

# ONTARIO'S REGIONAL INNOVATION CENTRE NETWORK

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## 2015-16

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A YEAR IN REVIEW

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Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs



# Ontario's Regional Innovation Centre Network

## A Year in Review 2015-16

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# A Year in Review

## Ontario's Regional Innovation Centre Network

### A Year in Review 2015-16

The concept of innovation centres in Ontario is not a new one. A variety of centres, commercialization entities and support organizations began emerging in the early 2000s. At the same time, more established technology associations and community organizations began looking towards how early-stage tech ventures could be better supported based on their constituents' needs.

Since 2010, with the introduction of a provincial initiative called the Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs (ONE), 17 centres began operating as a coordinated collective, with support from the Business Acceleration Program (BAP) out of MaRS Discovery District and funded through the Province of Ontario. Under this network, the aim was to align and coordinate programming that would systematically support technology ventures by providing access to resources across a breadth of regions, and thus building a connected pipeline of accelerating ventures.

This support infrastructure was launched when tech startup activity in Ontario was bubbling up again, catalyzing a community of innovative tech startups in each region. Today, this activity is growing, maturing and increasing in

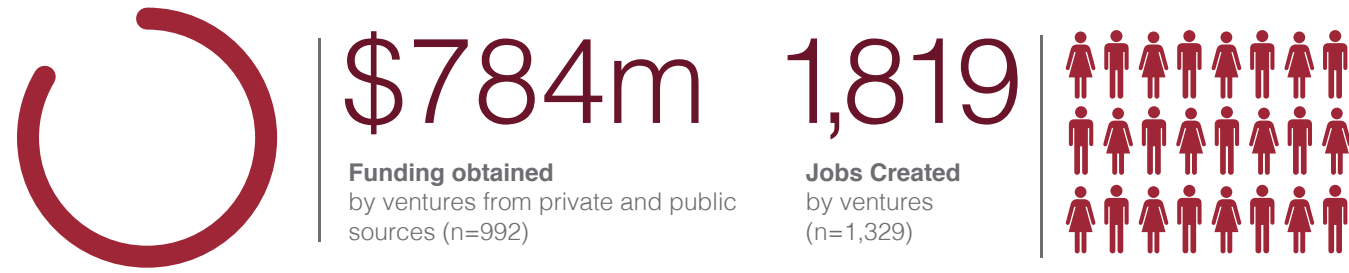
momentum in major hubs like Toronto, Ottawa and Waterloo, as well as in eastern, southwestern and northern Ontario, the Golden Horseshoe region, and the Greater Toronto Area.

Thankfully, we are now seeing strong venture activity across the province just as market uncertainties are dominating the global economy, and disrupting our regions and local communities. Regional Innovation Centres have become the "go-to" hubs in their respective regions, neutral conveners of all members involved in the tech and innovation space—municipalities, colleges and universities, federal partners, local investors, service providers, and grassroots support organizations. They each draw a diverse community of entrepreneurs who are working to build their regions' future economic base, providing a home where they can explore ideas, learn new skills and collaborate with like-minded innovators.

The following report provides a window into this community over the past operating year (2015—2016), demonstrating its collective impact. It also highlights the programming at each centre and offers a snapshot of the ventures they support.

# ONTARIO'S REGIONAL INNOVATION CENTRES AT A GLANCE

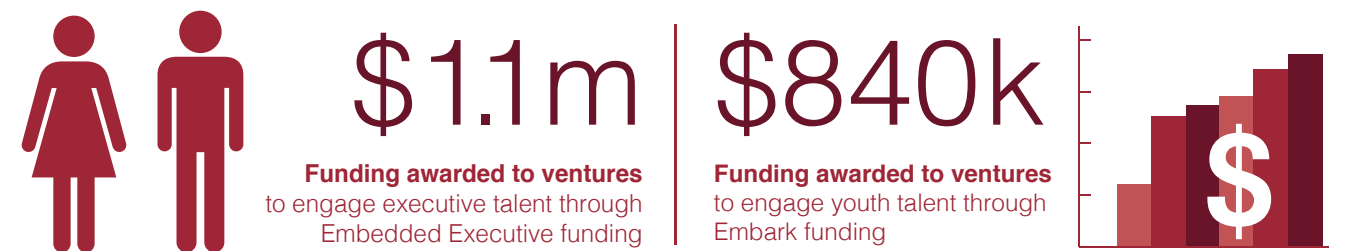
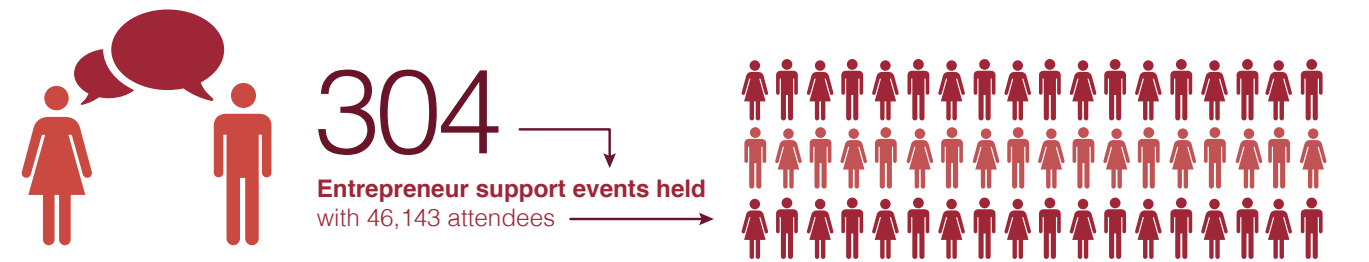
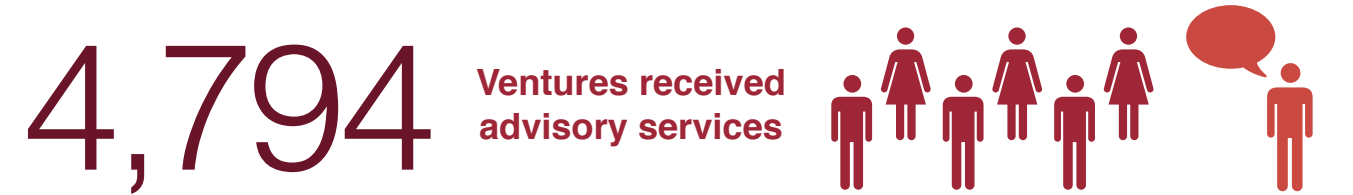
## VENTURE OUTCOMES

