

Impact Report **2024-2025**



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Message from President & CEO

North Forge's fiscal year 2024 (April 1 - March 31) has been nothing short of transformational. As one of Manitoba's launchpad for innovation, we've not just met the moment, we've moved it!

From unlocking capital, securing intellectual property, and accelerating market traction, to expanding our reach across the province and beyond, we've deepened our impact through bold programs, strategic partnerships, and an unwavering commitment to inclusive innovation. Since 2020, our founders have created over 1,080 jobs and contributed more than \$64.4 million to Manitoba's economy, numbers that represent not only growth, but lives changed, and futures redefined.

We're building a place where diversity isn't just acknowledged—it's activated. In 2024, we were honoured to receive recognition from the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and international recognition from TECNA (Technology Councils of North America) for our leadership in diversity, equity, and inclusion. These awards reflect years of intentional work to ensure every founder, regardless of gender, culture, or background, feels seen, supported, and equipped to succeed.

We continue to lead the way:

32%

of the founders we
support identify as
visible minorities

29%

identify as women

12%

identify as Indigenous

Initiatives like WiLab™ (Women in Innovation Lab) and MBWiTech are creating powerful pathways for equity deserving entrepreneurs to thrive, not just participate, in the innovation economy.

Since launching in October 2023, ElevateIP has helped protect the intellectual property of 131 startups across Manitoba and Saskatchewan, with 75% based in Manitoba and 22% in Saskatchewan. We have supported the filing of 229 IP assets, including trademarks, trade secrets, patents and industrial designs, valued at over \$2.5 million. Of these businesses, 47% are owned by underrepresented groups, such as women-led and Indigenous-led. And this is just the beginning. With a strong pipeline of future applications, this program is cementing the foundational IP needed to grow globally competitive companies right here in the Prairies.

We also welcomed 10 brilliant global startups through our Start-up Visa Program, bringing ideas in cleantech, healthtech, agtech, advanced manufacturing, and AI from Australia, Pakistan, Singapore, and China. 33% of these founders are women, and all of them chose Manitoba to plant their roots and scale their visions.

This momentum is only possible because of you, our dedicated team, our visionary partners, and the fearless entrepreneurs who are shaping what comes next. You are the pulse of this ecosystem. Your courage, ideas, and grit fuel everything we do.

Looking ahead, we are more energized than ever. Whether it's scaling startups, supporting underrepresented founders, or welcoming global talent—North Forge will be there, building boldly with you.

Thank you for believing in what's possible. Together, we're not just imagining the future, we're forging it.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joelle Foster".

Joelle Foster

President & CEO



Who we are

As Canada's only startup incubator, accelerator and fabrication lab, North Forge is where Canada's daring founders come to build what's next. We're a national not-for profit incubator rooted in the Prairies with a global reach, specializing in inclusive tech, STEM, and advanced manufacturing startups.

Our mission

North Forge is dedicated to fostering innovation, supporting startups, and driving economic growth by creating a collaborative environment where entrepreneurs can thrive, access resources, and scale their businesses.

Our vision

Manitoba becomes the destination of choice for innovative entrepreneurship.

Our purpose

At North Forge, we are more than just an incubator—we ignite the potential of startups. As a community-driven force, we create spaces where entrepreneurs can collaboratively evolve, supported by accessible and innovative programs tailored to their growth. Our identity is built on the foundations of inclusivity, support, and ethics, ensuring that every entrepreneur, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to succeed.



North Forge has been an invaluable partner in helping us grow and scale. Their resources, mentorship, and network opened doors that accelerated our business beyond what we thought possible. The community they've built is one of innovation, support, and growth, and it's clear that North Forge is committed to fostering success for startups like ours.

David Peters
Founder & CEO
ConstructionClock

We help **startups** and makers
build their companies through
groundbreaking experiences
and **resources**.

A woman with long brown hair and glasses is shown in profile, looking towards the left. She is wearing a black blazer over a pink top. The background is blurred, showing other people at a table.

