



# **Intellectual Property Ontario (IPON)**

## **2024-2027 Business Plan**

March 1, 2024

## 1.0 Message from the Board Chair

Intellectual Property Ontario (IPON) exists first and foremost to support Ontario's rich ecosystem of innovators and post-secondary researchers and their efforts to build Ontario's next great commercial successes and scientific breakthroughs. These efforts are central to increasing Ontario's productivity and ultimately the prosperity and economic success that every resident of this province enjoys.

IPON's inaugural year of operations in 2022-2023 provides a strong signal as to the impact that an effective intellectual property (IP) support agency can provide to this overarching mission. IPON met and exceeded its first-year targets for the number of companies who received services from the agency. IPON met and exceeded its first-year targets for post-secondary institutions who received funding and services from the agency. And IPON can confidently point to positive feedback from clients as validation of its first-year efforts.

However, in the process, IPON through its staff, management, and board of directors, learned a great deal about what services and supports are most needed by our innovators, researchers, and partners. While in most cases IPON's menu of offerings hit the mark, we have also learned how and where we need to continue to evolve our offerings to best enable our clients and their success. Moving forward, our 2024-2027 Business Plan reflects this learning. It also reflects that IPON must always seek to learn from its clients and from global best practice. IPON must continuously seek to meet, if not exceed, the highest bar for efficiency and effectiveness of an agency like it.

Our 2024-2027 Business Plan reflects this evolution and paves the way for an enhanced impact on the economic prospects of our province. Consistent with our legislated mandate, our strategic direction is focused and clear. We are committed to increasing IP capacity, strengthening strategic partnerships, supporting commercialization in the post-secondary education sector, and achieving operational excellence.

Our phased approach to full development reflects the needs and demands of businesses, innovators and researchers who are the lifeblood of our economy. It also addresses the IP-related capacity and resource needs of post-secondary tech transfer and applied-research offices, as well as Ontario's vibrant network of regional innovation centres. And finally, we look forward to ongoing engagement across Ontario's broader public policy ecosystem to ensure that an understanding and prioritization of intellectual property permeates our policy realm.

Ultimately, IPON's 2024-2027 Business Plan signals the agency's critical role in shaping the fabric of Ontario's present and future prosperity. We extend our gratitude to our government partners, notably Minister Jill Dunlop of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) and Minister Victor Fedeli of the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT), as well as our stakeholders, partners, and clients. Together, we are dedicated to supporting the evolving IP-related needs of Ontario's innovators and researchers, all in the name of building a competitive and prosperous Ontario.

- Karima Bawa, Chair, Intellectual Property Ontario

## 2.0 Executive Summary

Ontario has an immense opportunity to position itself as one of the world's leading jurisdictions for innovation. With strong foundations in post-secondary research, a vibrant network of industry-focused colleges and a well-resourced ecosystem for innovators, Ontario can and should be amongst the world's most productive and prosperous economies. In the past, however, the outcomes of these exceptional innovation-related inputs have too often led to prosperity being accumulated elsewhere as lax approaches to the development, commercialization and protection of intellectual property assets muted Ontario's economic prospects.

IPON was created in 2022 to help address this deficiency and to properly equip Ontario's innovators and researchers, as well as the publicly funded offices that support them, with the tools, strategies and knowledge required to not just compete but to win in today's hyper-competitive, global knowledge economy.

IPON's 2024-2027 Business Plan reflects on its initial year of operations and services and looks forward to the full scale-up of programs and services. The path ahead will see IPON maximize its impacts on Ontario's innovation system, empowering and enabling its clients and stakeholders with respect to the development, commercialization, and the protection of IP. Doing so rests on the strong operational foundations and processes set in place during IPON's inaugural year, and addresses important feedback received from clients and stakeholders.

IPON's strategic direction for the next three years concentrates on four strategic objectives, aligned to IPON's provincially legislated mandate, and is reflective of the needs and demands of our stakeholders:

- **Increase IP capacity within the ecosystem (building to maturity):** Provide clients with high quality and affordable IP services to increase the number of protected IP assets and enhance IP knowledge and awareness.
- **Strengthen strategic partnerships with IP ecosystem stakeholders:** Maximize the use of public funding and resources available for IP programs and Ontario companies, while reducing market confusion.
- **Demonstrate high-value partnership and IP support for the post-secondary education sector (PSE):** Ensure that the PSE sector is better equipped to realize commercialization outcomes.

- **Achieve operational excellence:** Foster an organizational culture that has effective governance protocols, uplifts teamwork and effective communication, and consists of engaging and motivated talent.

The ongoing strategic direction and activities outlined in this business plan reflect the key priorities communicated by the government in IPON's annual Letter of Direction. At the core of its priorities, IPON continues to follow a phased approach to its development, moving from a "scale-up phase" towards maturity. Through this process, IPON will continue to build a strong coalition of partners across Ontario's innovation and PSE sectors to coordinate IP-related program and service delivery. Additionally, IPON will focus on providing advisory services to the PSE sector related to the Commercialization Mandate Policy Framework (CMPF), and more fully develop its role and function as a centre of IP expertise on related policy matters.

IPON is committed to making a significant socio-economic impact and supporting Ontario's innovation-based companies capable of competing globally. To demonstrate its impact, IPON will continue to systemically explore and develop key performance indicators that will help assess the impact of IPON's programming and services, as well as measure broader and longer-term changes in the intangible economy of the province.

## 3.0 Mandate

**Intellectual Property Ontario (IPON) is a board-governed provincial agency that is dedicated to supporting the IP related needs of Ontario innovators, researchers, as well as the publicly funded offices that support them. In so doing, IPON seeks to better enable the development, commercialization and monetization of research and innovation in Ontario.**

### **Legislative Mandate:**

IPON was established in January 2022 by [Ontario Regulation 4/22](#) with the objectives to increase public access to IP services and resources, support the development and protection of IP to improve commercialization outcomes, advance IP knowledge and education, and establish partnerships across IP ecosystems both within and outside of Canada. The Regulation also sets out a critical advisory function in which IPON provides sound advice, recommendations, and support to the Government of Ontario, including the Minister of Colleges and Universities (MCU) and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT), with respect to advancing economic competitiveness through the development, protection, commercialization, and monetization of Made in Ontario IP.

### **Government Mandate:**

IPON is committed to supporting the Government of Ontario's objectives for IP protection and commercialization. While delivering on these objectives, IPON also supports the following government-wide priorities:

- Competitiveness, sustainability, and expenditure management;
- Transparency and accountability;
- Risk management;
- Workforce management;
- Diversity and inclusion;
- Data collection; and
- Digital delivery and customer service.

### Competitiveness, Sustainability, and Expenditure Management:

IPON will evolve its service delivery model based on insights from the agency's initial beta phase, and client and stakeholder feedback. IPON's funds will be efficiently and effectively dispersed to reach client targets in number, quality, and diversity, and to maximize the impact on Ontario's IP ecosystem.

