



National
Defence

Défense
nationale



CANADIAN
ARMED FORCES

2024–2025
**ANNUAL
REPORT**



IDEaS

**INNOVATION FOR DEFENCE
EXCELLENCE AND SECURITY**

Canada 



ABOUT INNOVATION FOR DEFENCE EXCELLENCE AND SECURITY (IDEaS)

Since 2018, [Innovation for Defence Excellence and Security \(IDEaS\)](#) program has partnered with Canadian innovators to turn bold ideas into real solutions for Canada's defence and security. Together, we're shaping the future of science and technology for the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces, and all Canadians.

Discover the impact in our Annual Report. Then take the next step—join hundreds of innovators already making a difference. Your ideas could help build Canada's defence and security ecosystem and lead the way in innovation.

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Innovation for Defence Excellence and Security (IDEaS) Annual Report 2024-2025

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MESSAGE FROM DR. JASPINDER KOMAL

Assistant Deputy Minister,
Defence Research and Development Canada

The Innovation for Defence Excellence and Security (IDEaS) program has been operating in the defence space for nearly seven years. During this time, it has become a key enabler for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), ensuring Canada can leverage its innovation ecosystem to remain adaptive, integrated, and future-facing.



IDEaS continues to demonstrate the value of investing early, boldly, and strategically in Canadian innovations. This year, the program's work has centered on applying artificial intelligence (AI) across defence challenges—from improving situational awareness and surveillance, to enabling more effective drone defence. Innovators are taking lessons from machine learning and applying them directly to operational needs at all levels.

While AI is transforming today's defence environment, IDEaS is also pushing innovation beyond the horizon—strengthening approaches in quantum technologies, resilient communications, and space-based capabilities. We are even challenging innovators to anticipate tomorrow's threats, ensuring Canada is looking not only ahead, but around the corner.

Our defence posture has shifted rapidly over the past year, with threats emerging from new and diverse directions. In this environment, the ability to transition innovation into real capability is more important than ever.

That is why streamlining the journey from innovation to acquisition remains an overarching priority. In the last year, IDEaS has worked with partners across Government to strengthen the path from early-stage solutions to CAF adoption.

We focused our efforts on exploring more agile contracting approaches and clearer routes toward potential acquisition to support the CAF's operational needs—important steps in connecting innovation to long-term capability development.

Looking forward, IDEaS will continue to expand opportunities for innovators, deepen partnerships across government, industry, and allied nations, and advance innovative defence procurement solutions in alignment with the Government of Canada's agenda to get cutting-edge Canadian technologies into the hands of the CAF sooner. Engagement, inclusivity, and transparency will remain central to our approach, ensuring that diverse ideas from across the country contribute to Canada's safety, prosperity, and strategic advantage.

By fostering innovation at home today—and ensuring it can transition into real capability tomorrow—we are building the defence and security solutions Canada will rely on in the years ahead.



MESSAGE FROM PHILIPPE HÉBERT

Director General R&D Innovation

In 2024–2025, the IDEaS program continued to demonstrate how a mission-focused approach to innovation can deliver meaningful progress for defence and security in Canada.

A defining feature of 2024–2025 was the program's growing role in supporting science and technology efforts related to our Northern defences. Through targeted challenges and research activities aligned with NORAD modernization priorities, IDEaS enabled Canadian innovators to contribute to critical domains such as advanced sensing, data integration, autonomy, space-based systems, and operations in northern and contested environments. These investments are strengthening the knowledge base needed to inform future capabilities while keeping innovation anchored in Canadian expertise.

Across all this work, our number one priority is to ensure innovation can transition into capability. Innovation pull-through—moving promising solutions from research and development to real-world applications by the CAF—is a central driver of IDEaS' efforts. In 2024–2025, IDEaS worked closely with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) and Defence Team partners through the Defence Procurement Review to explore ways to improve the transition from innovation to acquisition. IDEaS will leverage this work to prioritize bridging early-stage innovation with long-term capability development and ensuring the CAF can access cutting-edge Canadian solutions faster.



The work advanced this year reinforces a simple truth: Canadian innovators have the capability and ambition to address complex defence and security challenges when given the opportunity to do so. Innovators navigated technical complexity, matured solutions in demanding environments, and engaged directly with end users. These experiences are transforming promising concepts into credible, deployable capabilities—and procurement-ready options.

Above all, IDEaS remains focused on learning and delivery: refining how projects are supported, strengthening connections between innovators and Defence, and ensuring innovation efforts respond to practical, operationally grounded needs. Every improvement we make is guided by the imperative to accelerate and strengthen procurement pathways.