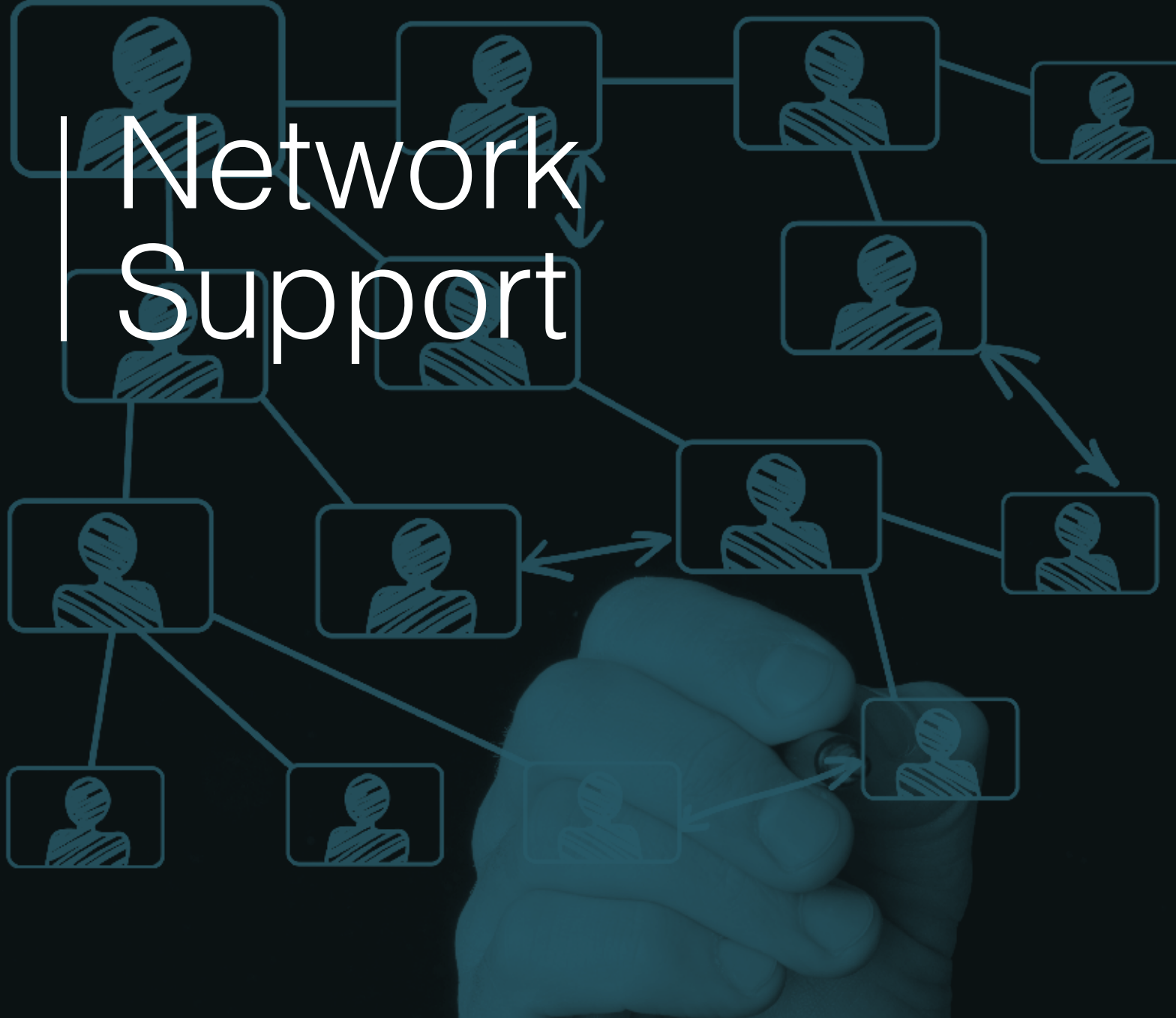


Funding, revenue, and employment activity data based on annual venture client survey results administered by MaRS Data Catalyst. Entrepreneur support activities is based on 2015-2016 Regional Innovation Centre quarterly reporting to the Business Acceleration Program at MaRS.

