



## **Innovation Cluster's Strategic Pivot Pays Off with Record Growth in Demand in 2025**

*Increased Client Engagement Validates New Programming and Strengthens the Regional Economy*

**PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO**, February 24, 2026 — The Innovation Cluster (Innovation Cluster – Peterborough and the Kawarthas) today announced record growth and impact in 2025, marking a pivotal year that validated the organization's new strategic direction and strengthened its role as a catalyst for regional innovation and entrepreneurship.

In 2025, the Innovation Cluster executed a comprehensive transformation of its business model, programming, and brand, dedicating its services to better support local and regional small and medium-sized technology and skilled trades businesses. Strong regional and provincial demand reinforced the strategic shift and the new programming.

### **2025 Highlights**

- Completed a strategic shift and rebranded to focus on serving local and regional small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs).
- Launched the BuildUP program, training 64 skilled journeypersons to start their own businesses. More than 50 percent of applicants were licensed journeypersons, making the program highly competitive.
- Delivered two oversubscribed LevelUP accelerator cohorts, with more than 80 percent of participants new to the Innovation Cluster. The programs culminated with a final pitch competition at the Toronto Stock Exchange.

- Mentored over 209 companies, contributing to the creation of 417 new jobs in 2025 and the retention of 374 jobs created in previous years.
- Expanded the Expert-in-Residence program by 55 percent, bringing in experienced investors, angel funders, serial founders, and corporate leaders.

“Joining the BuildUP program was the perfect opportunity to turn my passion into a real business,” said **Maggie McCullough**, a BuildUP participant. “With support I didn’t even know I needed, from website development to accounting guidance and confidence-building, I finally feel ready to take the next step. I’m deeply grateful for the community here and would recommend it to anyone starting their entrepreneurial journey.”

“Our strategic focus on SMEs has clearly paid off,” said **Nicole Stephenson**, Chair of the Board of Directors. “The strong response to BuildUP and our core programs demonstrates that founders well beyond Peterborough are seeking this level of support. It reinforces the importance of our work and the market we serve. We look forward to continuing to evolve our programming to align with government priorities and the changing needs of growing businesses.”

With its renewed focus and expanding ecosystem of mentors, partners, and entrepreneurs, the Innovation Cluster continues to play a vital role in building a resilient, innovation-driven economy for Peterborough, the Kawarthas, and across Ontario.

### **Social Networks:**

- Web: <https://www.innovationcluster.ca>
- LinkedIn: <https://ca.linkedin.com/company/innovation-cluster-peterborough>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/innovationcluster/>

### **About the Innovation Cluster**

The Innovation Cluster is a non-profit organization that supports small- and medium-sized technology enterprises. The organization aims to propel regional growth and entrepreneurship by establishing Peterborough and the Kawartha Lakes as a Centre of Innovation. Visit [www.innovationcluster.ca](http://www.innovationcluster.ca).

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