Looking ahead, IDEaS will continue to deepen partnerships across government, industry, and allied nations, and advance innovative defence procurement solutions that align with the Government of Canada's broader agenda to deliver capabilities to the CAF. Engagement, inclusivity, and transparency will remain central to this work—ensuring that diverse ideas from across the country contribute meaningfully to Canada's security, prosperity, and defence readiness.

By fostering innovation today—and by making procurement and adoption our foremost priority—we are building the capabilities Canada will rely on tomorrow.

PROGRAM EVOLUTION **GROWING IDEaS**



Over the past year, the Innovation for Defence Excellence and Security (IDEaS) program continued to strengthen its role as a key enabler of Canada's defence and security priorities. As Canada adapts to emerging threats and invests in modern, resilient capabilities, IDEaS has evolved into a primary platform for connecting Canadian innovators with real operational challenges—helping advance technologies that will shape the future of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and Canada's contribution to continental defence. This evolution reflects the program's founding mission to accelerate science and technology solutions and build a robust defence innovation ecosystem.



Listening, Learning, and Modernizing the Program

Over the past 12 months, IDEaS engaged extensively with industry, academia, and innovation partners. Stakeholders provided consistent feedback: they wanted a simpler application process, clearer challenge statements tied to operational priorities, earlier engagement with end users, more predictable funding cycles, and stronger pathways from innovation funding to Defence adoption. IDEaS took this feedback to heart. The program took steps to modernize its processes through the initial release of the Defence Innovation Portal (DIP) to support the evaluation of funding applications. Looking ahead, the DIP is expected to further digitize innovator applications, evaluations, and milestone tracking. As part of broader Government procurement initiatives, the program also continued exploring new approaches to facilitate the adoption of solutions by the CAF.

Canadian Armed Forces at the Core of Innovation

CAF operators and end users played a central role in shaping problem definitions, refining challenge design, and providing operational insight throughout solution development. This deepening engagement ensured that emerging technologies are not only innovative but directly relevant and rapidly testable—continuing a trend seen across earlier years showing the growing involvement of CAF stakeholders in shaping innovation priorities.

Strengthening the Innovation Pipeline

In 2024–2025, IDEaS made one of its most significant program updates to date: Competitive Projects has enabled broader funding. Limits have increased from \$1.2M to up to \$6.75M in phased development funding, dramatically improving innovators' ability to develop, test, and mature solutions. This expansion represents an important step in accelerating technology progression and improving the transition of successful prototypes toward operational adoption.

IDEaS also updated its calls for proposals to create more flexible and intuitive pathways into the program—reflecting its broader shift toward more agile entry points and larger, more strategic investments across the innovation cycle. This builds on steady growth and maturing performance, including more than 20 technologies reaching test-ready status.

Advancing Continental Defence and NORAD Modernization

The program continued to play a vital role in advancing research and innovation tied to continental defence, particularly within the NORAD Modernization Science and Technology portfolio. Through IDEaS challenges and funding tools, emerging solutions are increasingly aligned with sovereignty and continental defence priorities, ensuring Canadian innovations directly support modernized capabilities for North American security.

Strengthening the Path to Adoption

To improve the transition from innovation to procurement, IDEaS worked closely with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), ADM(Mat), and other defence procurement stakeholders. These joint efforts explored more agile contracting approaches, mechanisms for supporting CAF operational needs, and clearer pathways toward adoption and potential acquisition—an important step in connecting early-stage innovation activities with long-term capability development. While these represent important first steps, IDEaS is making clear that facilitating defence procurement and accelerating innovation pull-through will remain its top priority moving forward.

A Program Continuing to Grow

As the program continues to evolve into National Defence's premiere innovation platform—agile, inclusive, mission-driven, and deeply connected to Canada's defence and security priorities—IDEaS is also continuing to leverage its scientific and technical expertise to guide innovators. Through technical insight, IDEaS helps innovators understand the defence context, track progress toward higher technology readiness levels, and ensure solutions remain aligned with operational needs.

By investing strategically, modernizing program delivery, and strengthening partnerships across the CAF, industry, and academia, IDEaS is helping ensure that innovation remains at the heart of National Defence outcomes. Its growing ecosystem, enhanced funding tools, and strengthened alignment with operational needs position IDEaS to deliver even greater impact in the years ahead—shaping the future of defence capability development for Canada.

