
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2026JEG0024-000374
April 7, 2026

Ministry of Jobs and Economic Growth

Supporting early-stage tech innovation

B.C. companies get support to pilot new technologies in key sectors

VICTORIA –

Summary

- *14 companies across five sectors are receiving a total of nearly \$3.5 million (up to \$500,000 per project) for pilot-scale demonstrations of new technologies*
- *This is the first round of projects funded through Innovate BC's early-stage demonstration call, delivered through the Integrated Marketplace Platform*
- *This work aligns with key sectors in the Look West strategy by helping small and medium-sized enterprises move closer to commercial adoption of their innovations*

The Province is supporting companies across five strategic sectors to test their technologies in real-world industrial settings, helping them grow and create good jobs for people as part of B.C.'s Look West strategy.

Through the Integrated Marketplace Platform's early-stage demonstration call, the Government of B.C. is providing nearly \$3.5 million to support pilot-scale demonstrations of new technologies in airports, ports, health, forestry, emergency management, marine, mining and critical minerals.

"B.C. companies are developing innovative solutions and critical supply-chain inputs that are essential to growing our economy," said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs and Economic Growth. "By giving businesses an opportunity to test and refine their technologies in real-world, industrial settings, we're helping them grow, create good jobs and expand exports. This work is central to our Look West strategy to build a stronger economy, diversify exports and building global supply-chain opportunities for B.C. companies in critical sectors."

Small vessels to support industry

Drop Marine in South Slokan received \$280,000 to build and test a smart-control system on a small workboat that will operate on B.C.'s inland waterways. The boat, built in partnership with the Indigenous-owned company Skemixst Solutions, will use advanced sensors and software to track vessel performance and predict maintenance needs.

Over eight months, the project will gather detailed data on:

- fuel use

- emissions
- reliability
- and ease of operation

This real-world testing will determine whether the technology can lower costs, prevent breakdowns and modernize vessel operations. The project is expected to support safer, cleaner and more efficient transportation for Indigenous, forestry and port operations. It will also help create jobs and support clean-tech boat building in the province.

“For a small manufacturer building purpose-built technology in rural B.C., early-stage support like the Integrated Marketplace is the difference between a promising idea and a proven one,” said Chelsea Bannister, VP operations, Drop Marine. “This funding gives us the runway to put our technology in the water, in commercial conditions, alongside Indigenous partners, and generate the kind of evidence that opens markets. B.C.’s working waterways deserve world-class vessels, and we’re proud to show that the innovation capable of delivering that is coming out of the Kootenays.”

Safer marine operations

MarineLabs in Victoria received \$310,000 to demonstrate an AI-powered fog-detection and forecasting system to make marine operations safer and more efficient. The company is enhancing its existing CoastAware product by adding new sensors, data streams and data processing to enable fog forecasting at scale.

The enhanced system aims to provide precise, timely fog alerts that help marine pilots and ships navigate safely, reduce delays, lower costs and support emissions-reduction goals. The result will be:

- Improved maritime safety outcomes
- more confident port and terminal operational decision-making
- improved cargo throughput

“Fog is a big challenge for coastal maritime industries. By advancing our fog detection and forecasting capabilities with the support of Innovate BC through the early-stage demonstration call (ESDC), we’re helping marine pilots, ports and others make better decisions in low-visibility conditions, reducing risk, minimizing costly delays and improving operational efficiency,” said Scott Beatty, CEO, MarineLabs. “Programs like ESDC help accelerate technologies already in development, bringing them into real-world operations where they can deliver measurable impact across B.C.’s economy and around the globe.”

Detecting marine mammals, debris

Reach Technologies in Victoria, received \$115,000 to test a new safety system on the Victoria FRS Clipper passenger ferry to evaluate how well it detects debris and marine mammals in real operating conditions. This technology is expected to improve passenger safety, reduce damage to vessels and lower maintenance costs. It will also support future autonomous vessel operations and will help create more high-skilled engineering and manufacturing jobs in the province.

“We are excited that Innovate BC has chosen to support our work in commercializing this

unique new maritime safety technology,” said Glenn Jones, CEO, Reach Technologies. “The technology has been developed in B.C. with federal funding for military applications. Now, with support from Innovate BC, we are evaluating the commercial application of this technology.”

Helping businesses bridge gap

Through this funding, the early-stage demonstration call is helping B.C.-based small and medium-sized businesses demonstrate the performance of their innovations, attract early customers and move closer to full commercial adoption.

“Early-stage support plays a defining role in whether promising solutions can successfully reach the market,” said Peter Cowan, president and CEO, Innovate BC. “These projects show how B.C. businesses are taking the next step - moving their innovations into real-world environments and closer to market adoption. Through the Integrated Marketplace, we’re helping turn promising ideas into practical solutions that strengthen key industries, create good jobs and support the Province’s Look West strategy.”