# ONTARIO'S REGIONAL INNOVATION CENTRES AT A GLANCE

## ENTREPRENEUR SUPPORT ACTIVITIES





**SUPPORTED BY THE BUSINESS ACCELERATION PROGRAM AT MARS DISCOVERY DISTRICT**

Common network support programs and services have been developed through the Business Acceleration Program to extend and complement the regional offerings at each Regional Innovation Centre. They include Market Intelligence and Insights, Funding Venture Talent, and Entrepreneurship Programs.

**MARKET INTELLIGENCE AND INSIGHTS**

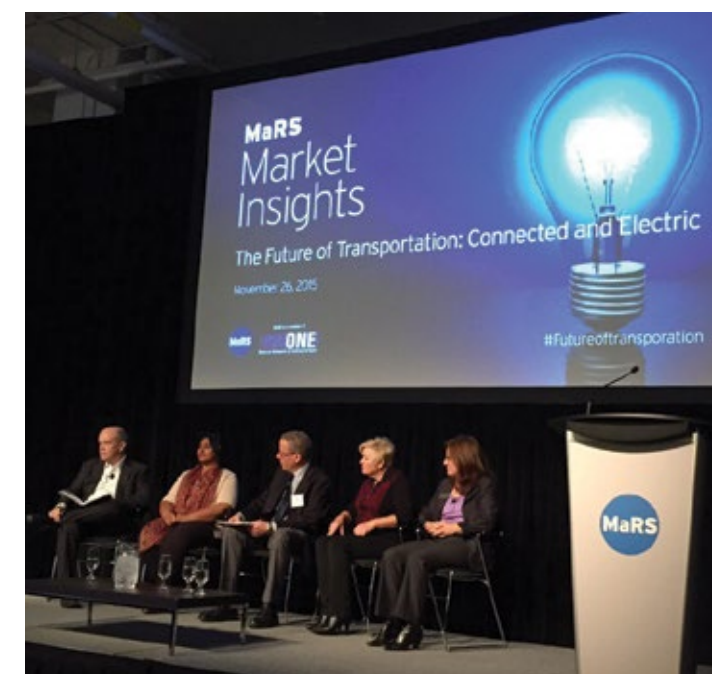
Market Intelligence services drive Ontario’s entrepreneurs forward by providing them with premium market research reports at no cost, improving their knowledge and enabling them to reach their immediate milestones.

The majority of clients indicate that this service has saved their startups the cost of market research reports and supported their overall market research efforts. Entrepreneurs say their understanding of industry growth rates and global markets increased by more than 50% upon reviewing research reports provided.

The MaRS Market Intelligence team also publishes Market Insights whitepapers that uncover major trends in emerging industries. This past year, the team published six papers in the fields of connected car technologies, the delivery and administration of healthcare, and digital energy and the home.

The Smart Transportation Market Insights Series explored three key trends and areas of growth: connected cars, electric vehicles and the ride-sharing economy. On the health side, the team published a piece in the Transforming Health series on the trend from reactive to proactive and predictive healthcare.

- 2,838 research hours
- \$18M of value provided
- 6,300 online page views of Market Insights papers



*“Without [MI’s] resources, the time and monies involved would ultimately impede the early progress of our product development. Solid, accurate market intelligence should be incorporated into any technology product lifecycle to meet market needs succinctly.” —Macht-Haus*

*“Market Intelligence is one of the best kept secrets of the Ontario Regional Innovation Centres. As someone who has long coveted—but unable to afford—industry reports from organizations such as Forrester Research, I was very pleased by the depth and quality of research to which I was given access.”—Mercarto*

## FUNDING VENTURE TALENT

Over the last three years, a growing need among ventures in the ecosystem was observed, that of a deeper level of advisory support as the ventures mature. At the same time, ventures were experiencing challenges in securing and engaging key talent. To respond to this gap in support, funding programs were focused on talent engagement with the objective to further the ventures' plans for growth.

Two programs, Embedded Executive and Embark, were run this past year to assist ventures with achieving their next growth milestones, awarding a total of \$1.94M in funding.

Embedded Executive Funding helps place a C-level or other senior-level executive with a venture through a \$50,000 grant toward the executive's salary. The program is best suited for novel tech ventures in the later discovery stage or growth stage of development.

Embark Funding, which is youth-focused, provides venture clients with up to \$20,000 to engage a young professional (aged 22–29) in a business role to assist with the advancement of their ventures.

*Embark is supported through the Youth Business Acceleration Program.*

While the programs are active for a six-month term, most ventures continue to engage these candidates full-time beyond the scope of the project, having built a strong and successful relationship with them. In other cases, the candidates provided an opportunity for knowledge transfer, mentorship or training, or accomplishment of a business development milestone during that time.