IDEaS PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

FROM APRIL 1, 2024, TO MARCH 31, 2025

HIGHLIGHTS

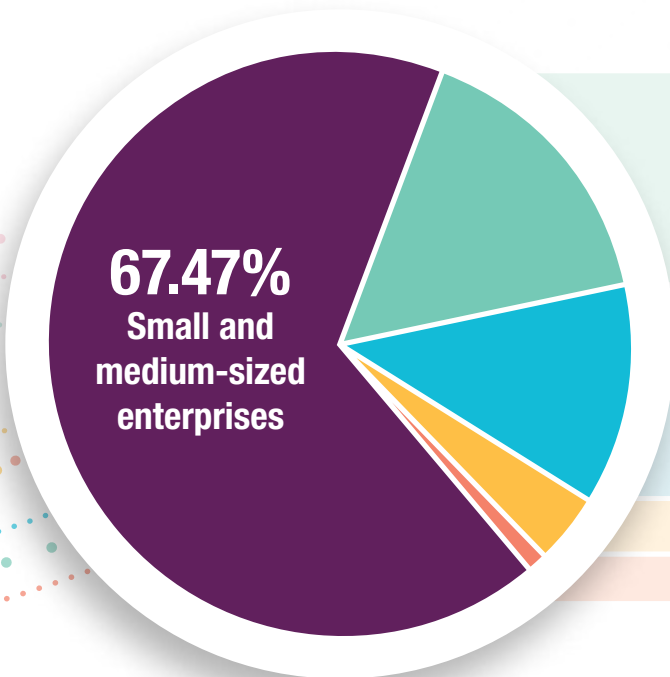


TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED BY PROVINCE



*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest hundredth.

INNOVATOR TYPES



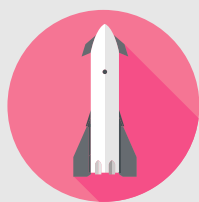
15.66% ACADEMIA

12.05% LARGE INDUSTRY

3.61% PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS

1.20% NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

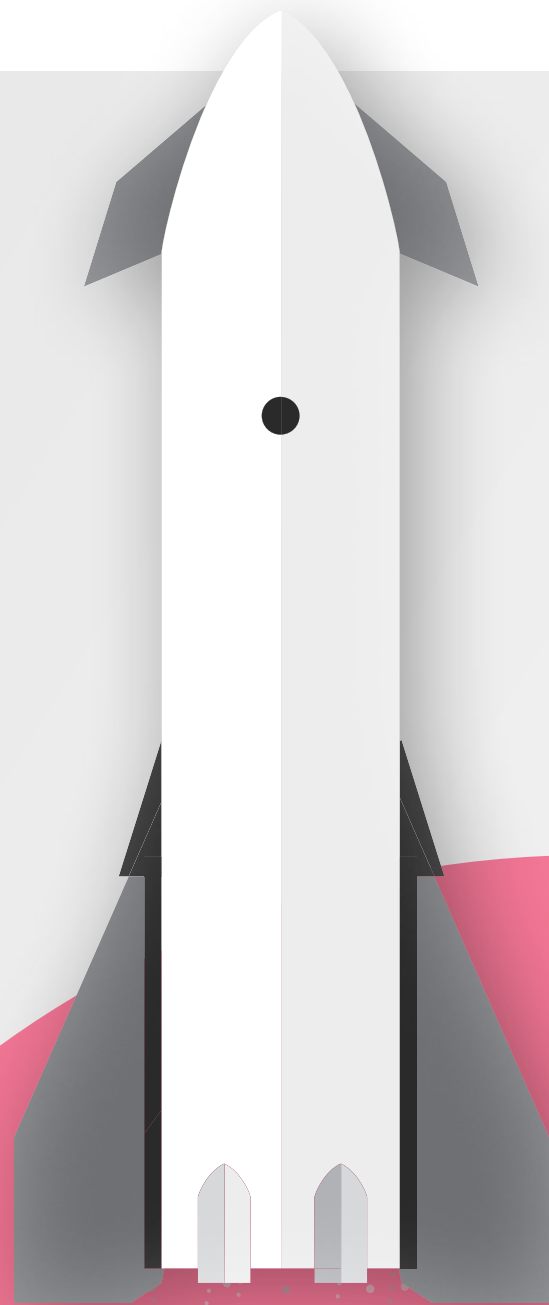
PROGRAM OF WORK UPDATES



COMPETITIVE PROJECTS

In 2024–2025, the IDEaS Competitive Projects element continued to advance innovative science and technology solutions addressing priority defence and security challenges faced by the Canadian Armed Forces. Through targeted calls for proposals, Competitive Projects supported Canadian innovators in developing and maturing solutions with the potential to enhance operational effectiveness in complex, contested, and resource-constrained environments.