548

companies supported

Metrics for the Founders Program from 2020
to March 31, 2025

North Forge's values



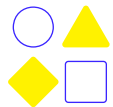
Cultivating a community of support

Fostering a community to super charge entrepreneurial innovation for startups across Canada and globally, guiding through challenges with customized support.



Championing through innovation and adaptability

Driving progress through innovation and adaptability, we help navigate the dynamic landscape of entrepreneurship, ensuring impactful relationships and sustainable growth.



Embracing diversity and removing barriers

Dedicated to diversity, we remove barriers to entrepreneurship.



Empowering through protection and guidance

Protecting innovators by navigating through shark infested waters guiding them to realize their potential.



Championing positivity and respect

Promoting a positive and respectful atmosphere, we encourage open heart led communication ensuring a welcoming inclusive and understanding environment.

The **history** of North Forge

Founded in 2016 through the merger of four innovation organizations –The Eureka Project, Startup Winnipeg, RampUp Manitoba, and AssentWorks (now FabLab)– North Forge unified resources to simplify the start-up ecosystem for Manitoba founders.

Under the leadership of President and CEO, and Co-Founder Joelle Foster since 2020, North Forge has prioritized innovative programming to remain competitive in an evolving market. The 4-stage Founders Program, launched in 2020, is a four-stage initiative guiding startups from idea to scale through tailored education, mentorship, and access to growth capital networks. This program achieved a 294% increase in participation within its first year, thanks in part to the support of the Province of Manitoba.

Today, North Forge continues to adapt and innovate, creating opportunities for entrepreneurs to transform industries and drive Manitoba's economic growth.



A Fabrication Lab fit for a Prince

In May 2014, Prince Charles toured AssentWorks (now FabLab) during his visit to Winnipeg, showcasing the facility's role in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. As a volunteer-run, non-profit prototyping space, the Fabrication Lab impressed the Prince with its array of advanced tools and equipment, designed to help entrepreneurs bring their ideas to life. The tour highlighted the commitment to supporting Manitoba's innovation ecosystem by providing affordable access to prototyping resources and collaborative opportunities. The visit underscored the importance of grassroots innovation in driving economic growth and community development.

Joelle Foster with HRH Prince of Wales as he tours the FabLab (then AssentWorks)

How we help startups

4-stage Founders Program

The North Forge 4-stage Founders Program is our core offering, providing startup founders with individualized support and access to key people and resources to launch, fund and grow their businesses at no cost.

Pathfinder

01

Pathfinder is designed for entrepreneurs with a new idea, guiding them to deeply understand their opportunity, target market, and the critical supports needed to refine their business proposition for success.

Base Camp

02

Base Camp is for early-stage startups in the wireframe stage of product development. It helps you understand your market fit and refine your value proposition to ensure your idea aligns with customer needs and expectations.

Ascent

03

Ascent is designed for startups that have completed market validation and are ready to build a working prototype and commercialize their product. This stage focuses on developing your go-to-market strategy and expanding your network to drive business growth.

North Star

04

North Star is for startups with a proven revenue stream and a growing customer base. With a validated, marketable solution, this stage connects you to specialized supports to drive scalable growth and prepare for an investment round.

Learn more at
northforge.ca/founders-program

Current Founders Program Participants

20

Pathfinder

16

Base Camp

43

Ascent

03

North Star

As of March 2025



I'm not sure if we would have been in the place we are today without North Forge. I do think that the connections that we made and the support we've had led us to where we are right now.

Dr. Norm Silver, MD

Co-Founder, QDoc Inc.

ElevateIP

North Forge is proud to facilitate the ElevateIP program, a federally funded initiative designed to empower Canadian startups with the resources they need to understand, strategize, and protect valuable intellectual property (IP) assets.

ElevateIP provides financial support of up to \$100,000 to assist startups in developing and implementing a comprehensive IP strategy, ensuring their innovations are protected without incurring prohibitive costs. In partnership with Communtech and ISED, ElevateIP offers support through a structured three-tiered process:



IP Education & Awareness

Gain knowledge through consultations, workshops, and online resources to better understand the importance of IP in your business.