During all phases of IPON's growth, the agency will take steps to ensure a fiscally smart and balanced budget and strive to balance cost efficiencies with service quality and target market reach. IPON will deliver efficiencies through automation and process improvements, utilizing in-house expertise to deliver advanced services and apply learnings whenever possible to reduce overall program costs.

IPON will employ lean principles and practices to organisational design and service delivery to maximise the operational efficiencies and impact on its clients. In addition, IPON will leverage lean, agile and digital first methodologies to position IPON as the most efficient and successful government service provider in Canada.

#### Transparency and Accountability:

IPON is committed to providing effective oversight, transparency and accountability. This includes complying with applicable Government of Ontario directives, policies, and guidelines. It also includes reporting on travel expenses, public salary disclosure and financial supports for IP services to Ontario companies and post-secondary education institutions. IPON will continue to be accountable to government and the public through existing reporting tools and mechanisms (e.g., annual reports, financial and service delivery updates), as well as by sharing information on the agency's work via IPON's website at [www.ip-ontario.ca](http://www.ip-ontario.ca) and other digital channels.

IPON will adhere to BPS accounting standards and practices, and respond to audit findings, where applicable.

#### Risk Management:

The phased approach of IPON's operationalization (beta, scale-up, maturity) was designed to mitigate and minimize program risks so that learning from each previous phase informs plans for the next one.

To this end, IPON developed an Enterprise Risk Management Framework (ERM) in 2023-2024 which has now been incorporated into the regular cadence of business starting in 2024-2025, with quarterly reporting to the Ministry. The ERM framework is set up to assess risks and opportunities on a regular basis to proactively address internal and external environmental shifts.

Key risks are included in the annual business plan and IPON reports on risks to the ministry on a quarterly basis and via the Annual Risk Report process.

### Workforce Development

IPON will continue to take several approaches to ensure that organizational and human resource capacity is optimized to support the agency's operationalization and growth. This includes investment in professional development, training and a commitment to continuous learning for staff and management.

IPON will also continue to build and nurture an organizational culture that encourages teamwork and effective communication and collaboration. IPON's leadership team will be measured on its ability to motivate and inspire employees.

### Diversity & Inclusion

One of IPON's key workforce priorities is to recruit and retain a diverse and inclusive team of talent by promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist, and diverse workplace.

Furthermore, given the increasing diversity of the Ontario population, IPON will endeavour to support its diverse client base and to adapt, where appropriate, their business and commercial strategies in a manner that reflect the experiences and perspectives of people from different cultures and backgrounds. Diversity and inclusion considerations are embedded in IPON's client intake criteria and eligibility requirements.

### Data Collection, Digital Delivery & Customer Service

IPON collects data from program applicants and funding recipients. This may, at times, include confidential data and/or information. IPON protects this data by maintaining clearly defined record keeping procedures for the collection, use, and storage of confidential records, aligning to government legislation and policies. IPON is using government IT infrastructure and services for information and data storage and protection. The new automation solution will undertake a Privacy Impact Assessment and Cyber Security Assessment.

IPON is building a digital organization that will enable seamless and efficient interaction with the agency's clients, team, and other stakeholders. IPON will ensure that its service delivery and communications strategies take a secure, digital-first approach, wherever possible, to ensure Ontario's roster of intellectual assets are protected, supported, and sustained.



## Vision, Mission, and Values:

To support the agency in successfully delivering its legislative and government mandates, IPON developed a vision, mission, and values to guide its operations.

### IPON's Vision

IPON is the go-to, trusted independent source in Ontario to protect and maximize the commercialization of IP for the financial benefit of all Ontarians.

### IPON's Mission

To increase prosperity for Ontario by maximizing the value of innovative IP and the capacity for businesses, researchers, and entrepreneurs to compete in the global economy. We achieve this through services and programs that provide IP awareness, IP funding, and IP capacity building.

### IPON's Values

- **People first:** We're people first – all doing our best. We show compassion, understanding, and trust for one another. We strive to provide a safe and respectful environment where everyone feels welcome. We're all on the same side, assume the best intentions, and approach situations with curiosity over judgement.
- **Small team, big impact:** Everyone pulls their weight and pitches in to make big things happen. "That's not my job" is not a phrase you'll hear at IPON. Each one of us brings and shares diverse and valuable experience and we trust each other's expertise. We depend on open communication and collaboration to deliver big results and propel forward together.
- **Client-success focus:** We truly care about our clients' outcomes and successes and aim to provide meaningful and thoughtful programs and services. We are passionate about IPON's mandate, engaging with and providing the best value and IP support to Ontario's innovation ecosystem.
- **Integrity:** We believe in doing the right thing for the betterment of our community and stakeholders by making difficult decisions, delivering real value, and being accountable to our clients, partners, government, and taxpayers.
- **Start-up mentality:** We move with speed and agility to align our support with our clients' needs. We believe in progress over perfection because we have a trusted and talented team where we can fail forward and course correct as we learn.

## 4.0 Environmental Scan

**This section outlines the key external and internal factors that influenced the development of the 2024-2027 Business Plan.**

IPON's activities are driven first and foremost by our clients – Ontario innovators and researchers – and the needs and challenges related to the development, protection and commercialization of IP that they face. These needs are constantly affected by changes in the global innovation economy in addition to the market needs and demands, as it relates to new technology development and deployment, as well as IP-related regulatory and policy changes around the world.

IPON's position as the province's centre of IP expertise requires the agency to keep its finger on the pulse of these trends and changes through on-going discussion with key stakeholders, market scanning and policy analysis. IPON is looked to as a model for effective IP service delivery and maintains ongoing engagements and dialogue with stakeholders both nationally and internationally.

### 4.1 External Factors

#### Canadian Legislative, Regulatory, and Policy Environment

National and provincial legislative and policy frameworks play a crucial role in shaping the IP ecosystem and influencing commercialization outcomes in the province. They remain critical tools that the government can leverage to encourage the responsible development and commercialization of IP and cutting-edge innovations that foster growth in key sectors, such as artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.

Federal and provincial governments in Canada have increased their commitment to supporting intellectual property, directly or indirectly, for firms and researchers. IP programs are currently being offered by the federal government through the following (non-exhaustive) key programmatic initiatives: ElevateIP, NRC IRAP IP Assist, Innovative Asset Collective.

At the provincial and national level, governments increase and establish new entities that are responsible for IP and Innovation programming, such as Innovate BC, Springboard Atlantic, Axelys Quebec and others.

As it relates to the post-secondary sector, universities and colleges across the country continue to advocate for enhanced IP support as a means of improving research commercialization outcomes.