This year’s challenges focused on resilient communications, integrated earth-and-space systems, and ways to make informed decision making for advanced health protection technologies—reflecting the growing need for adaptability, connectivity, and situational awareness across all domains of operations.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024–25

STAY CONNECTED:

Seamless Transitions between Mobile Broadband Networks

This challenge focused on maintaining continuous communications as personnel and platforms move between different mobile broadband networks. The challenge is looking for solutions that enable automatic, secure, and reliable transitions across multiple network types to ensure uninterrupted connectivity during operations.

EXTENDED COMMUNICATION COVERAGE:

Exploiting Connections of Earth and Space Systems

This challenge sought innovative approaches to extend communication coverage by integrating terrestrial and space-based systems. The challenge is looking to identify projects that explore ways to improve reach, resilience, and redundancy by leveraging combined Earth and space networks, particularly in remote or infrastructure-limited environments.

UNMASKING BIOTHRREATS:

Identifying Biological Agents in the Field

This challenge aimed to improve how teams make fast, informed decisions when facing possible biological threats in the field. Solutions needed to quickly identify viruses, bacteria, or toxins so responders know how to protect personnel and the public, even when no full laboratory is available.

COMPETITIVE
PROJECTS
AT A GLANCE
FOR 2024–2025

\$11.18 M
TOTAL FUNDING

3

CHALLENGES
LAUNCHED

175

PROPOSALS
RECEIVED

10

PROJECTS
SIGNED



TEST DRIVES

IDEaS Test Drives enable the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces to assess high-readiness innovations in real-world operational environments. In 2024–2025, Test Drives continued to provide a critical pathway for transitioning mature solutions toward potential future integration by allowing Defence teams to lead and conduct testing while innovators supply and support their technologies under IDEaS contracts.

During the reporting period, several Test Drives were completed or progressed, demonstrating the value of testing advanced capabilities under operational conditions.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024–25

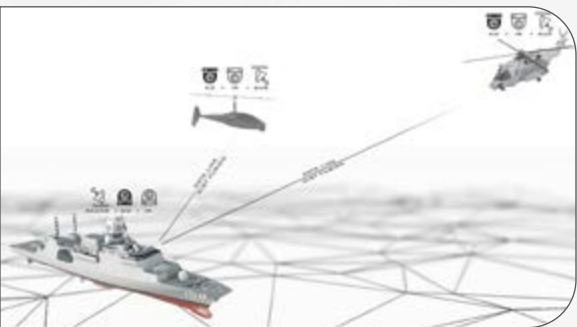


ECOPIA ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI): Digitizing the World Using Artificial Intelligence

This Test Drive evaluated an artificial intelligence solution capable of automatically extracting and classifying objects and terrain features from imagery to support mapping and intelligence activities. Testing assessed the technology's ability to enhance situational awareness through rapid, automated geospatial data generation.

STATUS: Test Drive completed (May 2024)

WHAT WE LEARNED: Automated feature extraction can significantly accelerate geospatial analysis while reducing analyst workload in intelligence production.



TERRASENSE ANALYTICS: Multi-sensor Intelligence Solution (MIST)

This Test Drive examined an AI-enabled system designed to analyze full-motion video from multiple sensor types to detect, classify, and track objects of interest. Testing focused on its application to intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations in complex environments.

STATUS: Test Drive completed (August 2024)

WHAT WE LEARNED: Fusing data from multiple sensors enhances detection and tracking performance in complex and cluttered operational environments.



BLACK & MCDONALD: Green Heat Kingston Energy Storage

This Test Drive involves the design and installation of a large-scale low-carbon thermal energy storage system to heat an existing facility at Canadian Forces Base Kingston. The project is assessing the feasibility of reducing emissions and energy costs without modifying internal heating systems, supporting Defence sustainability objectives.

STATUS: Test Drive ongoing

WHAT WE LEARNED: Low-carbon energy systems can be integrated into existing defence infrastructure while supporting emissions reduction and energy resilience objectives.



INNOVATION NETWORKS

Innovation Networks bring academia, researchers, industry, and government together to work on shared defence and security challenges. Through these networks, IDEaS supports small, focused teams—called *micro-nets*—that combine different skills and perspectives to move ideas from early research toward practical solutions.