**“ This is a fantastic program for start-up companies. It's likely the most helpful type of granting program because it provides a key hire at the right time.”** – Damiva Inc., Toronto (Embedded Executive recipient)

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**“ This was a great program to help us hire an early career candidate for a crucial position in our company. We are very satisfied.”** - Structur3D Printing, Kitchener (Embark recipient)

- \$1.94M committed this year to engage key venture talent
- 24 ventures awarded Embedded Executive funding
  - Three were selected to pilot a Local Opportunities program
- 42 ventures awarded Embark funding



Matter and Form received Embedded Executive funding to bring on a Director of Channel Sales to develop their marketing strategy and drive revenue to more than 50% YOY.



With Embark funding, Limelight Platforms was able to hire a Marketing Manager to increase inbound traffic, social shares, and SEO rankings, and the Embark candidate continued to work with Limelight Platforms after the end of the program.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMS

Entrepreneurship Programs continued to expand its experiential learning offerings as well as increase access to online resources across the provincial network in the past year.

In response to client demand, two new Entrepreneurs' Toolkit workshops were implemented this year. *Introduction to Leadership*, first piloted at EPICentre in Windsor, was so well received that it was run seven times throughout the year. The team also piloted a two-part workshop called *Going Global* to develop planning for foreign market expansion for ventures, with a second pilot running at Communitech in Fall 2016.

Also new this year was the MaRS Everest Program, a group advisory program where five founders had the chance to test their assumptions and work through problems together. The pilot program was scaled throughout the year to include special topics from cleantech and health.

An Advisor Bootcamp program was developed and delivered first at ventureLAB in Markham, with the goal of supporting advisors from across the network and developing a common vocabulary around mentorship and innovation. Subsequently, three more bootcamps were run at RIC Centre, Communitech and MaRS.

Lastly, two online courses were developed this year to provide greater accessibility of program resources to entrepreneurs in the network: *Investment Readiness and Selling for Entrepreneurs*. Each piloted different production styles in order to test how entrepreneurs respond to the format. Both are made available through the Entrepreneur's Toolkit at [learn.marsdd.com](http://learn.marsdd.com).



**“...online courses were developed this year to provide greater accessibility of program resources to entrepreneurs in the network...”**



# Regional Innovation

Regional Innovation Centres throughout Ontario actively create new support programs and initiatives on an annual basis to best meet the increasing needs of entrepreneurs in their region. The following highlights these initiatives, many carried out in partnership with community partners, as well as profile some of the emerging ventures they serve.

## TORONTO & GTA

### RIC CENTRE

#### CHAR Technologies - Cleantech Venture

CHAR Technologies developed SulfaCHAR™, a cost-effective, zero-waste targeted gas cleaning solution for the global problem caused by toxic and corrosive hydrogen sulfide in the renewable natural gas industry. Since 2012, RIC Centre has helped CHAR to reduce its time to market through the RIC Centre advisor network, develop partnerships, and achieve investment, product development and distribution milestones. SDTC awarded a \$750,000 grant to CHAR in 2015. A merger between CHAR Technologies and Cleantech Capital followed in 2016. CHAR Technologies recently went public on the TSX and is looking to fulfil its first contract through the Build in Canada Innovation Program.



#### First Look

In April 2015, RIC Centre partnered with the City of Mississauga and Angel One Investor Network to create a forum, "First Look," to profile early-stage technologies to potential investors. This was an exclusive opportunity for members of five angel investor groups (Angel One, MLA, YAI, GTAN and NAN) to network with up to 20 high-potential technology companies from RICs, including RIC Centre, Innovation Factory, Innovation Guelph, Innovate Niagara and HalTech. They worked alongside the Office of the Mayor and Angel One to generate new economic development opportunities in an effort to turn Mississauga into a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship.



### VENTURELAB

#### The Classy Cyborgs - Edtech Venture

The Classy Cyborgs, ventureLAB's youngest client located in Aurora, created the Treasure Box Braille System, a tablet-based learning software that teaches the Braille alphabet. Working with ventureLAB, York University and the Lassonde School of Engineering, The Classy Cyborgs won awards and prize money to help bring its idea to fruition. The Classy Cyborgs encountered many roadblocks in legitimizing its product; however, through hard work and support from organizations like ventureLAB, it was able to create strong partnerships.



## Global Impact Competitions (GIC)

In 2015, ventureLAB hosted the Global Impact Competitions (GIC), an annual competition held in partnership with sponsor organizations worldwide, organized by geographic region and theme. These competitions act as a platform to identify outstanding entrepreneurs and leaders with the most innovative ideas for positively impacting millions of lives locally and globally within the next three to five years. The winner of each competition is invited to either attend the Graduate Studies Program (GSP) at Singularity University free of charge or receive reduced fees. ventureLAB partnered with Deloitte, which sponsored the grand prize. The event brought national exposure to ventureLAB's catchment area, receiving dozens of applications from across Canada and broadcasting five incredible pitches via livestream.



## MARS DISCOVERY DISTRICT

### Blue J Legal - ICT Venture

Blue J Legal makes legal research more accessible. By using machine intelligence to provide answers to “grey areas” of tax law, its technology analyzes situations with deep learning to improve and complement the work of tax lawyers, tax accountants and the Canada Revenue Agency. Over the last six months, MaRS has provided Blue J Legal with introductions to investors, pitch and demo reviews, funding advisory and social media support. Blue J Legal was recently accepted into the MaRS Growth Program, and it is one of the top five finalists for the Canadian Bar Association Pitch Competition.