### **Availability of IP Support**

If Ontario seeks to lead in the creation, protection and commercialization of its intellectual property, it must be strategic with the funding it makes available to support the marketplace. In step with this strategic support, the province's broader network of IP and innovation support agencies, notably IPON alongside actors such as the Ontario Centre for Innovation (OCI) and the network of regional innovation centres (RICS) must work collaboratively to leverage capital, resources and expertise throughout the ecosystem. IPON intends to play a leadership role in this area, thereby reducing market confusion and redundancy, and maximizing the impact of Ontario's investment in IP support. IPON will minimize risk of potential market confusion through clear positioning and communication of its program and services, while leveraging collaborations, where possible, for a more cohesive and impactful IP ecosystem.

### **New Technology Development**

The accelerated development of emerging technologies introduces new complexities for IP creation and protection. Accelerated development means that technologies move from conception to commercialization at a faster pace, requiring researchers and businesses to remain agile with respect to the related IP implications. The dynamic nature of emerging technologies necessitates that IPON adapts its programs and services to enable clients to secure protection and maintain a competitive edge. IPON will leverage an enhanced policy and research function to appropriately address this.

### **Post-Secondary Innovation & Tech Transfer in Ontario**

Post-secondary institutions in Ontario are recognized as catalysts for research, invention and innovation. Lack of access to market intelligence and expertise, as well as limited funding for technology transfer resources (e.g., support personnel, technology development and Research & Development, patent filing) are challenges facing post-secondary institutions in Ontario. IPON is committed to supporting capacity development at Ontario TTOs and applied research offices. However, expanding the role of post-secondary institutions in fostering innovation requires technology transfer from academia to industry. Bridging this gap creates commercialization opportunities for researchers which may be otherwise difficult to capitalize on independently.

## **4.2 Internal Factors**

### **Establishing Foundational Capabilities**

Focusing on the objectives outlined in its 2023-2026 Business Plan, in its first year of operations, IPON has made significant strides in operationalizing the agency, showcasing its commitment to growth and service excellence. Moving forward, IPON must continue to build its operational foundations. This includes leveraging automation for efficiency, building IT infrastructure, integrating client-centric technologies, and strengthening cybersecurity measures. These areas will especially become critical as IPON builds and matures over the coming years.

### **Office of the Auditor General of Ontario Audit Recommendations**

During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, IPON underwent a comprehensive financial audit led by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. The findings have been a critical step in strengthening internal structures and building a culture of transparency and accountability. Additionally, the Auditor General's recommendations underscore the need for enhancing year-end financial reporting processes, which IPON has taken concrete actions to address in this business plan.

### **Organizational Culture and Staff**

Over the past year, IPON staff has established operations in accordance with the agency's legislated mandate and has developed an organizational culture with a strong emphasis on supporting staff through a diverse, inclusive, and collaborative environment. By fostering an environment that is agile, adaptable, and values the well-being of its team members, IPON will continue to navigate the complexities of the IP ecosystem and attract and retain top talent in the field.

## 5.0 Services

### 5.1 Initial Services

IPON's initial service offerings included foundational IP education, direct funding for IP services, mentorship, and benchmarking.

#### Direct Services Provided to 40 Beta Clients

During the beta phase, IPON provided services to its 40 beta clients including benchmarking, foundational IP education, funding, mentorship and intelligence.

- **Benchmarking:** Provided a comprehensive assessment of clients' IP health and awareness by conducting a review of their IP strategy, assets, and processes. Results help inform tailored IP strategies and actions to meet clients' IP needs.
- **IP education:** The Foundations of IP Strategy course helped clients improve their IP knowledge and provided an understanding of how IP can be strategically leveraged to advance business objectives.
- **IP funding:** IPON's direct funding supported the negotiation of IP centric agreements (e.g., licenses, partnerships, research agreements, EULAs, etc.) and the filing of patents, provisional patents, trademark applications and industrial design applications.
- **Mentorship:** Clients were matched with mentors with lived IP and commercialization experience. Mentors provided 1-1 subject matter expertise, insights and IP guidance tailored to clients' businesses.
- **IP intelligence:** Clients received market intelligence based on IP patent landscapes and datasets that provided insights to accelerate innovation and focus resources on the right opportunities.

Early learnings from the Beta phase, notably with respect to fixed intake dates, delivery methods and overall program flexibility, were applied in preparation to support at least 150 new clients during scale-up.

### 5.2 Enhanced Services (Scale-up)

#### Launch of Scale-up

Consistent with the direction received in its Letter of Direction, IPON applied learnings and client feedback to develop its enhanced scale-up plans, which were approved by IPON's Board of Directors and MCU and MEDJCT in September 2023. IPON worked with MCU to launch its scale-up phase significantly earlier than initially expected, which

allowed IPON to better 1) grow IP capacity in more companies; 2) work with partners to maximize ecosystem supports; 3) optimize the delivery of services; and 4) maximize the utilization of IPON resources.

IPON started to accept new applications on October 23, 2023, and offered three streams of services tailored to client's needs:

- **IP Bootcamp:** Designed for IP owners who need immediate access to IP funding and are eager to engage with IP experts and valuable resources. This program provides access to all IPON services and a dedicated Account Manager.
- **Partner Program:** Available to IP owners who are affiliated with an IPON partner organization such as an Ontario Regional Innovation Centre (RIC), Ontario Centre of Innovation (OCI) or the Vector Institute and need additional IP support to complement their existing services. This program provides access to select services: IP funding of up to \$35,000, access to funding calls, education (foundational and advanced), IP benchmarking, Tiger Team, and networking events – plus mentorship and IP intelligence on a need and availability basis.
- **Self-guided Program:** For IP owners who want to learn and access services, including funding and education, at their own pace. This program provides access to education (foundational and advanced), IP benchmarking, funding calls, Tiger Team, and networking events.

IPON aims to serve 150+ clients during the scale-up phase while continuing to serve its existing roster of beta phase clients. Considering budget and market demand, the total number of IPON clients is expected to exceed 700 by the end of fiscal 2024.

### Service Enhancements during Scale-up

Reacting to early feedback, IPON will deliver refinements to its delivery plan based on the following principles:

- **Open for business** – companies can apply anytime to access services when they need them (not only during fixed intake periods).
- **Flexible** – ability to modify when and how services are delivered without impacts to client experience or expected outcomes.
- **Optimal client experience** – seamless and user-friendly experience tailored to clients' IP needs.