IP Strategy Development

Work on crafting a tailored IP strategy, including patent mining, prior art searches, trademark strategy, and agreement reviews.



IP Strategy Implementation

Move from strategy to action by creating and securing IP assets, such as drafting and filing patents or trademarks, developing licensing agreements, and conducting open-source audits.

Learn more at
northforge.ca/elevateip

ElevateIP Recipient, a program of



Innovation, Science and
Economic Development Canada

Innovation, Sciences et
Développement économique Canada



ElevateIP

SAFEGUARD YOUR
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY



ElevateIP has been a game-changer for my startup, POPP3R Cybersecurity, providing us with the education, resources, and support to develop a comprehensive IP strategy. The team at North Forge made the entire process seamless, offering unwavering support and guidance every step of the way. Through the program's three-tiered approach...we gained a deep understanding of IP and identified the key assets that set our business apart from competitors. Thanks to ElevateIP...we now have a well-defined IP strategy in place, and our company's assets are protected, giving us a competitive edge in the market.

Hernan Popper
Founder & Principal Consultant
POPP3R Cybersecurity

Start-up Visa (SUV) Program

North Forge, a designated organization under the Government of Canada, supports the Start-up Visa (SUV) program by helping innovative, scalable businesses with job-creating potential establish themselves in Canada. We guide successful candidates through the program, ensuring a smooth transition into Canada's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The Start-up Visa Program is a government initiative designed to attract innovative entrepreneurs from around the world who have the potential to create jobs and contribute to the Canadian economy.

The program offers a pathway to permanent residency for foreign entrepreneurs who have a viable business idea, secure funding or support from a designated Canadian organization, and meet specific language and financial requirements.

Learn more at northforge.ca/startupvisa



Global Entrepreneurship Initiative (GEI)

If you're an international entrepreneur looking to start your business in Canada or a newcomer eager to build a successful startup, the Global Entrepreneurship Initiative (GEI) is your gateway to success.

GEI offers 24 on-demand webinars with subtitles, covering essential topics on doing business in Canada. Participants gain a solid foundation in Canadian business practices, build relationships with a nationally recognized incubator, and connect with industry experts who provide invaluable business support.

Learn more at northforge.ca/gei

Fabrication Lab (FabLab)

One of the largest publicly-accessible Fabrication Labs in North America

The North Forge FabLab provides entrepreneurs, makers, and innovators with the tools, resources, and community needed to bring their ideas to life.

With state-of-the-art facilities, it offers access to millions of dollars in advanced prototyping equipment. Combined with expert guidance and a vibrant ecosystem of like-minded individuals, members gain the skills and support necessary to transform concepts into tangible products, accelerating their journey from idea to market.

Learn more at northforge.ca/fablab

Prioritizing Safety and Comprehensive Training

North Forge's FabLab is SAFE Work Certified, highlighting our commitment to a safe, healthy environment. This industry-recognized certification reflects adherence to safety principles such as leadership commitment, hazard identification, risk control, and active worker participation, ensuring a secure space for all to create and innovate.





I was able to test my ideas and create small runs without major costs. I would never be able to accomplish what I have without their help. Between the equipment and the people, the experience at North Forge has been invaluable. It has a magical energy that inspires me.

Avery-Anne Gervais

*Founder of Maker Mind Toys and
North Forge FabLab member since 2012*

Fabrication Lab



Bockstael Carpentry room

The Bockstael Carpentry Room is a dedicated space for woodworking and carpentry projects. Sponsored by Bockstael, a leader in construction, this room is equipped with high-quality tools and machinery, including table saws, band saws, planers, jointers, and sanding stations.



Princess Auto Tool Room

The Princess Auto Tool Room is a dedicated space filled with high-quality hand tools, providing everything needed for precision work. Sponsored by Princess Auto, it's the ideal place to fine-tune designs, assemble components, and bring ideas to life with efficiency and accuracy.