### Venture North

Venture North is a new event that focuses on raising awareness of Ontario's vibrant innovation sector, and generating opportunities with prominent US venture investors. Hosted at MaRS, the exclusive event was organized in collaboration with the C100, OneEleven, Communitech and other leading organizations from the technology ecosystem in Toronto and Waterloo. Over 40 high-profile Canadian, US and international investors (e.g., Google Ventures, Andreessen Horowitz, Microsoft) were present, and sponsorship partnerships were generated with RBC, CIBC, OMERS Ventures and Ryerson Futures, to name a few. There is now great momentum for Venture North to become an annual conference and should continue to expand in scope.



## SPARK CENTRE

### Tiko 3D - ICT Venture

Tiko 3D has invented the most elegant, simple and proficient 3D printer on the market. Tiko 3D is the 2014 winner of the Ignite Durham startup competition, which is an annual startup pitch competition run by Spark Centre that awards \$25,000 to two innovative startups. After winning Ignite, Tiko 3D was able to create a working prototype that it launched on Kickstarter. In 30 days, more than 16,000 people had backed the Tiko 3D project worldwide and the company raised \$3.5 million CDN. The first Tiko 3D units are shipping to backers in Summer 2016, and online pre-sales will follow.



### A Year at Spark

This year, Spark Centre saw more than 160 new clients. Our Thrive Accelerator Program entered its second year, and helps startups achieve faster market entry with advisory and operational support. In culmination, our clients raised \$6.13 million in funding, 51 paid jobs were created and over 6,700 advisory hours were spent. Spark Centre strengthened strategic relationships with local municipalities, including the City of Oshawa and Town of Whitby, and developed a strong partnership with BDO Canada. Spark Centre also launched our Youth Incubator Program, in partnership with FastStart, and ran our third year of the Ignite Startup Competition, awarding \$55,000 in prizes.



## CENTRAL ONTARIO

### COMMUNITECH

#### Knowledgehook - Edtech Venture

Knowledgehook is focused on helping teachers improve math outcomes for students. In November 2015, Knowledgehook was accepted into Communitech's Rev program. Over the six months, the Rev team helped founders to build a customer acquisition model that allowed Knowledgehook to go from two paying school boards and 50 teachers to 12 school boards and 7,000 teachers. Since graduating from the Rev program, Knowledgehook has received accolades that include “The Game Changer” award at Google Demo Day in San Francisco and BNN's “Top Disruptor Award.”





## Rev

Communitech launched a new accelerator program called Rev. Rev is designed for companies that are product-ready, but don't yet have a solid sales and marketing strategy in place. Rev mentors help founders to build scalable processes, keep them accountable on their set goals and put together a solid plan for growth. Communitech successfully launched three cohorts during the past fiscal year. Participating companies achieved several milestones, which included increasing revenue growth, reducing the sales cycle, building a sales process, hiring a sales team and raising the first institutional round post-Rev.

***“The Rev mentors help founders build scalable processes, keep them accountable on their set goals, and put together a solid plan for growth.”***



## INNOVATION GUELPH

### Lucky Iron Fish - Health Venture

Founded in 2012, Lucky Iron Fish is a growing social enterprise with big aspirations: to tackle and wipe out iron deficiency anemia. Its carefully formulated and tested cooking cast iron fish, believed to be lucky in Cambodian culture where it was first introduced, has been shown to reduce instances of iron deficiency anemia when used daily during food preparation. Innovation Guelph provided the venture with mentorship, networking and promotional opportunities, a nomination for the Manning Awards, and a reference for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Saving Lives at Birth grant application. A certified B-Corporation, Lucky Iron Fish continues to receive major international awards and recognition from groups like the Clinton Global Initiative University, Forbes, The Oprah Magazine and the Cannes International Lions Festival.

### University of Guelph CBaSE Partnership

For the past 2+ years, Innovation Guelph has partnered with the Centre for Business and Student Enterprise (CBaSE) at the University of Guelph. There have been four cohorts of approximately 25 Guelph alumni-led businesses participating in the CBaSE 16-week Hub Incubator Program. The course takes entrepreneurs through the lean startup methodology to starting and growing a business, which involves validating product and market ideas and getting entrepreneurs out the door talking with customers. The CBaSE–Innovation Guelph partnership has proven to be an excellent model of demonstrating the benefits of collaboration between Campus Linked Accelerators and Regional Innovation Centres.

***“The CBaSE - Innovation Guelph partnership has proven to be an excellent model demonstrating the benefits for collaboration between a Campus Linked Accelerator and a Regional Innovation Centre”***

## INNOVATION FACTORY

### Nix Sensor Ltd. - ICT Venture

The Nix Pro Color Sensor is a patented handheld device that measures the colour of any surface and provides colour information to smartphones or tablets with industry-leading accuracy; it's similar to a tape measure for colour. Nix Sensor Ltd. offers colour measurement solutions for the interiors and architecture, graphic design, paint and coatings, food and agriculture, quality control and vinyl film industries – and more. Early help from Innovation Factory helped Nix to secure funding, gain introductions to investors and win the Ernest C. Manning Innovation Award in 2015. Executives-in-Residence helped Nix to define their sales model and gain market access in several key verticals.