Improvements to our offerings include:

- **Remaining “open for business” year-round** with the elimination of fixed application windows, allowing companies to apply for services when needed.
- **Streamlining intake** with “one window” to become an IPON client (instead of applying to IP Bootcamp or being referred by a RIC) to eliminate market confusion on which stream to apply to and to use IPON’s resources more efficiently).
- **Granting client access to foundational IP services** (previously Self-guided Program) for all eligible applicants. This provides more clients with immediate access to low-touch services at their own pace. This approach will build foundational IP knowledge for a larger volume of clients and better position them to benefit from tailored services. It also allows for delivery of services in a more effective and efficient way.
- **Refining delivery of tailored services** (previously IP Bootcamp). Clients can select which tailored services they need (vs. “set menu” under IP Bootcamp).
- **Serve RIC/stakeholder clients** directly (previously Partner Program). IPON will replace the dedicated RIC referral form with one application simplifying the RIC/partner client referral process.
- **Optimizing the funding model** to optimize client access to funding calls by removing \$35,000 upfront commitment. This model better aligns funding with clients’ needs and improves financial forecasting for IPON.
- **Serving additional clients beyond the approximate 150+ scale-up companies as IPON’s capacity increases.**
- **Continuing to build internal tools** to further automate and streamline delivery.

IPON will pivot its delivery model to provide all clients with immediate access to foundational IP services, including benchmarking and foundational education. Tailored services (e.g., funding, mentorship) will be offered periodically so that select clients can access them as needed. This approach will also help manage resources since high-touch support, while impactful, requires more labour.

IPON will continue to improve its services based on client feedback and lessons learned and will reassess its delivery for maturity. Prior to entering the mature state, IPON will submit an operational plan to seek Ministerial approval in 2024-2025. This plan will include lessons learned, client feedback, proposed changes to IPON services, and other relevant fiscal and operational details.

### **5.3 Service Demand**

IPON anticipates a growing demand for IP services from Ontario clients over the next three years. IPON's main guiding principle in delivering services is that they are client driven. There will be a constant evolution of the design and scope of its services based on market demand communicated via various client feedback channels.

IPON's original priority sectors included Artificial Intelligence, Automotive, and Medical Technologies. IPON has since expanded its priority sectors to include Mining Technology, Advanced Manufacturing and Life Sciences.

Market demand for IPON services dictates the need to expand the number of priority sectors by welcoming new clients from such sectors as AgriTech, Cleantech, Nanotechnology, Quantum and others. Working with its Board of Directors and the Ministry, IPON will expand at least one sector in fiscal 2024.

Based on outcomes of the PSE pilot, IPON will seek to expand the program to a greater number of researchers and innovators at Ontario colleges and universities. It is also expected that IP service demand will continue to grow among Ontario-based researchers and post-secondary IP support offices as IPON continues to demonstrate its impact in this largely untapped catalyst for discovery.

Ultimately, the key characteristics of maturity state for IPON will be diversification of sectors served and sophistication and breadth of services to Ontario Innovators and Researchers.



## 6.0 Strategic Plan 2024-2027

### 6.1 Agency Performance Measures

IPON is committed to continuously measuring the impact of the IP services it delivers. Recognizing that IP is an investment, performance measures will be tracked in short term impacts and longer-term outcomes. The following are the objectives by the end of fiscal 2024 – 25. In 2024 – 25, IPON will also finalize the establishment of key impacts and outcome measures for those companies who have benefited from funding.

|                   | Goal   | By End of 2024-25  |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <b>SERVICES</b>   | Deliver funding to companies to access IP services.        | 150+ new clients<br>\$9M+ distributed                    |
|                   | Provide connections to IP mentorship services for clients. | Approximately 2,000 hours / year                         |
|                   | Deliver IP education courses to clients.                   | >200 companies complete IP courses                       |
|                   | Deliver other (nonfinancial) IP services to clients.       | >200 companies complete 1 <sup>st</sup> benchmarking     |
|                   | Statement of Works <sup>1</sup> (SOW) executed.            | >80% of eligible clients fully execute at least one SOW. |
| <b>OPERATIONS</b> | Maximum % of IPON budget invested directly to clients.     | Corporate Admin costs <20%                               |
|                   | Client satisfaction (NPS)                                  | Set NPS benchmark  |

As part of IPON’s ongoing policy and research efforts, the agency will continue to improve its performance-based framework to include additional strategic and outcome based KPIs supporting the evidence on how intellectual property and the work of IPON impacts economic growth and prosperity in Ontario.

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<sup>1</sup> Statement of Work is detailed descriptions of the IP services, including disbursements related to IP services, that are eligible for funding from IPON. Once executed and approved by IPON, the SOW forms part of the Client Agreement.

## 7.0 Implementation Considerations

To support the commitments outlined in this business plan, the agency has considered the following implications of its proposed activities.

### 7.1 Human Resources Priorities

#### Workplace Culture

IPON's values were collaboratively developed with staff and will continue to be operationalized through programs, services, and processes. Regular channels to collaborate and communicate have been established including company meetings and formal and informal feedback mechanisms to inform people and culture priorities. IPON has made efforts to adopt flexible practices that foster innovation and engagement, provide hybrid work standards, work-life balance, and the right to disconnect policy in accordance with [ON Bill 27](#).

Return to office planning activities have critical dependencies related to pending government directions with regards to the province's Community Jobs Initiative and CBREA initiatives. This planning will also be driven by agency business needs and talent attraction strategy. Due to the scarcity of IP talent and the geographic spread of IPON clients/stakeholders, IPON's recruitment strategy is driven by talent and subject matter expertise availability (primarily concentrated in Kitchener-Waterloo, Toronto, and Ottawa regions) and not by office location/geography.

#### IPON's Real Estate Strategy

IPON is headquartered at the Catalyst Commons, a technology co-working facility in Kitchener-Waterloo. This location was selected to build a physical presence in the heart of Ontario's innovation corridor and to support the Government's Community Jobs Initiative. IPON's headquarters is also conveniently located near several colleges and universities (e.g., University of Waterloo, University of Guelph, and Conestoga College), as well as Communitech.

While IPON does not maintain a location-specific recruitment strategy, IP expertise is dispersed across the province with a larger concentration in Toronto and the GTA due to general population density. For this reason, IPON has taken steps to solidify its presence in Toronto through its satellite office, which enables approximately 20

employees located throughout Toronto and the GTA to meet regularly for strategic planning initiatives and attend the office for connection and collaboration.

Additional satellite locations may be investigated dependent on the geographical distribution of IPON's client base.

## **Performance Management & Compensation**

IPON is formalizing additional policies to support the performance management and compensation review processes. Total competitive compensation and creative employee benefits remain top-of-mind as part of IPON's talent attraction and retention strategies. IPON's strategic objectives and operating plan drive employee and team goals. A top-down approach to goals ensures that everyone is working on the right tasks and driving the right metrics to support IPON's overall objectives. IPON's inaugural formal performance review process will take place in early 2024 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, with a focus on continuous development and meaningful feedback, aligning with strategic goals, performance development, and enablement. IPON is investing in learning and development including leadership training and skills development to support employees' professional development goals (identified as a top retention factor from employee feedback) and to support internal skills and capacity building.