EcoPoxy Epoxy Room

The EcoPoxy Epoxy Room is a dedicated space for resin and epoxy projects, blending creativity with innovation. Sponsored by EcoPoxy, a Manitoba-based leader in sustainable resin solutions, this room is equipped with a Lifebreath air quality system for safety and professional-grade tools and materials, including EcoPoxy's eco-friendly resins.

Fabrication Lab Equipment



Metal Shop

The Metal Shop is a fully equipped workspace designed for precision metalworking and fabrication.



CNC Room

The CNC Room is a hub for precision machining and advanced fabrication.



Laser Room

The Laser Room is a dynamic space for precision laser cutting, engraving, and creative exploration.



Design Lab

The Design Lab is the go-to space for members to prototype packaging, create branded items, and design materials



3D Printing Room

The 3D Printing Room is a versatile hub for additive manufacturing and prototyping.



IoT Innovation Lab

The IoT Innovation Lab is a clean space dedicated to the testing and development of devices and systems.





Makers Market

North Forge Makers Market features products that reflect the unique talents and expertise of the FabLab members.

The Makers Market transforms the FabLab into a complete hub where innovators can take their ideas from prototype to production and straight to market, all in one place. You'll discover a curated selection of handcrafted, locally-made products showcasing the incredible skills and creativity of our FabLab members.

Learn more at northforge.ca/makers-market

Advanced Manufacturing Lab (AMLab™)

Supporting Founders from
Concept to Commercialization

AMLab is dedicated to supporting founders through every stage of their product journey, from the initial concept to successful commercialization. AMLab participants must be enrolled and accepted into the North Forge 4-stage Founders Program to gain the expertise and hands-on experience needed to navigate the complexities of the manufacturing ecosystem. Our goal is to help businesses avoid costly mistakes, driving growth and innovation while ensuring that ideas become market ready products.

Learn more at northforge.ca/amlab



Women in Innovation (WiLab™)

Empowering and inspiring women and gender diverse entrepreneurs.

The Women in Innovation Lab (WiLab) at North Forge is designed to empower women and gender-diverse entrepreneurs by providing essential resources, mentorship, and community support. The program centres on four key pillars:



Knowledge Sharing

Foster the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and insights among women+ entrepreneurs to accelerate growth and innovation.



Skill Development

Equip participants with the technical and business skills necessary for success in their entrepreneurial endeavors.



Networking

Create meaningful opportunities for participants to connect with other entrepreneurs, industry professionals, and potential partners to build a robust support system.



Mentoring

Provide structured mentorship opportunities that support both personal and professional growth for women+ entrepreneurs, tailored to their unique challenges and goals.

These focus areas are brought to life through year-round workshops, networking events, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment for entrepreneurial growth.

WiLab was created to actively invite and support female-identifying and gender diverse persons to participate more readily in Manitoba's innovation ecosystem.

Manitoba is notably lagging behind in terms of female entrepreneurship, with only **12.9%** of women engaged in entrepreneurial activities compared to **14.6%** in other provinces.

Learn more at northforge.ca/wilab



It's a very flexible program and doesn't approach you with a rigid, 'this is how you're going to scale' mentality, which I've seen with some of the other programs out there. North Forge meets you where you are in your entrepreneurial journey and provides you with the resources that you actually need in that moment.