### Synapse Life Sciences Competition

Hamilton's annual Synapse Life Sciences Competition brings Innovation Factory together with industry and academia to create a place where emerging life sciences innovations can flourish. The competition connects researchers and innovators with students from McMaster University to help commercialize their ideas. In 2016, Synapse took a select group through four months of training and feedback, culminating in a pitch competition where the top three companies pitched their ideas to industry experts for the chance to win \$55,000 in prizes. The final event showcased nine teams, and the top three pitched to a record crowd for the grand prize.



## INNOVATE NIAGARA

### BISEP - Health Venture

BISEP is a medical device innovation company that enhances human performance in sport, exercise and rehabilitation. BISEP's first product, the ARMM, attaches an individual's wheelchair to his or her walker to provide lateral support when transferring from the wheelchair to a walker, and posterior support during ambulation. Innovate Niagara has helped BISEP with preparing a winning pitch for the 2016 Blueprint Competition (\$12,000), accessing IP attorneys to develop an IP strategy, accessing scientific validation research services from Brock University (\$5,000), and accessing industrial design services from Niagara College's Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (\$10,000).

***“BISEP's first product, the ARMM, attaches an individual's wheelchair to their walker to provide lateral support when transferring from the wheelchair to a walker, and posterior support during ambulation.”***

## IGNITE Niagara

In partnership with the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, IGNITE Niagara was established in 2015 to give up-and-coming entrepreneurs the opportunity to pitch their ideas to a panel of Niagara's top business experts. In its inaugural year, innovative renovations solution provider Dust Guards Inc. won the judges' top prize, receiving a business services package valued at more than \$17,000. Immigration lawyer Sean Polden's inadmissible.com took home the People's Choice award. IGNITE Niagara has grown into its second year with the addition of presenting sponsor Meridian Credit Union and a larger prize package, thanks to generous community partners supporting innovation in Niagara.



## HALTECH

### Daniel Christian Tang - Advanced Materials & Manufacturing Venture

Daniel Christian Tang (DCT) is a technology-based producer of luxury jewellery that leverages architectural design and custom 3D printing solutions to efficiently and cost effectively offer bespoke manufacturing of complex items. Haltech assisted DCT's youth co-founders with securing SmartStart funding to boost sales and marketing efforts, which now includes several high-end retailers (e.g., Holt Renfrew, The Shopping Channel, Swarovski). Haltech helped DCT to engage with two tech development partners and prepared them for pitching to angel investors at three venture competition events. In its short existence, DCT has received major media attention, including "Best Emerging Designer" at Toronto's Fashion Week 2016.



***"With the Hi5 event, Haltech has achieved what others have not – to showcase its clients as the high-value venture opportunities that should be elevated, not overlooked."***

## HEAT™ Program

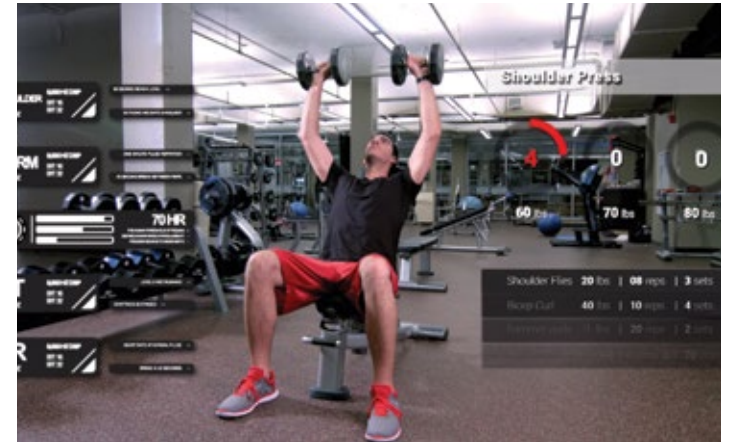
The Haltech HEAT™ program (Helping Entrepreneurs Accelerate Technology) provides a structured, milestone-driven environment that offers three stages of advisory support depending on the client's business stage. For the highest stage of business development, Haltech introduces startup clients to investors through a special "first introduction" event called Hi5 Startup Source. The Hi5 event enables our top five high-potential growth startups to pitch their company to an investor audience, while avoiding the "firing squad" style of interrogation, which often devalues the company. With the Hi5 event, Haltech has achieved what others have not: the ability to showcase its clients as high-value venture opportunities that should be elevated, not overlooked.

## EASTERN ONTARIO

### INVEST OTTAWA

#### Gymtrack - ICT Venture

Gymtrack builds a system of aftermarket equipment that lets gym members automatically track their workouts, while creating a platform for virtual personal training. Following a \$2.5M seed round in February 2015, the Gymtrack team leveraged support from Invest Ottawa around their marketing and product management strategies, leading up to the soft launch of the technology in March 2016, with the hard launch planned for September 2016. Invest Ottawa also helped Gymtrack to explore the market in Brazil, conduct market research that provided insight into potential channels, partnerships and markets, and make connections with a partner accelerator in the country.