## **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

IPON's recruitment practices (e.g., job postings, talent attraction methods, compensation ranges) and internal policies and procedures (e.g., leave of absence policy, time off policy, accommodation procedure) are developed to promote inclusive, accessible, and anti-racist best practices. Through formal and informal feedback channels (e.g., engagement surveys, candidate feedback, onboarding check-ins, exit interviews) IPON maintains a lens on the state of diversity, equity, and inclusion. IPON has also formalized an accessibility policy and multi-year accessibility plan in accordance with the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#).

Building IPON's employment brand and attracting talent with the skills to successfully serve the client base through scale-up and maturity, as well as alignment with IPON's vision, mission, and values, will continue to be a focus. As IPON matures, retention will also play a key factor in fostering a high performing and motivated team, and continuing to engage the team with motivating work, career growth, and benefits. IPON will invest in leadership development to equip and empower managers with the skills, tools, and

mindset required to scale operations and support, engage, and develop their teams through growth and change.

## 7.2 Organizational Framework

IPON continues to focus on delivering services with a lean and efficient organizational structure. The resourcing plans for 2024-2025 include 35 FTEs, three co-op students, two fractional roles (CFO and General Counsel), and one government secondment.

The plan for the structure in 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 will continue to be refined based on learnings, client demands, and ensuring the agency can continue to deliver the Ministry's mandate. The goal will be to improve the agency's administrative costs year over year.

## 7.3 Financial Budget

|  | 23/24 (Projected)    |            |             | 24/25 (Budget)       |            |             | 25/26 (Budget)       |            |             | 26/27 (Budget)       |            |             |
|--|----------------------|------------|-------------|----------------------|------------|-------------|----------------------|------------|-------------|----------------------|------------|-------------|
|  | \$                   | % Category | % Total     | \$                   | % Category | % Total     | \$                   | % Category | % Total     | \$                   | % Category | % Total     |
| <b>Company Programs and PSE</b>              |                      |            |             |                      |            |             |                      |            |             |                      |            |             |
| PSE  | \$ 3,950,000         | 36%        | 28%         | \$ 5,000,000         | 26%        | 20%         | \$ -                 | 0%         | 0%          | \$ -                 | 0%         | 0%          |
| IP Funding (Grants)                          | \$ 4,828,305         | 44%        | 35%         | \$ 10,750,000        | 56%        | 42%         | \$ 16,900,000        | 83%        | 67%         | \$ 16,900,000        | 83%        | 67%         |
| IP Education                                 | \$ 95,171            | 1%         | 1%          | \$ 150,000           | 1%         | 1%          | \$ 100,000           | 0%         | 0%          | \$ 75,000            | 0%         | 0%          |
| IP Mentorships                               | \$ 32,988            | 0%         | 0%          | \$ 117,500           | 1%         | 0%          | \$ 105,000           | 1%         | 0%          | \$ 105,000           | 1%         | 0%          |
| IP Tools and Supports                        | \$ -                 | 0%         | 0%          | \$ 100,000           | 1%         | 0%          | \$ 100,000           | 0%         | 0%          | \$ 100,000           | 0%         | 0%          |
| IP Tiger Team                                | \$ 94,520            | 1%         | 1%          | \$ 53,760            | 0%         | 0%          | \$ 53,760            | 0%         | 0%          | \$ 53,760            | 0%         | 0%          |
| IP Insurance                                 | \$ -                 | 0%         | 0%          | \$ 150,000           | 1%         | 1%          | \$ 100,000           | 0%         | 0%          | \$ 75,000            | 0%         | 0%          |
| Salaries, Wages and Benefits                 | \$ 2,096,988         | 19%        | 15%         | \$ 2,896,440         | 15%        | 11%         | \$ 2,954,369         | 15%        | 12%         | \$ 3,013,456         | 15%        | 12%         |
| <b>Total Company Programs and PSE</b>        | <b>\$ 11,097,972</b> |            | <b>79%</b>  | <b>\$ 19,217,700</b> |            | <b>76%</b>  | <b>\$ 20,313,129</b> |            | <b>80%</b>  | <b>\$ 20,322,216</b> |            | <b>80%</b>  |
| <b>Ecosystem Development</b>                 |                      |            |             |                      |            |             |                      |            |             |                      |            |             |
| Government IP support (IP Policy, CMPF, etc) | \$ -                 | 0%         | 0%          | \$ 100,000           | 4%         | 0%          | \$ 100,000           | 4%         | 0%          | \$ 100,000           | 4%         | 0%          |
| Marketing and Communications                 | \$ 58,802            | 5%         | 0%          | \$ 791,075           | 33%        | 3%          | \$ 878,093           | 35%        | 3%          | \$ 878,093           | 34%        | 3%          |
| Salaries, Wages and Benefits                 | \$ 1,230,349         | 95%        | 9%          | \$ 1,523,388         | 63%        | 6%          | \$ 1,553,856         | 61%        | 6%          | \$ 1,584,933         | 62%        | 6%          |
| <b>Total Ecosystem Development</b>           | <b>\$ 1,289,151</b>  |            | <b>9%</b>   | <b>\$ 2,414,463</b>  |            | <b>10%</b>  | <b>\$ 2,531,949</b>  |            | <b>10%</b>  | <b>\$ 2,563,026</b>  |            | <b>10%</b>  |
| <b>Corporate Administration and Support</b>  |                      |            |             |                      |            |             |                      |            |             |                      |            |             |
| Technology                                   | \$ -                 | 0%         | 0%          | \$ 1,814,388         | 49%        | 7%          | \$ 613,608           | 25%        | 2%          | \$ 644,288           | 26%        | 3%          |
| Admin  | \$ 387,409           | 25%        | 3%          | \$ 483,801           | 13%        | 2%          | \$ 448,793           | 18%        | 2%          | \$ 354,619           | 14%        | 1%          |
| Board of Directors                           | \$ 308,786           | 20%        | 2%          | \$ 260,000           | 7%         | 1%          | \$ 260,000           | 10%        | 1%          | \$ 260,000           | 11%        | 1%          |
| Salaries, Wages and Benefits                 | \$ 884,482           | 56%        | 6%          | \$ 1,143,648         | 31%        | 5%          | \$ 1,166,521         | 47%        | 5%          | \$ 1,189,851         | 49%        | 5%          |
| <b>Total Corporate Admin and Support</b>     | <b>\$ 1,580,677</b>  |            | <b>11%</b>  | <b>\$ 3,701,837</b>  |            | <b>15%</b>  | <b>\$ 2,488,922</b>  |            | <b>10%</b>  | <b>\$ 2,448,758</b>  |            | <b>10%</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>\$ 13,967,800</b> |            | <b>100%</b> | <b>\$ 25,334,000</b> |            | <b>100%</b> | <b>\$ 25,334,000</b> |            | <b>100%</b> | <b>\$ 25,334,000</b> |            | <b>100%</b> |

Over the next three years, IPON's budget priority will be to increase the amount of funding flowing directly to companies year over year. The approximate 3-year investment of \$3 million in automation will allow the agency to maximize its delivery efficiencies, creating a service delivery solution that will be able to serve more clients with limited increases to overhead costs. Once there is more progress on the PSE Pilot, the agency will work with the Board of Directors and Ministries to develop a recommendation for the future of the program.