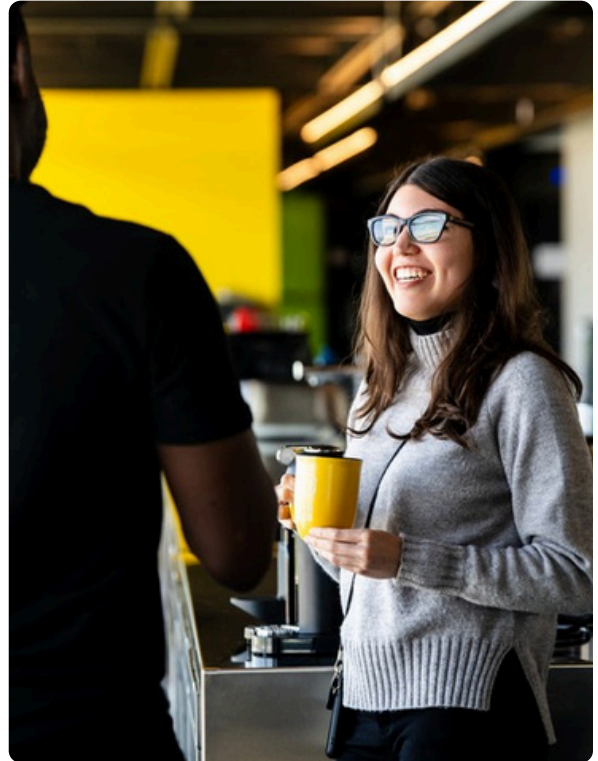
Kiera Fogg
CEO and Founder
Ribit AI

NF Angel Network

North Forge is strengthening Manitoba's economy by continuing to develop the North Forge (NF) Angel Network, a key initiative to boost early-stage investment and support innovative startups across the province.

With a vision for a strong Manitoba economy driven by value-aligned angel investors, the NF Angel Network was created with support from the National Angel Capital Organization (NACO) to provide founders with essential access to capital. This network connects accredited investors from Canada and the U.S. with promising startups, enabling them to scale their businesses and structure investment deals.

Learn more at northforge.ca/nf-angel-network





WeTech Loans



Empowering Manitoban women+ tech entrepreneurs with up to \$25,000 in funding

North Forge and WeMB have joined forces to launch the WeTech Loans program, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at removing barriers to funding for women and gender-diverse entrepreneurs in Manitoba's tech industry.

This partnership offers loans of up to \$25,000 to women-led tech businesses, combining North Forge's tech incubation resources with WeMB's expertise in accessible funding and business advising. Together, they provide unparalleled support to empower women+ tech entrepreneurs, fostering innovation and growth in Manitoba's tech sector.

Learn more at northforge.ca/wetech



Met Innovation Centre for Entrepreneurship (MICE) Program

Empowering the Next Generation of
Entrepreneurs.

The Met Innovation Centre for Entrepreneurship (MICE) Program is a collaboration between North Forge and the Seven Oaks School Division designed to nurture future Canadian innovators. Through partnerships with Maples Met, Seven Oaks Met, and Exchange Met schools, students gain hands-on entrepreneurial experience at North Forge. They develop their own ventures, from app development to social enterprises, while being mentored by experts in innovation, technology, and design. Funding for MICE is provided by the Province of Manitoba.

