

TechNation Challenge: Post Pandemic Economic Recovery

Over the past 2 years, cities around the world have experienced unprecedented economic impacts in responding to the global COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, governments have invested in technology solutions to support their citizens, workforce and local businesses and through an accelerated digital transformation that has created new ways of delivering services and programs.

At Microsoft, our Vision is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more – and that has never been truer than the efforts we are putting forward to help governments deliver innovative, trustworthy, and standards-based digital programs and services for all that will help cities recover from the financial impacts of COVID-19.

The Challenge

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many small business-owners are unsure of what the future holds, particularly in the tourism and hospitality industries. In the coming months, national and provincial support programs will end for small businesses without a clear end in sight for pandemic restrictions. While these funding programs will end, capacity reductions, client hesitancy, and ongoing outbreaks still present challenges for local businesses in Ontario to maintain profit margins.

Cities rely on the hospitality industry, tourism, and local retail to drive economic prosperity; local businesses are desperate to find ways to drive costs down while bringing customers back into stores and restaurants. While local governments continue to safely relax restrictions, small business needs better ways of understanding the rapid changes to policies, and their responsibilities in keeping consumers and staff safe while managing their own risk and liability. The role of the employee has changed overnight, and businesses need help in equipping their workforce with the skills and supports they need in order to adapt their roles to this new digital norm.

Do you have a creative idea for a digital product that leverages the Microsoft platform and would revolutionize the post-pandemic landscape? How could your product contribute to economic recovery for small businesses particularly in hard-hit industries in Ontario? How would the product benefit your client specifically, be it a government, business, or individual consumer? Does your solution support exceptionally impacted or underrepresented groups and sectors (such as the not-for profit or arts and culture industries)? Are there technical or policy constraints would you need to address for your product to be successful?

Desired Outcomes

1. A 2–4-page proposal for a new digital product, which will run on the Microsoft platform, and help local governments, businesses and citizens recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Proposals should include:
 - i. **Executive summary** outlining the product purpose, audience, and benefit to governments or local business, and
 - ii. **Technical specifications** of the proposed solution that demonstrates compliance with design standards and how the product will leverage the Microsoft platform and products.
2. Identification of support from Microsoft to address any expected policy or technical constraints, such as product expertise, financial assistance (direct or credit), marketing, etc.
3. A prototype solution completed within 3 months that:
 - i. Fully runs on Microsoft Azure.
 - ii. Complies with Accessibility, Privacy, Security policies.
 - iii. Has a low cost to government, businesses and/or consumer.
 - iv. Is self-sustainable after 6 months

Eligibility

1. Canadian-owned and operated small and medium sized businesses (< 500 employees, as defined by Stats Canada) and/or students.
2. Minority-led individuals and businesses are invited to self-declare.
3. Proposed solutions must comply with all local/prov/fed and Microsoft standards.
4. Proposals will be accepted in either official language (English, French).
5. The deadline to have proposals received is February 11, 2022. Proposals must be submitted to napollonova@technationcanada.ca and must be received electronically by the deadline.