

Sandbox Centre Fiscal Year-in-Review

(FY 2024-25 Q4)

Key Highlights:

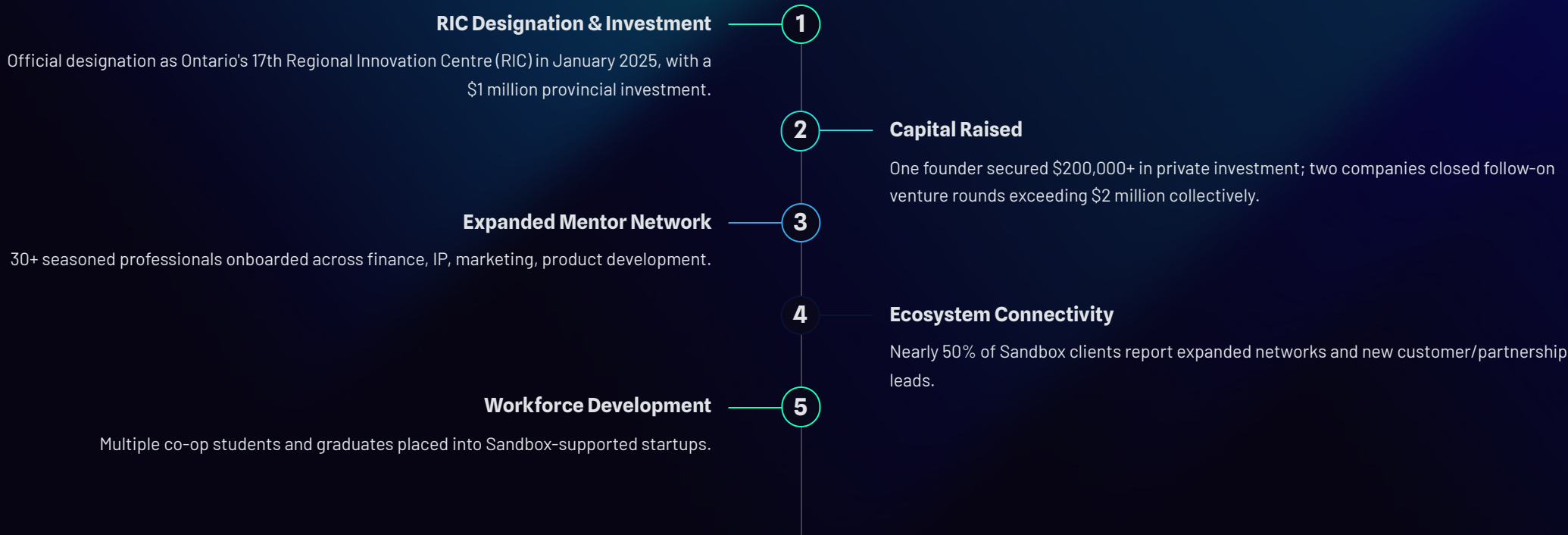
- Ontario's 17th Regional Innovation Centre
- \$3.3M+ Capital Raised by Founders
- 30+ New Mentors Added
- 50% Client Ecosystem Connectivity