Learn more at northforge.ca/mice



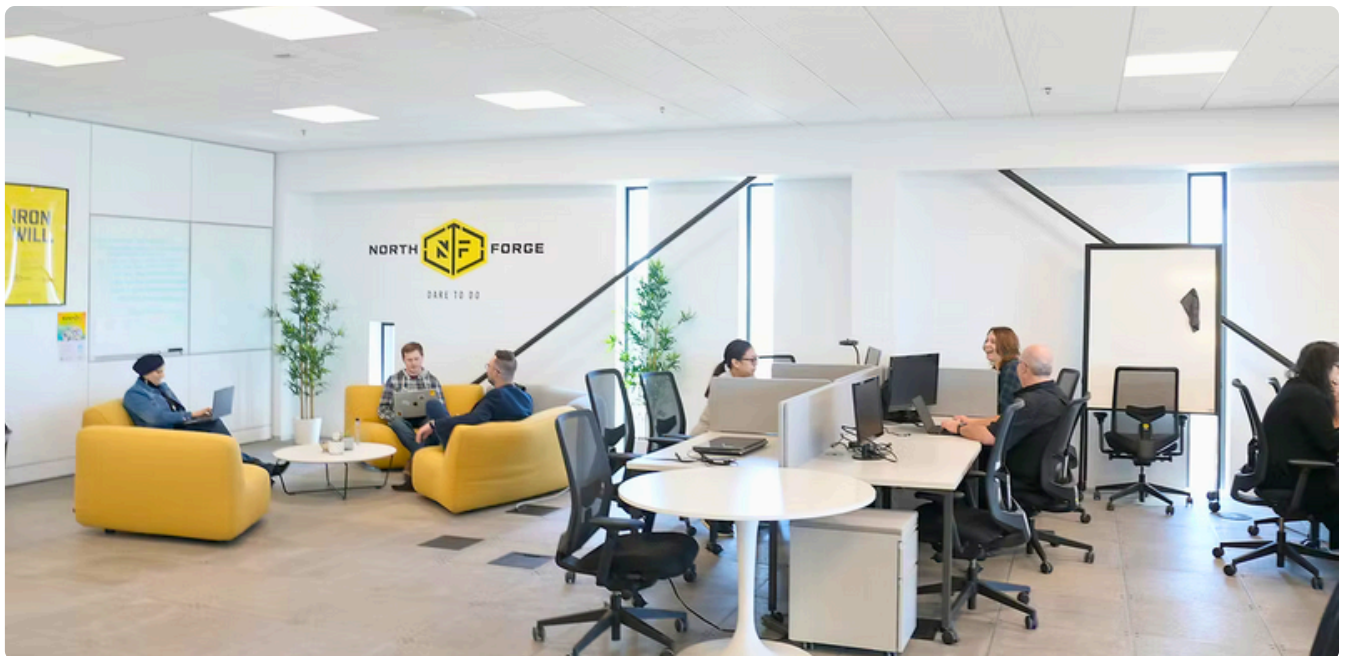
Coworking space

North Forge has coworking spaces available for entrepreneurs wanting to work in a collaborative environment with others who are building their futures from the ground up.

With 24/7 access, our coworking space fosters valuable connections and collaboration, helping entrepreneurs grow their network and their business.

Members enjoy high-speed internet, printing services, fully equipped meeting rooms, and a community kitchen with a complimentary coffee bar, everything they need to stay productive and comfortable.

Learn more at northforge.ca/coworking





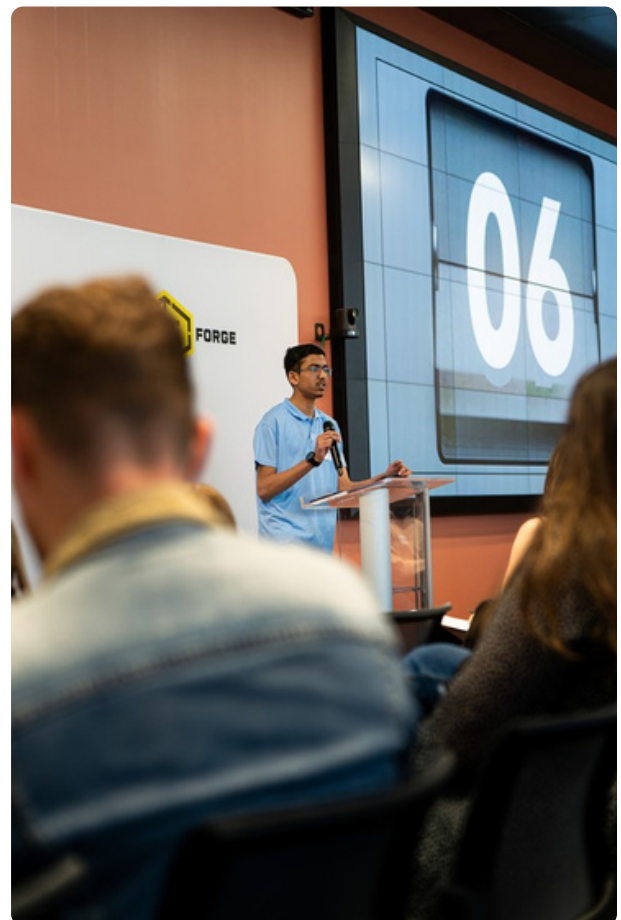
RampUp Weekend

Create, develop, and pitch a business idea in just 50+ hours for a chance to win \$10,000!