## 7.4 Information Technology Plan

IPON has earned a reputation for providing high quality service delivery to its clients. However, to date, IPON's processes have been overly manual inherent in a start-up operation. There is confidence in the current operation to continue to meet the near-term commitments with these manual processes and existing tools. However, to scale its offerings without significant overhead expenses, IPON recognizes the need for more efficient technology-driven solutions.

In response, IPON is undertaking an initiative to implement automation within its service delivery processes. A thorough analysis was completed to identify specific areas where automation will enhance operational efficiency, streamline workflows, and deliver results more promptly. This comprehensive plan involves responsibly investing in technology automation while providing the necessary training for upskilling the team. IPON is committed to striking a balance between automation efficiency and support that can only be achieved by working directly with an experienced third-party provider and is estimating a project launch in Fiscal 2025 – 2026.

The automation project will prioritize the following features:

### Website & Client Portal

An improved, more user-friendly website will provide greater functionality and the ability to efficiently provide updates. The system will be accessed by applicants and clients through a secure client portal. All stakeholders, including the public, will be able to access information and resources from the updated IPON website.

### Client Experience (Intake, Selection, Onboarding, Funding & Case Management)

A significant portion of applicant and client services will be automated, ensuring a more efficient operation and an improved experience. The automation solution will ensure that IPON resources are able to efficiently manage processes from application review to fund payment processing without losing any of the strict discipline applied to all decision making.

### IP Benchmarking

While the benchmarking tool has made significant progress in providing clients with an overview of their IP health and needs, the automation solution will allow an integration of this tool with other technologies ensuring a full assessment of client needs.

### **Service Providers (including Mentors)**

Further automation will be considered through the system allowing service providers to login and complete profiles in the portal. This portal will allow a streamlining of service provider processes including application review, agreement execution and more.

### **Education**

The system will also provide the next evolved stage for education services by delivering a permanent Learning Management System (LMS). The completed solution will deliver:

- Client access to professional introductory and advanced education courses;
- Client access to their education completion status;
- The ability to record and track successful completion of courses or workshops;
- A single sign on (SSO) solution from the portal; and
- Integration with the CRM.

## 8.0 Policy & Research

As per the MCU Minister's 2024-2024 Letter of Direction for IPON, the agency was directed to start provisioning additional advisory services to the Ontario government by developing policy and research papers on issues relating to IP, innovation, and commercialization.

The policy and research work that IPON will start in 2024-2025 will position the agency as a centralized resource of strategic expertise on a broad range of innovation and IP matters for government ministries, agencies and key stakeholders including government funded organizations throughout the province. IPON will remain in discussion with other interprovincial innovation and IP-related funders, as well as federal counterparts, who may contribute or benefit from the final research findings and policy papers.

Key outcomes of policy and research activities will include, but are not limited to:

- Improved understanding of impact of IP support programs on prosperity of Ontario businesses and the province as a whole;
- Increased visibility and understanding of international best practice for related programmatic initiatives and/or policy initiatives;
- Enhanced engagement with government departments on relevant research findings and strategic policy recommendations;
- Continuous refinement and improvement of IPON programs and services;
- Supporting the work of the postsecondary sector joint working group (CMPF).

IPON will refine and expand specific research and policy questions based on demand, capacity, research, and policy significance and in close consultation with relevant Ministries. Policy-related engagement with stakeholders in Ontario's IP ecosystem will be critical for the success of IPON's policy work and to avoid duplicating research efforts within the IP and innovation ecosystem. To maximize the impact of IPON's policy advisory efforts, it is important that IP policy and research efforts are properly resourced and cost efficient. IPON's in-house policy capacity may expand to carry out relevant activities.

## 9.0 Communications Plan

IPON’s communications team operates as a centralized support for program service delivery, internal departments, and all stakeholders to ensure that branding and messaging:

- Are accessible and inclusive;
- Are timely and concise;
- Take a digital-first approach wherever possible;
- Are cost-effective;
- Are client focused and reach target audiences; and
- Support IPON’s mandate.

### Overarching Communications Strategy for 2024-2027:

- Continue to build IPON’s reputation as a collaborative, centralized, and client-centric IP resource within Ontario, leading the way for other interprovincial agencies to follow.
- Position the IPON team as experts on innovation policy, education, commercialization, and IP.
- Support Ministry priorities and deliver IP programs and supports to increase commercialization across the province.
- Provide accessible, inclusive, and client-oriented information to support researchers, SMEs, and entrepreneurs in understanding how IPON services can meet their specific needs.
- Utilize owned media, social media channels, and personalized 1:1 consultation to educate prospective and current clients on why IP is important to protect ideas and commercialize.
- Foster a culture of continuous improvement by seeking and incorporating client, partner, and other stakeholder feedback into our strategies and campaigns to ensure we remain at the forefront of industry needs and expectations.

| <b>Communications priority: Stakeholder engagement and partnerships</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Strategy</b>   | <b>Actions</b>   |
| Government engagement   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure government stakeholders have timely and concise communication and multimedia assets about IPON applications/deadlines to share with their networks.</li> <li>• Meet regularly and be available for advisory role on matters relating to IP and commercialization.</li> </ul> |



|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
|                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on Ministries/agencies that are concentrated on subjects that have IP-related funding or priorities: MEDJCT, MCU, Invest Ontario, Supply Ontario, Ministry of Finance, Treasury Board, OMAFRA, Ontario Digital Services, Data Authority, etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Performance measurement:</b> Engagement from Ministries and MPPs disseminating IPON communications; advisory meetings initiated by government or agencies; integration of IPON advice into programs or policies.</p>  |
| Partnership engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to engage in strategic partnerships to build IPON's reputation and amplify communications on activities such as launches and events.</li> <li>Participate in at least 20 partner events (webinars, conferences, panel presentations, etc.) throughout the year.</li> <li>Host annual in-person IP and Data Summit bringing together sought-after thought leaders from Canada and beyond.</li> <li>Leverage partnerships for launch activities such as research reports or service offerings to reach a greater audience and reduce marketing.</li> <li>Promote partnerships on social media and website.</li> </ul> <p><b>Performance measurement:</b> Number of MOUs signed, number of partnership events IPON participates in; number of attendees to Summit event; number of partners involved in priority sector intakes and/or launches.</p>   |
| Client engagement      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct client survey to identify improvement opportunities and adapt communication strategies to client preferences.</li> <li>Create key messages for IPON, including client-centric communication demonstrating IPON's unique offerings.</li> <li>Establish a designated IPON Hub Slack channel for real-time communication and community building among IPON clients and supporters, such as staff, mentors and service providers.</li> <li>Implement strategic client communications plan in collaboration with the program team to help streamline client communication creation, design, and delivery.</li> <li>Explore alternative communication channels, such as SMS for urgent updates or reminders, based on client feedback and preferences.</li> <li>Organize client-exclusive events, including networking opportunities, to foster a IP community and provide additional connections and support.</li> </ul> <p><b>Performance measurement:</b> Implementation of feedback from client survey as appropriate; creation and implementation of key messages; activity and engagement levels in Slack; open and engagement rates of client communications; post-event feedback via survey results.</p> |
| PSE engagement         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add information on how we work with and support Ontario PSE institutions on ip-ontario.ca.</li> <li>Host event(s) to showcase IPON-funded PSE innovation initiatives.</li> <li>Capture and share testimonials and success stories from PSE innovators.</li> <li>Collaborate on relevant event participation as appropriate.</li> <li>Consider additional avenues to engage with and support Ontario PSE clients as needed.</li> </ul>  |