#### Peer-to-Peer Programming

Invest Ottawa successfully developed a model for peer-to-peer programs. The added value of our approach is that, while they are peer-based, groups are led by an Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR) or specialist who helps set the agenda and keeps the focus on outcomes. An example is the Product Company Roundtable, led by Invest Ottawa's EIR who specializes in consumer products and the food/beverage industry for clients in the physical product space. This contributes to a safe environment where founders can discuss real problems and learn from each other. Guest speakers are invited to address specific issues, including a specialist on SEO to increase online visibility and sales.

***"An example is the Product Company Roundtable, led by Invest Ottawa's EIR specialized in consumer products and the food/beverage industry a monthly for clients in the physical product space."***

### LAUNCH LAB

#### FireRein - Cleantech Venture

FireRein has created FireRein Eco-Gel, a highly effective, bio-based firefighting gel that is made of 100% food-grade ingredients. FireRein Eco-Gel smothers fires faster using substantially less water. FireRein has developed a market strategy, attracted several strategic partners, raised more than \$750,000 in investment and non-dilutive funding, and has recently generated its first sale. FireRein has also participated in the GrindSpaceXL program, has engaged Launch Lab, Queen's Industry Partnerships, PARTEQ Innovations and St. Lawrence College for support, and has pitched to the Southeastern Ontario Angel Network (SOAN). The next steps are to focus on sales and educating fire departments, municipalities and other agencies about its brand and the advantages of using FireRein Eco-Gel technology.



## GrindSpaceXL

In 2015, Launch Lab, in collaboration with Queen's University and PARTEQ Innovations, accelerated a third cohort of eight high-potential technology companies via GrindSpaceXL—Kingston. This intensive 12-week program, originating at Invest Ottawa and now at Queen's Innovation Park, helps startups to improve customer traction, grow sales and prepare for investment. Feedback from participants is always excellent, and it has been rewarding for the Launch Lab team to hear the value that ventures find in the program. The partners have just launched GrindSpaceXL 2016 with another dynamic cohort!



## WESTERN ONTARIO

### WETECH ALLIANCE

#### Infini Nutrition Canada - Health Venture

Infini started as a customized nutritional fuel for athletes and branched out into the general health market. Through WEtech's Regional Alliance Roundtable, Infini leveraged connections and expertise to access Market Intelligence services and MITACS support. In March 2016, Infini pitched to four hospitals during a Health Innovation event organized by WEtech, WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation and MaRS. As a result, Infini is now in discussions with a local hospital, looking at both procurement and research opportunities. Infini fuelled more Team Canada athletes during the Rio Olympics than any other sports nutrition company.



#### Hacking Health Windsor Detroit

WEtech Alliance partnered with TechTown Detroit to host the first ever cross-border Hacking Health in the world, bringing together 30 partner organizations and 250 professionals from the healthcare and tech sectors to accelerate health innovation. In addition to being a powerful networking event, Hacking Health Windsor—Detroit sparked startup companies on both sides of the border, leading to a subsequent US-Canada Health Innovation Summit that introduced 20 Canadian life sciences startup companies from the Canadian Technologies Accelerator program to support organizations, potential clients and investors in Michigan.



## TECHALLIANCE

#### Voices.com - ICT Venture

Voices.com is the world's leading marketplace for voice-over work, counting more than 125,000 voice actors and tens of thousands of organizations and companies, including many Fortune 500 companies, in its network. From the very beginning, from developing its business plan with TechAlliance's advisors to using resources and opportunities through ONE, CDMN and FedDev Ontario, the company has become an integral and growing part of the London tech scene. In October 2016, the company will be moving to a new 45,000 square foot office in London to accommodate growth plans that will see the company expand from 100 to 400 employees.



#### Proteus Innovation Competition

The Proteus Innovation Competition, organized by TechAlliance and other local economic development ecosystem partners, challenges teams to create and pitch a viable commercialization strategy for technologies developed at London's research institutions. This competition is a unique approach to moving important research from the lab into the marketplace, while also providing new entrepreneurs with valuable experience and training, and a ready-made startup business opportunity. With more than \$30,000 in cash prizes in its first year, plus the chance for finalists to license their chosen technologies, the competition featured five technologies and 36 teams of students and veteran entrepreneurs.

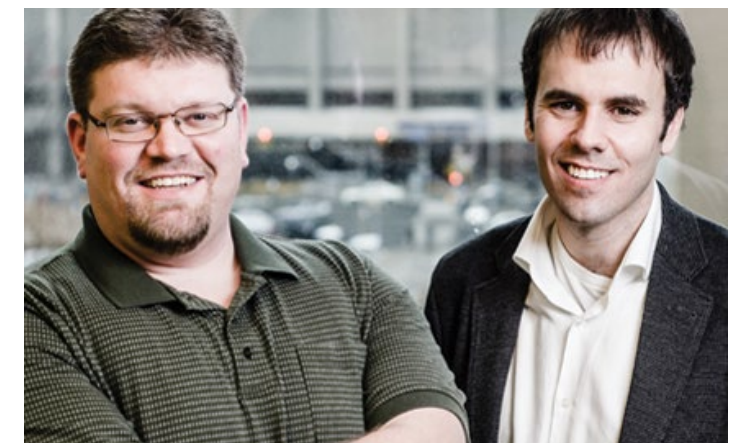


## NORTHERN ONTARIO

### INNOVATION INITIATIVES ONTARIO NORTH (IION)

#### MetricAid - Health IT Venture

MetricAid, located in North Bay, Ontario, is a health IT company transforming emergency department physician scheduling. By building schedules based on three main axes—performance, preference and equitability—MetricAid is able to improve patient wait times, decrease workload spikes for physicians, increase revenues for hospitals and improve overall patient care. Since 2012, MetricAid has been able to secure contracts with several hospitals (including Mount Sinai), increase its total number of employees from two to ten, and source several grant opportunities while continually developing its product offering. More recently, MetricAid is beginning to explore international opportunities in Detroit and Philadelphia.