These collaborations help build strong connections across Canada’s innovation ecosystem while advancing technologies from early concepts to more mature stages. Innovation Networks focus on challenges that matter to the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces, and their safety and security partners, and they help ensure Canada is ready for future threats and operational needs. IDEaS continues to support multi-year projects selected through previously launched Innovation Networks, including funding for Quantum research and 5G communications.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024–25

Safer Passage During Minefield Breaching Operations in Ukraine

LAUNCHED: April 2024

In April 2024, IDEaS launched the Safer Passage During Minefield Operations in Ukraine Challenge. The funding initiative was designed to identify game-changing disruptive solutions that enable an army to maneuver through a complex heavily defended minefield.

The IDEaS team worked with stakeholders from Ukraine, with technologies developed supporting potential capabilities in Ukraine as well as advance the capabilities of the CAF in future minefield breaching or clearance initiatives.

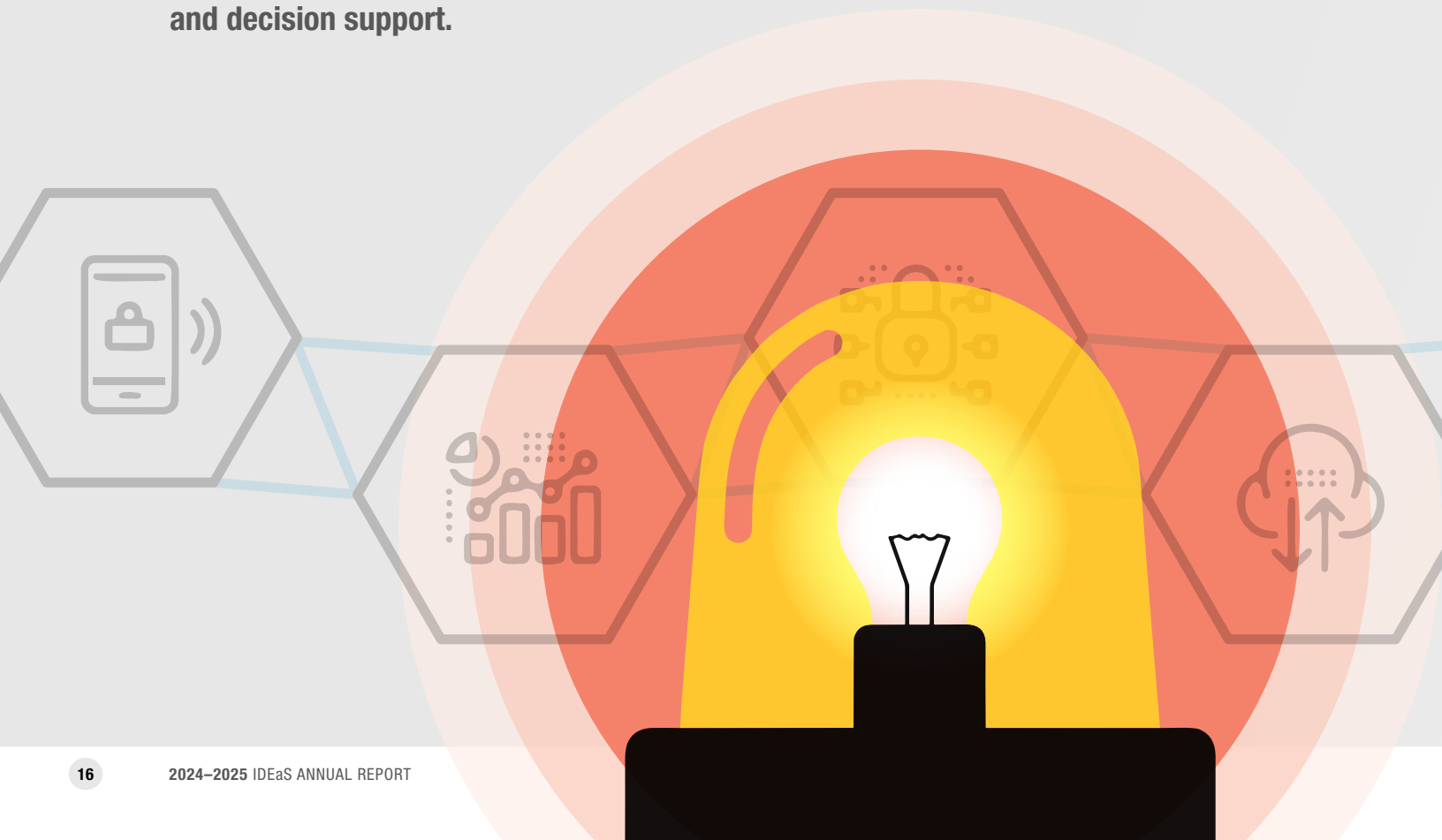
Five innovators were selected to receive \$1,000,000 each to further develop their concepts. A demonstration event was planned for fall 2025 to showcase the solutions.