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|  | <p><b>Performance measurement:</b> Adding information on IPON's PSE support on ip-ontario.ca and its associated analytics; completion of innovation showcase event(s), feedback from post-event surveys; number of testimonials and success stories shared and their associated analytics; number of PSE clients participating in identified events; volume of other support provided.</p> |
|--|--|

| Communications priority: Differentiate IPON from other IP programs & position agency as centralized IP resource |   |
|---|---|
| Strategy  | Actions   |
| Content strategy  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop clear communications for prospective and current clients in the form of videos, webinars, FAQs, blog posts, and multimedia content that articulates how IPON is different from other IP programs in Canada and/or integrates with other IP funders.</li> <li>• Continuously monitor public and client sentiment towards IP programs to adjust communications as needed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Performance measurement:</b> Website traffic, downloads, and social media engagement on differentiation content; measurement of positivity; decreased number of questions for IPON employees on how the agency differs.</p> |
| Ecosystem strategy  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with other IP funders and federal/interprovincial counterparts to cross-promote services, sharing and streamlining resources wherever possible.</li> <li>• Attend and host interprovincial roundtables and meet 1:1 with leaders of agencies and other IP funding programs.</li> <li>• Establish MOUs with ecosystem partners to share best practices, resources, and metrics.</li> </ul> <p><b>Performance measurement:</b> IPON services cross-promoted from other programs, number of MOUs established, number of interprovincial/federal engagement meetings or consultations.</p>                                  |

| Communications priority: Position IPON as thought leader on IP and commercialization |  |
|--|--|
| Strategy   | Actions  |
| Industry strategy  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide accessible and inclusive information to support researchers, SMEs, and entrepreneurs accessing IPON resources and applications.</li> <li>• Educate stakeholders, via owned media and social media channels, on why IP and commercialization are important.</li> <li>• Work with strong industry partners to plan and execute virtual and in-person events to disseminate knowledge and publicize the agency.</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p><b>Performance measurement:</b> Number of IPON applications, number of events (virtual and in-person) that IPON leads; number of attendees for IPON events; number of speaking engagements.</p> |

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| Media strategy  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position IPON as experts and a go-to resource on innovation policy, commercialization, and intellectual property through media interviews and placement of op-eds.</li> <li>• Support Ministry priorities and publicize IP programs and supports to increase commercialization and IP awareness.</li> </ul> <p><b>Performance measurement:</b> Number of interview requests from top-tier outlets; number of op-eds placed in top-tier outlets; media sentiment; government media references.</p>  |
| Client strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curate and disseminate thought leadership content tailored to clients, highlighting IPON's expertise in IP and commercialization.</li> <li>• Organize exclusive client events led by IPON experts and industry thought leaders to delve into advanced IP strategies, innovation trends, and commercialization best practices.</li> <li>• Foster a collaborative environment for knowledge exchange through the IPON Hub on Slack.</li> <li>• Develop content showcasing successful IP journeys facilitated by IPON, demonstrating the tangible impact of effective IP management and commercialization strategies.</li> <li>• Engage clients in co-creating content, such as social media posts, blogs, videos or other projects, to highlight diverse perspectives and experiences within the IP ecosystem.</li> <li>• Include clients in IPON-hosted events as appropriate.</li> <li>• Provide clients with exclusive early access to IPON publications as appropriate.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities for clients to speak at or participate in industry events.</li> </ul> <p><b>Performance measurement:</b> Track engagement metrics for thought leadership content; conduct post-event surveys, evaluate attendance and participation levels at events; track engagement in Slack; number of successful IP journeys featured in IPON communications; volume of content created in collaboration with clients; number of IPON clients at IPON-hosted events; number of advance publications shared with clients; number of events clients speak at or participate in as an IPON client.</p> |

## 10.0 Risk Management

IPON recognizes the critical importance of robust risk management practices in achieving its objectives and ensuring sound governance. As a newly established provincial agency, IPON is committed to effective risk management as an integral part of its strategic and business planning process.

The phased approach of the agency’s operationalization was designed to mitigate and minimize program risks for the new agency. For IPON, risk management is a continuous and proactive process that remains essential to internal controls, and further reinforces the agency’s commitment to accountability and transparency. The establishment of a robust enterprise risk management (ERM) framework underscores IPON’s dedication to effective governance, strategic decision-making, and responsible use of resources.

In fiscal year 2023-2024, IPON’s Board of Directors directed the development of an ERM framework to foster a culture of risk-aware decision making. IPON has undertaken a comprehensive approach to develop its ERM framework, engaging in extensive internal consultations with staff, leadership, and Board of Directors. This collaborative effort has resulted in the identification of a comprehensive risk registry encompassing over 100 risks pertinent to the agency’s operation, ensuring a holistic understanding of potential challenges and opportunities. Within the expansive registry, the following risks have been prioritized for active monitoring and mitigation through tailored strategies:

| <b>Risk Definition</b>  | <b>Likelihood</b> | <b>Impact</b> | <b>Mitigation</b>   |
|---|-------------------|---------------|---|
| <b>Market Confusion</b><br>Availability of multiple IP service and funding programs both provincially and federally causing confusion in the ecosystem. | High              | High          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build and execute on a strong marketing and awareness strategy to address/minimize market confusion.</li> <li>• Continue building strong partnerships with other IP stakeholders from MOU mechanisms.</li> <li>• Continue building IPON's reputation and role as a central IP resource, thought leader and coordinator of IP supports and programming in Ontario.</li> <li>• Maintain, update and promote IPON's IP Ecosystem Map (and any derivative products) to Ontario innovation community and SMEs.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Stakeholder Uncertainty</b><br>IPON not clear in the services and programs that it provides, causing misconceptions among                            | Medium            | High          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure clear, plain language description of services on IPON's website.</li> </ul>   |

