the intent for a joint pilot project from the client organization.

3.3. Project location

Projects and pilots must be executed within Canada, collaborating with food and agriculture companies operating in Canada. All projects supported through this initiative must demonstrate a clear and justified value proposition for economic, environmental and public benefits in Canada.

4. Terms of funding

4.1. Funds available

The total funding pool is \$2,010,400 with \$692,500 available for distribution before March 31, 2027. Funds will be distributed directly to successful startup applicants in structured tranches tied to milestones. Depending on the rate of deployment and pilot timeframe, projects may receive additional funding out of the total funding pool.

Funding per project will be determined by MaRS. No single startup may receive more than \$1,000,000 in funding over the course of all funding rounds.

MaRS will distribute a total of \$692,500 by March 31, 2027. Another \$1,317,900 will be distributed before March 31, 2028.

Projects **must at least reach milestone 1** (and receive funding tranche 1) **by February 28, 2027**. If this timeline is not feasible, project teams should wait to apply for the second round of funding planned for Spring 2027.

MILESTONE	TARGET DISBURSEMENT	REQUIREMENTS
Milestone 1 December 2026 to February 2027	40%	- Signed ultimate recipient (or UR) agreement between MaRS and the lead applicant. - Signed contract agreement between lead applicant and client organization detailing roles and scope of deployment, IP boundaries, safety protocols, defined KPIs and a clear definition of project success.
Milestone 2 Ideal deadline March 2027	30%	- Verification of baseline GHG emissions reduction estimates conducted by a third party (eligible for reimbursement as part of awarded funding, expected costs should be included in the application's project overview template). - Delivery, implementation or installation of technology in the corporate facility. - Successful training of facility operators. - Achievement of pre-determined mid-point KPIs. - Adherence to bi-weekly check-ins with MaRS. - Submission of quarterly report(s) to MaRS (see section 7).
Milestone 3 Ideal deadline August 2027	30%	- Successful pilot completion based on pre-determined criteria. - Submission of final performance reports and receipts.

Lead applicants must justify the amount requested relative to project scale, expected impact and partner contributions. MaRS may choose at its sole discretion to award project funding for an amount different from the requested amount.

4.2. Cost sharing

MaRS will contribute up to 75 percent of eligible project costs. The client organization is required to contribute, in kind, at least 25 percent of eligible project costs. The LOI must explicitly detail the client's type of contribution and the estimated value of that contribution.

An in-kind contribution is defined as the provision of non-monetary goods, services, equipment or assets that have a verifiable cash value and are contributed by a corporate adopter to support the execution of a funded pilot project. Cash contributions may be accepted in lieu of, or alongside, in-kind support.

Eligible costs are the incremental, relevant, reasonable and essential expenses required to carry out the eligible activities to which they relate.

4.3. Government stacking limits

Anti-stacking warranty: Successful applicants must formally represent and warrant that they have not and will not receive funding from AAFC via another initial recipient of the ACT Program (CAAIN, Bioenterprise, Ontario Genomics, Zone Agtech and CFIN).

4.4. Timelines

The following timelines apply to the full project submission and funding process. Note that MaRS reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to alter these timelines or cancel the initiative.

September 8, 2026	Application opens
September 17, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. EST	Information webinar
November 6, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. EST	Application closes
November 9 to 27, 2026	Third-party review and evaluation
November 30, 2026	Successful applicants notified
November 30 to December 18, 2026	Contract signing
December 2026 to August 2027	Funding distributed based on milestones achieved
August 31, 2027	Expected end date for pilot projects

Extension provision: MaRS has the right to reopen the application window for an additional six (6) weeks after the initial deadline.

5. Application process

5.1. How to apply

Application to the initiative is a single submission/evaluation process. Only applications submitted through the [submission form](#) will be accepted. In order for an application to be considered, the authorized representative of the lead applicant must complete and submit the following documents by the closing date and time (November 6, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. EST). A complete application package consists of:

- The submission form.
- Project overview template, provided in Microsoft Excel format.
- Letter of intent (LOI) from the client organization.