The projects support the Province’s Look West plan for jobs and industry, which outlines B.C.’s vision to deliver jobs and opportunities by strengthening the workforce to develop a more independent economy. Through Look West, the Province is working to invest in high-tech and emerging technologies, expanding market potential, while growing the economic value of tech sectors by 75% and doubling employment to 400,000.

Quote:

Rick Glumac, Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence and New Technology –

“By supporting early-stage innovation, we’re helping communities benefit from safer, cleaner and more efficient technologies. These projects give B.C. companies the chance to test their ideas while creating opportunities for local innovators to succeed. Through the early-stage demonstration call, we’re strengthening our workforce, building more resilient industries and ensuring people across the province share in the benefits of our growing tech economy.”

Quick Facts:

- B.C.’s investment in the Integrated Marketplace to date includes as much as \$41.5 million from the Ministry of Jobs and Economic Growth.
- Up to 40% of eligible project costs, to a maximum of \$500,000 per project, are provided to support pilot-scale demonstrations of made-in-B.C. technologies.
- Applications for the 2025-2026 intake were open until Dec. 21, 2025.
- Another call for applications is anticipated to launch this year.

Learn More:

- To learn more about the early-stage demonstration call, visit: <https://www.innovatebc.ca/integrated-marketplace-early-stage-demonstration-call>
- Learn about Drop Marine: <https://www.dropmarine.com/>
- Learn about Marine Labs: <https://marinelabs.io/>
- Learn about Reach Technologies: <https://reachtest.com/>
- Learn more about Look West: Jobs and Prosperity for a Stronger B.C. and Canada strategy: <https://gov.bc.ca/LookWest>

- To learn more about the Integrated Marketplace, visit: <https://www.innovatebc.ca/programs/integrated-marketplace>
- For more about Innovate BC, visit: <https://www.innovatebc.ca/>

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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More early-stage tech on the way

Early-stage demonstration call recipients:

- **Airble Aviation** in Richmond received \$480,000 to develop an AI-powered, multi-agent platform that simulates and optimizes air travel in real time, helping operators like Helijet improve safety, reduce emissions and maximize aircraft efficiency, including helicopters, seaplanes, turboprops and future electric air taxis, as well as broader uses.
- **Canadian Electric Vehicles** in Parksville received \$125,000 to test large, portable, scalable battery systems to both directly power and recharge heavy-duty electric equipment in remote or hard-to-service locations, helping reduce diesel use and emissions while enabling real-world operation of zero-emission fleets without requiring permanent grid upgrades.
- **Edison Motors** in Golden received \$140,000 to test new technology with Tolko, a wood manufacturer, designed to cut emissions and reduce fuel and operating costs for heavy-duty logging vehicles.
- **PrimeHealth (formerly ElderPrime Solutions)** in Courtenay, received \$350,000 to help scale up its digital platform among Fraser Health's 50,000 employees to streamline and improve absence and return-to-work processes, reducing delays, costs and administrative burdens while enhancing workforce readiness and employee experience.
- **Fusion Genomics Corporation** in Richmond received \$175,000 to support hospital-based patient testing of ONETest, an AI-enabled targeted metagenomic diagnostic that aims to advance faster, clinically actionable diagnosis, improve care for patients with life-threatening infections that standard tests often miss and help reduce the burden on critical care through earlier treatment decisions and shorter hospital stays.
- **iTotem Technology Solutions** in Victoria received \$90,000 to test the LocalLogIQ platform which uses AI to turn contractor data into clear, community-specific insights for Indigenous inclusion and reporting, helping industries like mining reliably track employment, procurement and engagement with Nations.
- **Mostar Labs** in Victoria received \$435,000 to test a floating clean-energy platform that combines solar, wind, wave power and battery storage to reduce diesel use at remote coastal sites.
- **Rigid Robotics** in Burnaby received \$350,000 to pilot an AI-powered, real-time coaching system for shovel operators at a B.C. mine, improving digging productivity, increasing consistency and supporting safer, more efficient operations.
- **Tree Track intelligence** in Port Coquitlam received \$85,000 to demonstrate its Seedpod reforestation technology at commercial scale across multiple B.C. sites, with the goal of showing it can support large-scale forest restoration programs reliably and cost-effectively.
- **Viridis Research** in Vancouver received \$450,000 to test a new water-treatment system

at the Arbios facility in Prince George, ensuring that biocrude production safely cleans its wastewater, protects local ecosystems and provides a model for sustainable operations at future biofuel plants.

- **VoxCell BioInnovation** in Victoria received \$110,000 to showcase its 3D-printed breast cancer tissue with built-in blood-vessel structures at BC Cancer, providing a more realistic way to test how drugs move and work in tumours and helping improve research, reduce animal testing and speed up cancer therapy development.

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