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| clients or the general public (i.e., risk stems from lack of clarity regarding IPON's intended functions and operational scope).   |        |        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive communications and outreach to existing and prospective clients to clarify questions or uncertainty about type of IP supports provided by IPON.</li> <li>• Continue focusing on CRM and self-guided services for the clients.</li> <li>• Continue building partnership relationships and ensuring the RICS and other key stakeholders know what services we offer, how we can help them, where there is overlap etc.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Cyber Security, Privacy &amp; Confidentiality Breach by Internal or External Threat</b><br>Similar to other government entities, there is a growing risk of cyber-attacks which could result in inappropriate access to confidential and commercially sensitive information of the agency and its clients. Threat to IPON's operations and client confidentiality if a former or disgruntled employee releases information that could compromise sensitive data that could lead to reputational damage and potential legal ramifications. | Medium | High   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue relying on government IT infrastructure to protect against cyber-security threats and pursue independent cyber insurance for the agency.</li> <li>• Embed cybersecurity assessment, processes, and considerations into all IT products.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Business Disruption &amp; Continuity</b><br>Lack of proper infrastructure to support business activities as a result of a start-up environment and the time required to build digital resources to improve operational efficiency.  | Medium | High   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement CRM and LMS solutions in accordance with digital first principles.</li> <li>• Continue relying on government IT infrastructure and services as required.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>High Interest from IP Ecosystem &amp; Service Demand</b><br>Ability to keep pace with client demand due to internal capacity and manual operations, as well as work with the right client groups requiring IPON's programs and services.  | Medium | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a strong referral mechanism and strong partnerships to re-direct overflow of clients to other partners and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Proactively monitor uptake and demand for IPON services to initiate timely discussions with the Ministry on additional funding, if required.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Scale-Up Limitations</b><br>Inability for IPON to work with partners across every sector may result in some key partners or clients missing from scale-up   | Medium | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with government to add additional sectors deemed priority by IPON.</li> </ul>  |

|   |               |               |  |
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| <p>plans (e.g., Northern Ontario, TTOs). Limitations are a result of regulation, staffing resources, maintaining relationships at the federal and provincial level, etc.</p>  |               |               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with intermediaries (e.g., RICs) in those regions to attract new clients in those sectors.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Competitiveness of IPON Services</b><br/>Existing services and funding may not be as competitive with other market competitors (e.g., Elevate IP is serving all sectors and has up to \$100k in funding, meaning clients would have to contribute less of their own funding).</p> | <p>Medium</p> | <p>Medium</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main mitigation response will be focused on further investment in IPON's strength and specific comparative advantages (e.g. education, IP intelligence, benchmarking, etc.) while avoiding duplication of services (or targeting sectors) well served by other IP players.</li> <li>• Constantly review the quality of existing services and develop recommendations on adding new supports reflective on increasing IP sophistication (e.g. patent pools, IP valuation, etc.).</li> <li>• Continue developing existing and new partnerships so that IPON is aware and proactive with regards to IP supports provided by other stakeholders.</li> </ul> |

## 11.0 Initiatives Involving Stakeholders & Partners

In 2023, IPON successfully formalized agreements with key partners, including the signing of 5 MOUs: Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED), Innovation Factory, TechAlliance, VentureLab and Ontario Centre of Innovation. A key initiative for 2024-2027 will be to continue prioritizing these critical relationships.

Some partnership focuses will include:

- Coordinating ecosystem resources to best serve clients and improve IP capacity overall;
- Delivering on current partnerships (MOUs/written agreements) in identified collaboration areas;
- Continuing working closely with RICs and other Business Accelerators and Incubators (BAIs) and identifying mutually beneficial collaboration areas e.g. referral process, co-development of events, IP education and awareness
- Establishing new government partnerships to ensure alignment on IP priorities and measurement while aiming to protect and maximize the value of home-grown innovations;
- Expanding reach to IP ecosystem, prioritizing collaborations in key underrepresented areas;
- Formalizing and communicating partnerships;
- Participating in SME-related events organized by partners;
- Attending tech and IP-related events across Ontario to raise awareness of IPON services and establish new partnerships; and
- Meeting with key partners and strengthening relationships.

IPON will also work closely with the RICs and MEDJCT to develop metrics needed to assess IP outcomes and contribute to the development of an annual report on RIC client IP performance.

### Post-Secondary Partners

In early 2023, IPON launched the first Call for Proposals for Ontario's colleges and universities to augment their IP knowledge and in-house capacity. This first Call was targeted predominantly at institutions that did not have access to any internal or nearby

IP capability. 23 proposals were received, and seven applicants were funded totaling \$2.0 million.

Early successes suggest that more positive outcomes are achievable by expanding both IPON's reach and its expectations of its program partners. As such, IPON is expanding the impact of its mandate across the PSE sector and pursuing additional opportunities to support the PSE sector.

With Ministry support and utilizing the \$1.9 million earmarked from the 2023-2024 budget, IPON invited a second Call for Proposals from colleges and universities in the province of Ontario that had not previously received IPON funding. Given the first Call's early success, IPON recognizes that a material partnership with Ontario's full network of PSE-based commercialization centers is likely to unlock significant economic benefits.

IPON's 2024-2025 PSE sector support strategy consists of three key initiatives:

- **Post-Secondary Education Commercialization Support Program:** Continuing with this expanded pilot supports colleges and universities with funding to augment and expand services and programs related to IP development and commercialization and establish sustainability plans.
- **Annual Commercialization Plan Reporting:** This consists of the review of the university and college Annual Commercialization Plan submissions and developing a report with analysis.
- **Joint Working Group:** This supports the creation of commercialization and IP development metrics for colleges and universities. The working group is on track to deliver a set of proposed metrics in March 2024 that is intended to provide a basis for future ACP reports.

These initiatives are designed to: 1) position IPON and the Government of Ontario as “a high-value partner for the PSE sector,” and 2) support “increased capacity within the ecosystem” by instilling operational excellence in programmatic support.

## PSE Outcomes

### Increased IP Capacity:

- Colleges offering new service with hiring of IP experts;
- Boosting university model for pro bono services and disclosures at an inventor-owned institution; and
- Increased staff training.



**Increased IP development:**

- Direct support of legal services;
- Networking/collaboration/partnership awareness; and
- Best practice development and dissemination.

**Relationship building between IPON and the PSE sector:**

- Building goodwill by responding to their needs, requests;
- Open channel for referrals; and
- Increased understanding of IPON offerings.

In summary, IPON has an exceptional opportunity to build upon its early success and materially extend its brand, reach, and influence in the PSE sector through this expanded set of initiatives. As important, IPON will be in a better-informed position to confidently recommend strategies and programs that ensure the sustainability of Ontario's IP strategy among researchers and early-stage entrants both now and in the future.