LIGHTING THE PATH WITH AI: **Advanced Analytics and Decision Support for First Responders**

IDEaS supported the Canadian Safety and Security Program (CSSP) in delivering the Lighting the Path with AI Micro-nets Challenge. The initiative funds multidisciplinary research networks to apply artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to improve how first responders make decisions in complex, fast-moving situations.

Through this challenge, six projects were selected for funding, with up to \$2 million per project over three years, to build national research networks focused on advanced analytics and decision support.



Collectively, the six projects focused on the following domains:

1. **Advanced data analytics for emergency operations**

Developing tools that analyze large volumes of data to support strategic and operational decision-making during emergencies, helping leaders act faster and with greater confidence.

2. **AI-enabled frontline responder analytics**

Creating AI tools designed for use by first responders in the field, providing timely insights that improve situational awareness and operational safety.

3. **Trend detection and information fusion**

Applying AI to identify patterns, trends, and emerging risks across emergency management, law enforcement, fire, and paramedic services, and combining data from multiple sources into a clearer operational picture.

4. **Improved situational awareness beyond current tools**

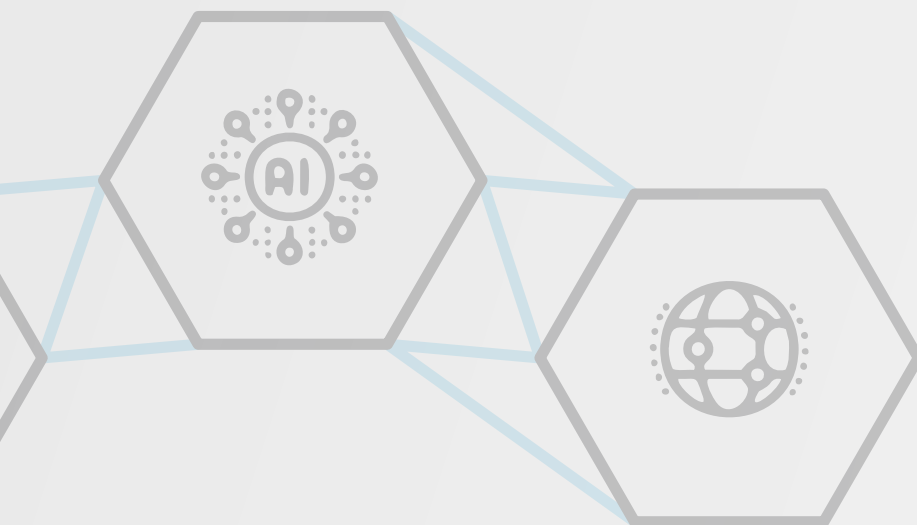
Advancing science and technology solutions that go beyond existing commercial systems, giving responders a more complete and real-time understanding of evolving incidents.

5. **Decision-support tools for complex emergencies**

Designing systems that help responders and coordinators assess options, risks, and likely outcomes during high-pressure events such as natural disasters or major incidents.

6. **National research networks for responder innovation**

Building long-term, multidisciplinary networks that connect academia, industry, and government to strengthen Canada's capacity to develop and apply AI in public safety and security contexts.





CONTESTS

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IDEaS Contests challenge innovators to tackle some of Canada’s most complex defence and security problems. Through a competitive, multi-stage approach, contests invite innovators to test bold ideas, refine prototypes, and demonstrate their solutions head-to-head.

Contests support early- to mid-stage innovations and reward progress at key milestones with grant funding. This approach helps reduce risk, encourages creative thinking, and accelerates promising solutions that could support current and future DND/CAF needs—while still leaving room for breakthrough ideas to emerge.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024–25

Fast Forward: Forecasting Global Emerging Threats

LAUNCHED: October 2024

In October 2024, IDEaS launched the Fast Forward: Forecasting Global Emerging Threats contest to improve how the Defence Team anticipates instability and emerging risks worldwide.

Canadian innovators were asked to propose solutions that use advanced forecasting models and prediction methods—such as statistical analysis, machine learning, and publicly available data sources, including the Violence and Impacts Early-Warning System (VIEWS) dataset. The goal is to help DND/CAF better identify potential flashpoints and emerging global threats before they escalate.

