

Scale-up Hub
Benelux

Centre d'expansion
Benelux



Request for Expressions of Interest

International Business Development Consulting
Services for Atlantic Canadian SMEs Exploring
Opportunities in the Benelux Region



Date of Issue:
Submission Deadline:

October 22, 2025
November 19, 2025

REVISED October 29, 2025

Background

Scale-Up Hub Benelux is a strategic initiative designed to help Atlantic Canada's clean tech and energy innovators land and grow in Europe.

The term 'Benelux' references three neighbouring states in Western Europe: Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. These three nations are involved in a politico-economic union, alliance, and formal international intergovernmental cooperation – making the region ideal for concurrent engagement.

This program will help small to medium-sized businesses (SMEs) throughout Atlantic Canada unlock new partnerships, gain market access, and position themselves for long-term growth across the European Union (EU), using the Benelux region as the launchpad.

econext is leading the program in collaboration with the governments of Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador with and tech NL supporting.

Objective

This EOI is an invitation by *econext* on behalf of its partners to prospective proponents to submit proposals for the provision of consulting services. *econext* and its partners are seeking a consultant (or consultants) with strong competencies in international business development and export of clean technology and energy solutions into the Benelux market.

The program is designed to provide business development support to achieve accelerated growth in the target markets for a maximum of 15 Atlantic Canadian SMEs. The cohort of SMEs will be comprised of experienced entrepreneurs with the capacity to scale internationally. The cohort will possess sufficient financial resources and a keen commitment to support a long-term presence within the Benelux region.

Scope of Work

Services

Selected international business development consultants will be expected to provide one-on-one international business development services to between 1-15 SMEs that may include:

- Sector-specific insights and partner identification.
- Lead generation, investor access, integration into relevant local cleantech ecosystem(s).
- Regulatory and procurement guidance in EU frameworks.
- Support for two in-market trade missions:
 - Curated B2B meetings and matchmaking with European firms, clusters, and trade associations.

- Site visits to energy hubs, research centers, and municipal partners.
- Connection to EU angel investors, VCs, and green finance programs/organizations.
- Investor readiness workshops, pitch preparation, and deal facilitation.

The specifics of the supports provided to SMEs will be defined following the selection of the program cohort of up to 15 SMEs and be customized to meet the unique needs of selected participants.

To achieve the above, consultants will be required to cultivate a thorough understanding of the participating companies and their technical and business competencies, particularly as it relates to driving export activity in the Benelux region. Developing a working understanding of Atlantic Canadian SME capabilities will be an important factor in successful matchmaking. This will require that consultants arrange regular weekly/bi-weekly meetings with each participant over the course of the program and provide regular progress reports to the Program coordinator.

Client Description

This program (and the consulting services provided through it) will be open to SMEs based in Atlantic Canada who provide exportable technologies and/or services related to:

- Renewable energy – solar, onshore and offshore wind, hydro, etc.
- Energy efficiency – equipment, infrastructure, storage/batteries, software, etc.
- Carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS)
- Circular economy – advanced waste management, biofuels, bioproducts, etc.
- Digital, remote, and autonomous operations including sensors, SaaS, digital twins, etc.
- Net zero enablers – clean logistics, electrification, port technology, environmental monitoring, etc.

Customization

The needs of each participating SME may require different skillsets and networks (i.e., a company with an energy efficiency technology in one market looking for investments versus a clean energy technology in another market looking for a pilot project).

Therefore, *econext* and its partners are open to EOI responses which are all-inclusive (i.e., the provision of services to all 15 SMEs across the Benelux region) and/or responses which are subject matter specific, nation specific, and firm-specific. It is the intention of the committee will establish a pool of pre-qualified consultants which can be drawn from depending on the bespoke needs of a given SME.

Timelines

It is anticipated that the program cohort will be selected by November 28, 2025 at which point in time consulting services will commence. Consultants would be required to provide services

between December 1, 2025 to March 31, 2027. The speed at which consulting resources are expended will depend on the specific needs of participating SMEs.

Budget

The maximum budget available for this contract is \$150,000 CAD (exclusive of any required taxes).

Proposal Submissions

The contracting organization for agreements that stem from this EOI is *econext*.

An electronic copy of submissions should be in DOC and/or PDF format, and sent to Kieran Hanley, *econext*'s CEDO, via email at kieran@econext.ca no later than 17h00 NST **November 19, 2025**. Questions from interested applicants can be directed to the same address and must be received by November 12, 2025.

Questions asked and answers (unattributed) will be published on the *econext* website [here](#).

A single electronic document is sufficient. The proposal should be no longer than four (4) pages, and be concisely worded with clearly described objectives, methods, and outcomes. The proposal must acknowledge and accept the terms and conditions as laid out in the request for EOIs.

Supporting documentation may be appended. Suggested appendices include (1) brief descriptions of the respondent's company/relevant experience with similar projects, (2) a description of the relevant work experience of the staff assigned to this project, (3) a description of the tools / resources / technologies / and/or methodology to be used, and (4) references.

It is expected that submissions will include hourly rates of services and the number of hours that the consultant is able to provide in support of an SME's unique needs. Respondents may choose to offer their services for the full cohort of participating firms or on an individual firm-by-firm basis. Respondents are highly encouraged to provide information on the services that they are able to provide on an individual SME basis.

EOI Timelines

1. EOI Release Date: October 22, 2025
2. Proposal Due Date: November 19, 2025
3. Project Kickoff: TBD based on SME requirements
Selected consultants to be available December 1, 2025 onwards
4. Project Completion: TBD

Evaluation Criteria

Submissions will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

Knowledge and experience in relation to the work: demonstrated ability to meet expectations based on completion of similar projects and/or quality of previous works.	35%
Understanding of the scope and objectives of the project: demonstrated comprehension of/adherence to the EOI; description of technologies / resources / tools to be applied in support of the work.	15%
Key personnel assigned to the project: proven expertise of team members relating to the market(s) and/or subject matter(s).	20%
Identification of potential risks to achieving the project's objectives and mitigations/contingencies to address them.	10%
Price: value of work proposed versus identified costs.	20%

Terms and Conditions

- All proposals received will be considered strictly confidential;
- The lowest cost, or any proposal, will not necessarily be accepted;
- Proposed costs must be represented in Canadian dollars;
- No payment will be made for the preparation and submission of proposals for this project;
- No fee will be made on the cost of work incurred to remedy errors or omissions for which the consultant is responsible; and
- *econext* reserves the right to meet with all, or any, of the applicants during the proposal evaluation stage to clarify information in the submissions and seek additional detail which may be used in the evaluation.