RampUp participants pitch concepts, form teams, and build minimum viable products (MVPs) with guidance from industry mentors and resources like the North Forge FabLab. The weekend culminates in a pitch competition, giving teams the chance to win prizes, attract investment, and access North Forge programs.

The event accelerates the startup journey, fosters collaboration, and provides participants with real-world experience in launching a business.

Learn more at northforge.ca/rampup





Our Impact

These impact metrics showcase the growth, innovation, and community impact North Forge is driving across the Prairies.

STARTUPS SUPPORTED

548

companies

Metrics from June 2020 to March 31, 2025

COMPANY TYPES INCLUDE

- SaaS
- Tech-enabled service
- Manufactured product
- EdTech
- FinTech
- Health/Med Tech
- Consumer App
- AgTech

ECONOMIC IMPACT

1,080

jobs created

Metrics from June 2020 to March 31, 2025

\$64.4M

total economic impact of wages

1,080 x \$59,694 (average salary in Manitoba)*
**Source: Manitoba Bureau of Statistics*

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

49%

companies led by women, indigenous, visible minority, newcomers and/or LGBTQ+.

29%

Women-led

12%

Indigenous-led

32%

Newcomer-led

FUNDING

\$35M

cumulative capital raised

Metrics from June 2020 to March 31, 2025

REVENUE

\$21.1M

Revenue growth since joining North Forge

17% pre-revenue companies in 2024. Metrics from June 2020 to March 31, 2025

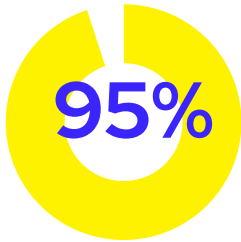
\$5.8M

revenue earned in 2024

Our Impact

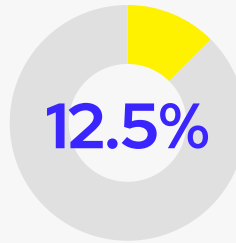
Financial Model

We are a not-for-profit with an annual operating budget of \$4.8M for FY2024..



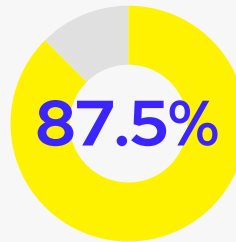
annual operating budget spent on programming

PROGRAMMING EXPENSES



Earned income through program fees (SUV), FabLab membership and rentals.

REVENUE



\$4.2M is needed to sustain programming through corporate sponsors, funding and grants



Partnership with purpose

At North Forge, we believe that partnerships are essential to building a strong startup ecosystem. As Canada's only incubator and fabrication lab, we work with organizations that want to make a meaningful difference, through funding, expertise, tools, and aligned values.

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Contributing Sponsors

are organizations that provide financial or in-kind support to power North Forge programs, operations and infrastructure.