Ten innovators were selected to receive \$25,000 each to further develop their concepts. Contest winners are expected to be announced in fall 2026.

IDEaS NORAD Modernization Science and Technology Contest

LAUNCHED: November 2024

In November 2024, IDEaS launched the NORAD Modernization Science and Technology (S&T) Contest to support early-stage solutions aligned with Canada's evolving continental defence priorities.

Innovators were invited to propose concepts across key capability areas critical to current and future NORAD and DND/CAF requirements, including:

- Quantum technologies
- Autonomous systems
- Counter uncrewed aerial systems (CUAS)
- Arctic mobility and navigation
- Sustainable power and energy solutions

Following a competitive selection process, nineteen semi-finalists were awarded \$1 million each to continue developing and maturing their solutions. Winners are expected to be announced in late 2026.



SANDBOXES

IDEaS Sandboxes give innovators the chance to showcase their technologies in realistic defence environments. These events connect innovators directly with experts from the Department of National Defence (DND), the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), and defence partners.

Through hands-on demonstrations, innovators test their products and services against real-world defence scenarios and, where appropriate, using CAF equipment. Participants receive observational feedback from subject-matter experts and potential end users—helping innovators understand operational needs, refine their solutions, and explore paths to future adoption.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024–25

Counter Uncrewed Aerial Systems (CUAS) Sandbox

The 2024 CUAS Sandbox brought together 15 innovators from five countries to demonstrate and test technologies designed to counter uncrewed aerial systems. Held in Alberta at Canadian Forces Base Suffield, the event provided a realistic and controlled environment for evaluating counter-drone capabilities.

Innovators demonstrated their technologies to DND/CAF experts and end users, receiving direct feedback on performance, integration potential, and operational relevance. The Sandbox helped inform the Defence Team on emerging CUAS capabilities and the art of the possible in this rapidly evolving field.

CUAS Concept Development

First introduced in 2023, the IDEaS program expanded its CUAS Sandbox challenge by offering innovators the opportunity to propose new CUAS solutions for concept development, design, and building of prototypes. Building on insights from the 2024 CUAS Sandbox, DND/CAF and defence and security partners sought CUAS solutions capable of detecting and/or defeating micro and mini UAS, with the ability to integrate into broader military command and control systems.

In Fall 2024, 12 innovative CUAS concepts were selected to receive \$500,000 each over nine months to further develop and test their technologies. Additional funding of up to \$2 million is under consideration for the most promising solutions emerging from this effort.

This year as part of the event, three Canada-incorporated innovators were recognized with 2024 CUAS “Diamond in the Rough” prizes worth \$1.75 million:

1ST PLACE: AIM Defence

TIED FOR 2ND PLACE:

DARIT Technologies and Prandtl Dynamics

2024 CUAS Sandbox – Quick Facts

15

PARTICIPATING COMPANIES

LOCATION: CFB SUFFIELD, ALBERTA

FOCUS: DETECTION AND DEFEAT OF
MICRO AND MINI UNCREWED AERIAL SYSTEMS

COLLABORATION AND OFF-RAMPING OPPORTUNITIES

IDEaS MARKETPLACE

IDEaS Marketplace brings innovators, defence experts, and industry together to turn promising ideas into practical solutions. This invitation-only event allows innovators to demonstrate their technologies, connect directly with DND/CAF stakeholders, and explore pathways to adoption and collaboration.



MARKETPLACE 2024

BY THE NUMBERS

600
ATTENDEES

445 GUESTS

135 INNOVATORS

48
SOLUTIONS
SHOWCASED

88%
SATISFACTION RATE
AMONG ATTENDEES

84%
SATISFACTION RATE
AMONG EXHIBITORS

HIGHLIGHTS OF IDEAS MARKETPLACE 2024

IDEaS Marketplace 2024 took place in May 2024 in Ottawa. The event brought together innovators, defence experts, and partners to showcase technologies developed through the IDEaS program and explore pathways to real-world application. The invitation-only event highlighted the depth and diversity of innovation emerging across Canada's defence and security ecosystem.

