

Spotlight on Innovate Calgary: Green Tech Mentors Global Accelerator Collaboration Turbo-Charging the Cleantech Sector in Alberta



Connie Raddatz

Director, Innovate Calgary

The acceleration of clean technologies required to meet Canada's GHG-reduction goals is a long, arduous process. Cleantech start-ups often struggle to achieve the magical combination of a clever technology, a strong management team, willing customers, and a deployable product, all readily financed.

Alberta's innovation ecosystem leaders recognize that the value of global contributions such as human capital, investment, and market connections could fill certain gaps to fast-track start-ups and the cleantech sector. Innovate Calgary, supported by Alberta's Ministry of Economic Development and Trade developed Green Tech Mentors (GT Mentors), a program connecting Alberta-based start-ups to global talent, markets, and investment accessed through a global accelerator network.

GT Mentors leverages its global accelerator network to support Alberta-based start-ups in some of the following ways:

- **Leverage human capital and expertise.** GT Mentors sources and matches missing expertise (mentors, advisors, executives) for start-ups through its global accelerator network. One of our recent clients was connected with a potential advisor in the Pacific Northwest to further develop the client's strategic reach into the United States.
- **Access to new markets and broadening opportunities.** Early access to new markets can be difficult to achieve, yet critical to identifying the best market opportunity. GT Mentors connected two companies to customers, funding opportunities, and mentors in their path towards exports through leveraging our relationship with the Canadian Technology Accelerator programs in France and Denver.
- **The introduction of solutions into Alberta.** The technologies required to achieve Alberta's GHG-reduction targets may not be locally available. Through GT Mentors' global accelerator network, clean technologies are sourced for local funding calls to significantly increase the pool of high-quality solutions. The New Energy Nexus is an early facilitator of global collaboration amongst accelerators and Innovate Calgary is an early member.
- **Financing options.** Global accelerators could provide GT Mentors' start-up clients an access point for private capital through specialized high-net-worth/ family offices, angel networks, and alternative cleantech funding mechanisms to support long development cycles.

While in its early days, GT Mentors and its international networks are part of a broadened trend toward collaboration to provide solutions, support the reduction of GHG's, and stimulate economic growth. Connecting cleantech start-ups to global market opportunities, human capital, and funding has only just begun.