**Sandbox Centre: Powering Barrie's Entrepreneurs, Growing
Ontario's Innovation Economy.**

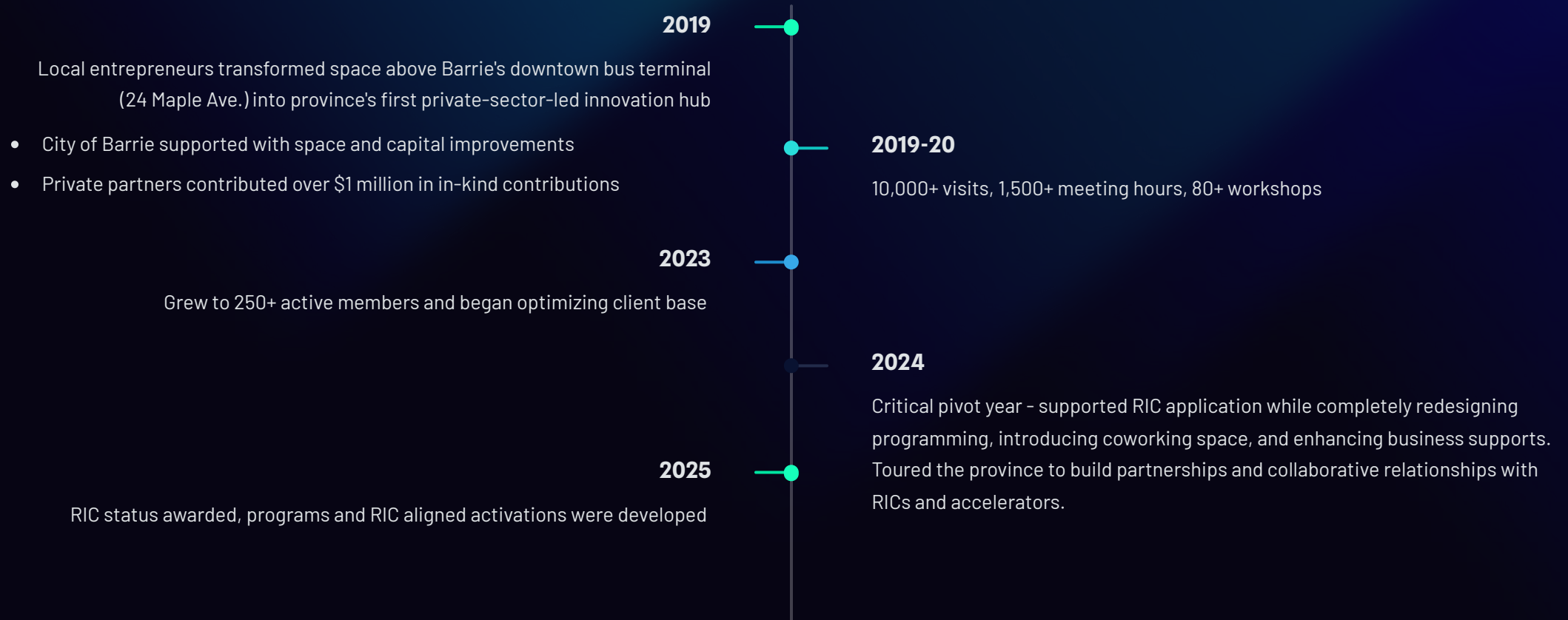
Executive Summary: Transformational Year

In January 2025, Sandbox Centre was officially designated as Ontario's 17th Regional Innovation Centre (RIC), accompanied by a \$1 million provincial investment.



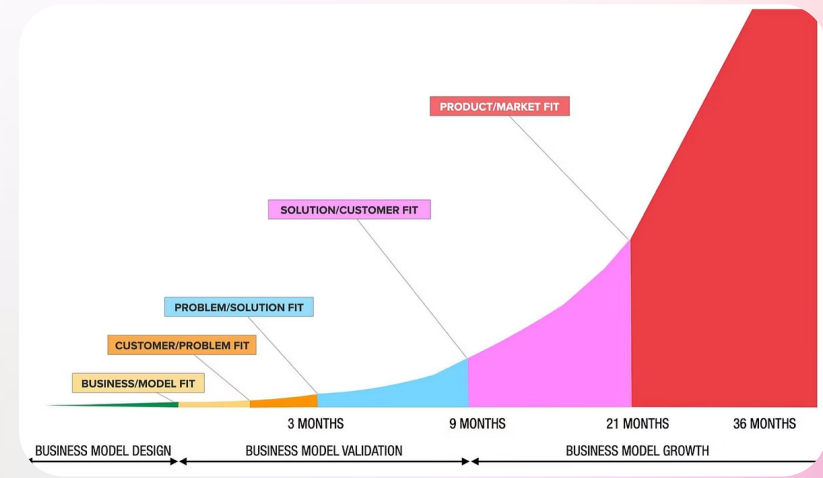
From Grassroots to Provincial Recognition

The Journey:



The Gap We Filled:

- Barrie and Simcoe County were previously excluded from the provincially funded RIC network
- The nearest RICs were located 90+ km away in Markham and 250+ km away in North Bay
- This left regional entrepreneurs at a significant disadvantage when accessing the highest levels of innovation support



What Regional Innovation Centres Do

RICs act as catalysts for innovation in their communities – a one-stop access point linking:

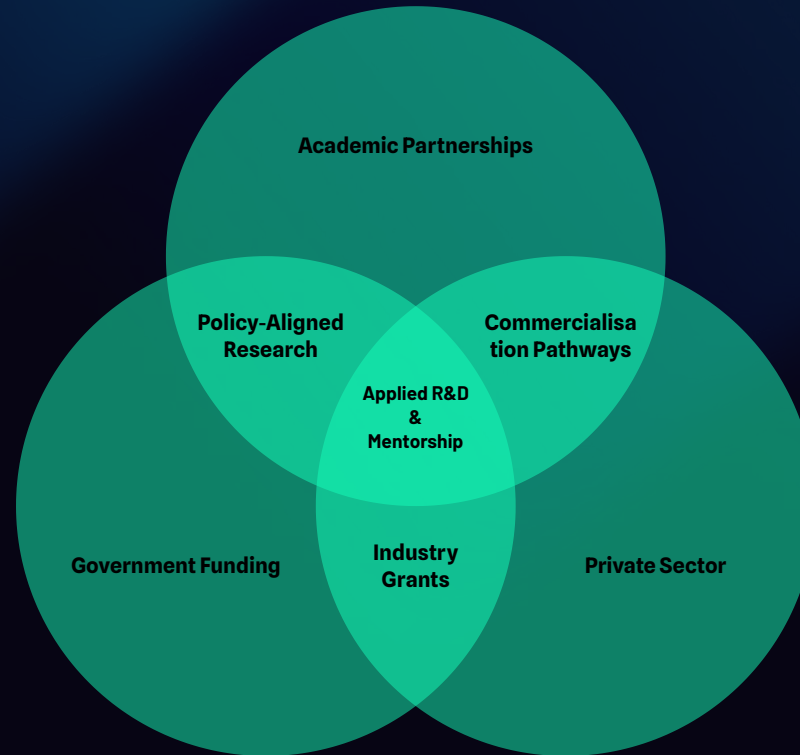
- Academic research through partnership
- Industry expertise
- Government support
- Capital networks