### Youth Entrepreneurship Placement Program (YEPP)

Funded by FedNor, IION's Youth Entrepreneurship Placement Program (YEPP) is a paid placement that involves experiential and educational learning for high-potential youth (18–29) interested in innovation and entrepreneurship. It combines a unique, custom-designed, 16-week online guided and structured skill-building educational program plus four days of inspirational Venture Camp activities. Funding to hire qualified youth for 16 weeks (May to August) is provided to for-profit small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that also embody the entrepreneurial innovative spirit. The goal of YEPP is to nurture youths' entrepreneurial capacity while increasing the SMEs' ability to innovate and commercialize.



### SAULT STE. MARIE INNOVATION CENTRE (SSMIC)

#### Heuristext Inc. - ICT Venture

Heuristext is leveraging artificial intelligence technology and machine learning processes to make Internet content easier for everyone to understand. Founded by Melissa Kargiannakis, MHIS, a MaRS Studio Y alumna and recipient of the Queen's Young Leader Award in 2015, the company continues to receive mentorship from SSMIC as a YouLaunch incubator client. The company is a seed-stage, for-profit social enterprise, and SSMIC supports Heuristext through various business development initiatives, including marketing and fundraising strategy and talent acquisition.



### YouLaunch

Created in 2015, YouLaunch is a partnership with the Youth Business Acceleration Program at MaRS, OCE, Sault College and Algoma University. As a youth entrepreneurship program, it aims to enable aspiring entrepreneurs under age 29 to start or grow successful businesses, to connect youth with business development resources, mentors, networking and funding opportunities, and to connect teachers, students and adult allies on campuses to spark innovative and entrepreneurial interests and attitudes. YouLaunch is a one-of-a-kind program; the Algoma University program coordinator is SSMIC-based to better collaborate with RIC resources, the community and post-secondary institutions. Since development, YouLaunch has assisted six youth-led businesses and reached more than 2,500 youth, becoming the province's model youth entrepreneurship program.



### NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO INNOVATION CENTRE (NOIC)

#### Recroup - ICT Venture

Recroup is a Thunder Bay-based startup that has created a talent recruitment platform that allows employers to engage interested candidates. The founders of Recroup moved to Thunder Bay from India to participate in the Innovation Centre's Costarter Accelerator. They have since obtained a startup visa and now call Thunder Bay their home. Recroup has taken advantage of the CDMN Soft Landing program, Youth BAP Regional Advisory Services Funding, IRAP and NOHFC Internship program. This assistance has helped the company to implement its market entry strategy. Recroup is currently engaging with very large strategic partners and evolving its model.



#### Partnership with Thunder Bay Public Library

The Northwestern Ontario Innovation Centre (NOIC) has established a strong partnership with Thunder Bay Public Library – Waverley Branch. Over the past year, it has worked with the library to create a Makerspace, where entrepreneurs and members of the community can access 3D printing, business advisory services and other technical support. Waverley hosted NOIC's second annual startup weekend, and provided programming support for the BizKids Summer Camp program. In the upcoming year, it will be launching a business incubation zone in the library to provide early stage startups with professional space. Members of NOIC staff will frequent the library to provide business coaching and support.

***“Over the past year they have worked with the library to create a Makerspace where entrepreneurs and members of the community have access to 3D printing, business advisory services, and other technical support.”***

### NORTHERN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY (NORCAT)

#### Plan A Healthcare Staffing Solutions - Health Venture

Plan A is Greater Sudbury's first and only healthcare staffing agency providing professional assistance to the long-term care sector, seniors and their healthcare providers. Plan A has doubled in size since its first year of operation and continues to work closely with NORCAT Innovation Mill. Plan A has recently received funding from the FedNor Innovation Accelerator Program (IAP) for business development, through on-boarding, creating and operationalizing new training modules.



## PITCH

NORCAT's third annual PITCH competition was held in April 2016 and featured early-stage entrepreneurial startups pitching their innovative business ventures to a room of prospective investors, community leaders, mentors/advisors and experienced entrepreneurs. This year's event brought in more than 230 people from the community to witness each startup's pitch for capital investment and a grand prize of \$25,000 of in-kind services from local partners. Daryl Dominique, Hexic Monitoring Systems, won the "People's Choice Award," receiving services and support valued at more than \$25,000.



## OUR PARTNERS

**COMMUNITTECH**

Waterloo



Oakville



North Bay



York Region



Niagara



Hamilton



Guelph



Windsor



Ottawa



Kingston



Toronto



Durham Region



Sault Ste. Marie



Thunder Bay



Sudbury



Mississauga



London