Applicants will be required to submit a comprehensive proposal covering the following themes:

- Applicant and technology overview.
- Client organization details.
- Pilot scope and logistics, including resource demands, KPIs, success metrics, deployment roadmap, projected financials and scalability potential.
- Estimated GHG emissions reduction potential.
- Other anticipated benefits to the public, economy, equity-deserving groups and the environment.

All supporting documentation must be uploaded to the submission form. Templates will be provided where applicable. Supporting documents include:

- **LOI (required):** At a minimum, one (1) letter of intent, executed by both the lead applicant and client organization which includes (at minimum):
 - A contractual commitment to fulfill the demonstration project within the predetermined timeframe, should funding be released.
 - Acknowledgement that the client organization is aware and approves of the proposed work plan, budget, timeline, emissions targets and scope (as identified in the application).
 - A commitment from the client organization that they will pay no less than 25 percent of the cost of the project. Type of contribution (in-kind, cash or mixed) must be specified as well as the estimated value of the in-kind contribution, if relevant.

- **Project overview template in Microsoft Excel (required):** This document will be used to provide details on project funding sources, costs and work plan.
 - **Project costs:** Details and justification of expected costs.
 - **Project funding:** Outline other sources of project funding.
 - **Work plan:** Details on activities required to reach each funding milestone and expected deliverables.
- **Letters of support (optional):** Letters of support from end-users/clients are useful and will be taken into consideration.

Only the information described above will be reviewed. Any additional attachments, materials or information will not be considered during the evaluation.

5.2. Submission deadline

The submission deadline for this initiative is November 6, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. EST. Submissions received after the deadline will not be accepted nor eligible in the initiative. Applicants are encouraged to complete their submissions well in advance of the deadline. Furthermore, partial or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

6. Evaluation

6.1. Screening criteria

All submissions will be screened to ensure they meet all of the eligibility requirements, including:

- Complete application package received by the deadline.
- Inclusion of the client organization's LOI, including commitment of 25 percent contribution.
- Adherence to eligibility requirements, including:
 - Canadian incorporation
 - SME status
 - MaRS membership
 - Appropriate TRL at time of submission
 - Confirmation that applicant is developing a “climate and resilience technology”
 - Acknowledgement that no funding has been received from other ACT program initial recipients
 - Completion of Milestone 1 by February 28, 2027, at the latest

6.2. Merit evaluation criteria

Proposals passing initial screening will be scored based on:

Technology, innovation and IP moat: Technical soundness, novelty and robustness of the current IP protection strategy.	10%
Operational fit and corporate partnership: Depth of the operational challenge being solved, alignment with corporate needs and adoption readiness.	15%
Pilot feasibility, logistics and timing: Deployment feasibility, realistic milestones and structured and measurable KPIs and targets.	20%
Financial viability and ROI: Economic viability of the project, including accurate and defensible calculations of financial metrics and projections.	10%
Environmental, social and economic impact: The scale and accuracy of projected GHG emissions reductions, alongside other environmental, social and public benefits.	30%
Scaling potential and broad industry reach: The capacity for long-term commercial scale within the client organization and across the industry.	15%

6.3. Selection and award process

Review mechanics: Applications will be evaluated over a two-week period by a third-party review panel representing diverse perspectives across industry, investment and academia.

MaRS discretion: MaRS maintains full control over the selection logistics, final project criteria and the timing/frequency of milestone payments.

Governance standards: MaRS operates under open, transparent decision-making procedures, utilizing established redress provisions and dispute resolution processes.

Following the evaluation period, MaRS will contact the authorized representative associated with each selected project by email (using the information provided on the submission form). Before being declared a funding recipient ("ultimate recipient" or "UR") and awarded funding, the authorized representative and project team associated with each selected project will be required to execute a form of project declaration and release. In addition, all parties of the project team of a project identified as a funding recipient will be required to enter into a recipient agreement ("ultimate recipient agreement") with MaRS and no selected project shall be a recipient of funding until it has completed such declaration and release and entered in the ultimate recipient agreement.

7. Project activation and reporting

7.1. Project structure

Funding made available through this initiative is provided to support the completion of projects with well-defined objectives, milestones, deliverables and timelines. Lead applicants must clearly delineate the scope of the project for which funding from MaRS is being requested. Any related work completed concurrently or before the project term, but outside the scope of the project, may be discussed in the submission form and must be clearly indicated as such.