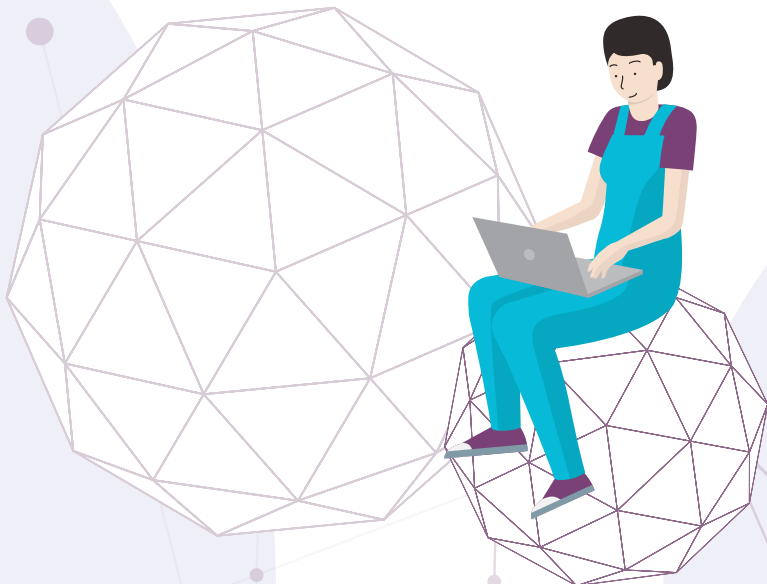
The Marketplace featured IDEaS-funded innovators from:

- Competitive Projects (CFP4)
- Pop up city and Robot Round-up Contests
- Innovation Networks (CFPMN3 – Advancing 5G capabilities)
- Counter Uncrewed Aerial Systems (CUAS) 2019 and 2022, and Corrosion Detection in Ships (CDIS) Sandboxes

Select Canadian innovators who participated in NATO's Defence Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) pilot challenges launched in 2023 were also featured, highlighting connections between IDEaS and allied innovation initiatives.

Marketplace 2024 benefits included:

- Raised awareness of technologies developed through the IDEaS program
- Gave DND/CAF stakeholders direct exposure to newly developed solutions
- Fostered interaction between innovators and potential end users across the public and private sectors
- Provided research networks a platform to present advanced work in areas such as autonomous systems and advanced materials
- Strengthened connections within the growing IDEaS alumni community, supporting future collaboration and transition opportunities



IDEAS

OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS



IDEaS works closely with Procurement Assistance Canada (PAC) to ensure innovators of all sizes—from individuals and SMEs to large companies—can successfully participate in the program. Through its national network, regional expertise, and five offices across Canada, PAC connects IDEaS with diverse suppliers and provides valuable insight into local innovation ecosystems. Formal MOUs with each region enable PAC to expand IDEaS outreach by organizing events, delivering awareness sessions, and helping innovators understand how to work with government. In 2024–2025, PAC continued to be a key collaborator, participating in 565 events nationwide to help innovators learn about opportunities, navigate procurement, and advance new solutions that support Canada’s defence and security priorities.



LOOKING FORWARD



The world, and Canada, are currently undergoing a rapid transformation characterized by rising global uncertainty. Technological advancements put a renewed focus on the need for investments in resiliency to reinforce our sovereignty. The Innovation for Defence Excellence and Security (IDEaS) program will continue to play a vital role in turning these national priorities into practical outcomes.

The need to be agile, adaptable, and to learn are the keys to success in the rapidly changing threat environment. IDEaS supports the development of new ideas, accelerating promising technologies.

The IDEaS program will continue to prioritize areas of strategic importance, including emerging and dual-use technologies that increase awareness, improve decision-making, and support operations in complex and contested environments. At the same time, IDEaS supports broader national objectives by reinforcing Canada's innovation ecosystem. By lowering barriers to participation and engaging small and medium-sized enterprises, academia, and non-traditional partners, Canadian innovators are not only contributing to defence and security outcomes—they are building technologies that can scale, compete, and succeed globally.

Looking forward, IDEaS will continue to strengthen partnerships across government, industry, and allied nations. It will also continue working towards advancing innovative defence procurement solutions to align with the Government's overall agenda to get Canadian innovator's solutions into the hands of the CAF. Engagement, inclusivity, and transparency will remain central to the program's approach, ensuring ideas from diverse regions and disciplines can contribute to Canada's security and prosperity.

As challenges evolve, IDEaS will continue to be committed to empowering innovators and driving innovation. We will continue to support digitization of the program, from proposal submission by innovators to evaluation by CAF/DND experts to program management by IDEaS staff, to help streamline processes and bring challenges to fruition faster and turn Canadian ideas into capabilities to protect Canadians today and tomorrow.

“IDEaS turns Canadian ingenuity into real-world solutions—accelerating innovation that strengthens security, sovereignty, and opportunity for the future.”



CANADA.CA/DEFENCE-IDEaS