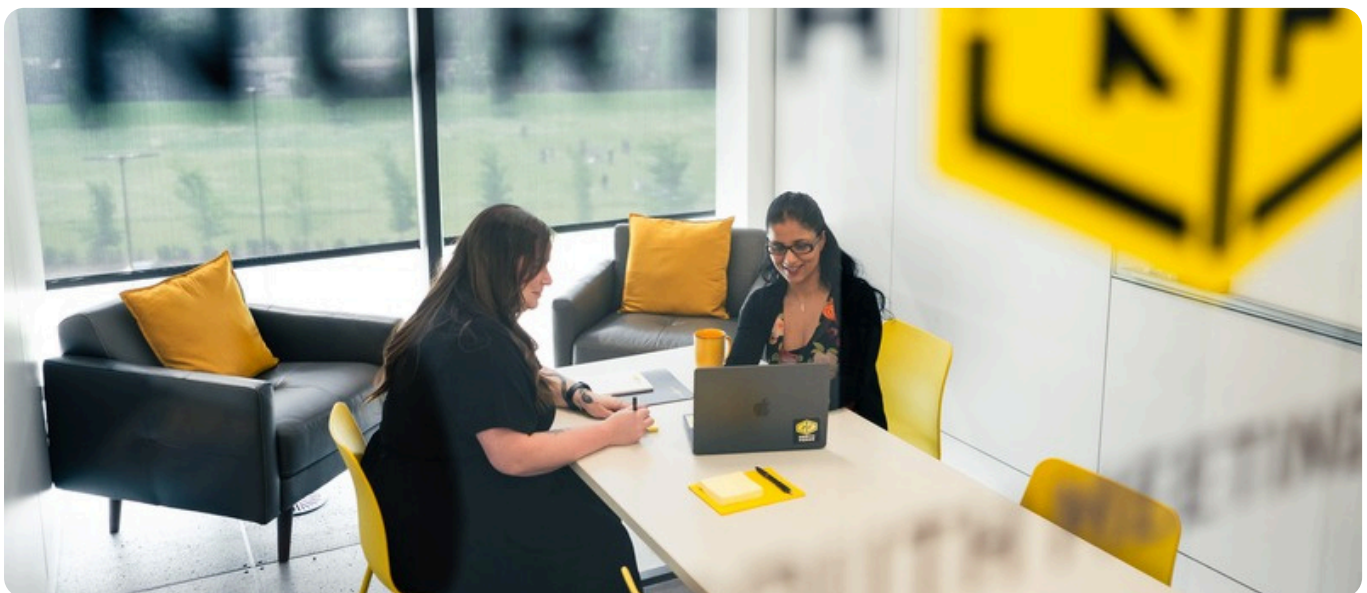
Ecosystem Partners

are mission-aligned organizations that collaborate with North Forge on programming, referrals, shared resources or co-branded initiatives.



Forge Advantage Partners

are organizations that offer exclusive perks, discounts, or services to North Forge founders and FabLab members.



Thank you to our partners

We extend our deepest gratitude to our partners, whose vision, collaboration, and unwavering support make our impact possible. Together, we are empowering innovators, strengthening our startup community, and shaping the future of entrepreneurship.

CONTRIBUTING SPONSORS



ECOSYSTEM PARTNERS



FORGE ADVANTAGE PARTNERS



If you're interested in joining us as a partner and driving innovation, visit northforge.ca/partners to learn more.

MEET THE NF COMMUNITY

548

Incubator
companies

55

Coworking
members

28

Entrepreneurs in-
Residence (EIR)

126

FabLab
members

37

Strategic
partners

As of March 31, 2025



Staff



Joelle Foster
President & CEO



Whitney Morgan
Director, Operations



Dana Driedger
Director, Marketing &
Strategic Initiatives



Adam Palanuk
Director, Fabrication
Lab



Kelly Sandhu-Voogd
Comptroller



Cara Dveris
Projects &
Administration Manager



Devon Shewchuk
Partnerships &
Marketing Manager



Grace Gyolai
Program Manager



Jeff Stobbe
Fabrication Lab
Maintenance Manager



Stephen Harwood
Fabrication Lab Asst.
Maintenance Manager



Robert Larnyoh
*Social Media & Marketing
Specialist*



Emelia Nyarku
Fabrication Lab
Assistant



Linsey Callaghan
Project Administrator



Janean McInnes
Office Administrator

Board of Directors



Dan Belhassen
Board Chair
CEO, Neovation



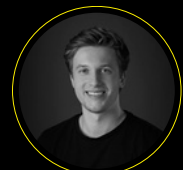
Carly Edmundson
Board Vice Chair
President & CEO,
CentrePort Canada



Diana Axelrod
Board Treasurer
Vice President, KPMG



Tracy Epp
Board Secretary
Partner, Pitblado Law



Chris Schmidt
Board Member
Founder/CEO, Parallel



Dan Blair
Board Member
CTO, Bit Space
Development (BSD)



Jill Knaggs
Board Member
VP, Stakeholder Relations,
Reclay StewardEdge



Melissa Cattini
Board Member
Partner, MLT Aikins