7.2. Project term

Pilot projects are expected to span five to nine months. If a pilot is to exceed nine months (August 31, 2027), the UR must inform MaRS in advance, and MaRS may, at its discretion, grant an extension.

7.3. Project initiation

Funding status is formalized only upon the legal execution of a written ultimate recipient agreement between MaRS and the selected venture.

7.4. Ultimate recipient agreement

Ultimate recipients will enter into an ultimate recipient agreement with MaRS. The ultimate recipient agreement will address the project scope, work plan, milestones, deliverables, performance targets, eligible costs, payment schedule, reporting requirements and terms and conditions of funding including intellectual property and project assets, and other aspects related to MaRS's funding contribution.

Potential recipients will be encouraged to obtain independent legal advice prior to entering into the ultimate recipient agreement as it contains material legal terms and long term obligations.

The legal contract will require the UR to strictly comply with the following:

- **Audit compliance:** MaRS and appointed federal auditors retain the right to conduct comprehensive financial and operational reviews. URs must preserve and grant access to its records, information, databases, audit and evaluation reports and all other documentation related to UR's project and associated expenditures.
- **Public release:** While application data is treated with institutional privacy, selected projects are subject to public disclosure mandates. MaRS and the Government of Canada retain the right to publicly release the recipient's identity, operational municipality, project scope and funding totals.
- **Communications:** The UR must acknowledge the Government of Canada's contribution in all public announcements and communications related to the initiative.

- Official languages: The UR must provide services and communications in both English and French if project activities impact both official language communities.
- Reporting schedules: The UR must agree to abide by the reporting schedule provided by MaRS, and upon project completion, cooperate in the creation of a case study.
- Liability exclusion: The UR is solely responsible for its project obligations. The Government of Canada and MaRS assume no liability for injury, loss or property damage occurring during the execution of the pilot project.

7.5. Intellectual property

Intellectual property (IP) generated remains with the developers, but the UR must report the total number of new technologies (products, practices, processes systems) that successfully attain IP protection during the reporting periods. See section 7.6 below.

7.6. Reporting and knowledge sharing

Ultimate recipients will be required to report on project outcomes, achievements and lessons learned, including environmental benefits (actual and projected), job creation and other economic and public benefits. The UR must comply with strict quantitative and qualitative reporting schedules set by MaRS.

The UR is expected to report on the following quantitative and qualitative metrics:

- Company size (micro, small, medium, large) and project location by municipality.
- Number of knowledge transfer events organized by UR to share results with potential adopters or to further commercialize the technology.
 - Examples include workshops, industry meetings, demonstrations, tours, expos and webinars.
- Number of knowledge transfer products created under the project that have been disseminated to transfer information to audiences who may adopt the technology.
 - Examples include brochures, factsheets, flyers, guides, articles in trade magazines, technical bulletins and social media items. Only the number of products developed should be reported, not the number of copies that were printed and disseminated.
- Number of full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs created.
- Starting and ending TRL.
- Whether this technology obtained intellectual property (IP) protection.
 - Examples for IP protection include, but are not limited to: patents filed, registered trademarks and copyrights.
- Estimated reduction of GHG tonnes CO2 equivalent and a description of this estimation.
- The likelihood the technology will be commercially available within the next five (5) years.

- Description of other environmental benefits that could be potentially achieved through this project utilizing both qualitative and where possible quantitative measures (e.g., estimated decreased risk to water quality, estimated reduction in water usage, protection of biodiversity).
- Description of specific benefits generated for the following groups: Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis, Inuit), persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities, women, youth, and members of 2SLGBTQI+ communities.
- Description of how the project has created specific economic benefits for the UR organization and/or the local economy.

Upon project completion, the UR is expected to cooperate in the creation of a case study.

Reporting cadence: URs are expected to report these metrics and other core project details to MaRS on a quarterly basis throughout the duration of the pilot.

For visibility, MaRS will work with the UR to schedule regular progress updates on a more frequent cadence than quarterly reporting requirements.

8. Contact Us

For questions regarding eligibility, cohort alignment or application logistics, please reach out to us at corporateinnovation@marsdd.com.