Core Services:

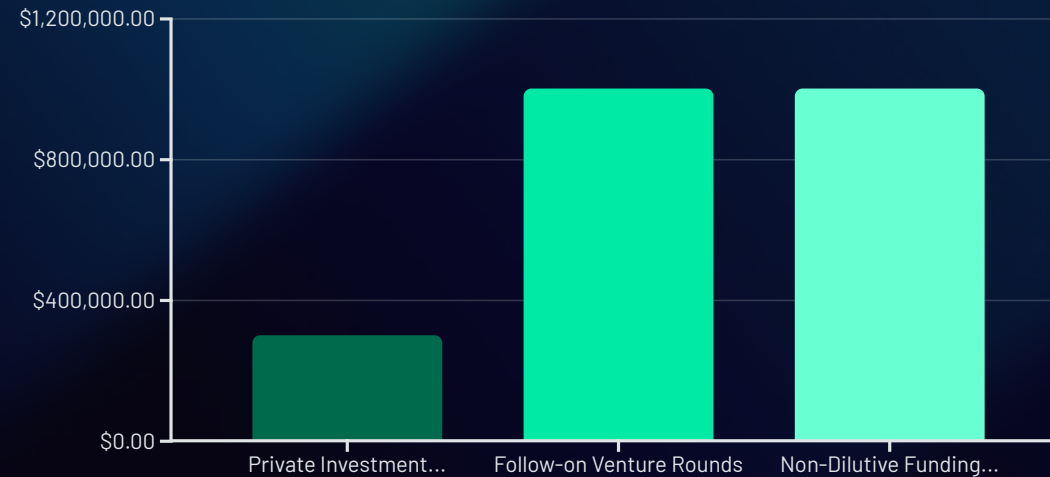
- Expert advice and mentorship
- Specialized training and workshops
- Market intelligence and customer development support
- Connections to funding (grants, investors) and corporate partners

The Triple-Helix Model:

Government funding + Academic partnerships + Private-sector involvement = Applied R&D, mentorship, and community-driven growth



Financial Impact & Capital Raised



Sandbox Centre clients demonstrated significant fundraising success in Q4 FY 2024-25, securing over \$3.3 million in various forms of capital.

Q4 FY 2024-25 Funding Success:

- \$200,000+ secured by one founder in private investment
- \$1 Million+ in follow-on venture rounds (two companies)
- Over \$1 Million in non-dilutive funding (grants) assisted in 2024
- Average annual revenue of member companies: \$2.4 million

Info **No-Equity Model:** SBX programs take no equity - founders retain full ownership

Expanded Programming & Services (FY 2024-25)

New Accelerator Programs:

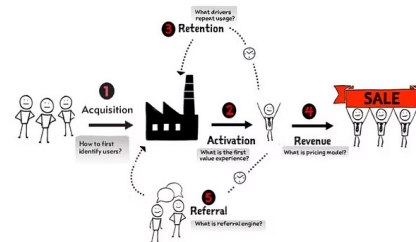
- Scale-Up Accelerator: Cohort-based program using Leanstack framework
- Female Founder Accelerator & Investment Readiness Bootcamp
- Commercialization Accelerator , for globally scaling companies
- NOVA (Newcomer Venture Accelerator): Follow-on support for scaling
- Good to Grow: Strategic growth and investment planning
- HaloHealth Physician Advisory Program: Health-tech startup support

Enhanced Community Building:

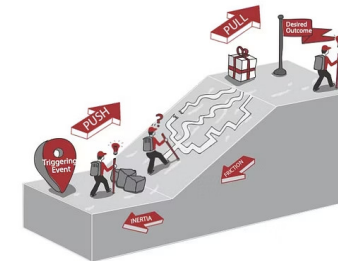
- Peer Circles program (Women in Business, Operations Managers, Marketing Professionals)
- Founders & Leaders Morning Meetup
- CO:LLAB Coffee Club
- On-demand training library
- Podcast studio for members



LEAN CANVAS
Deconstruct your business model



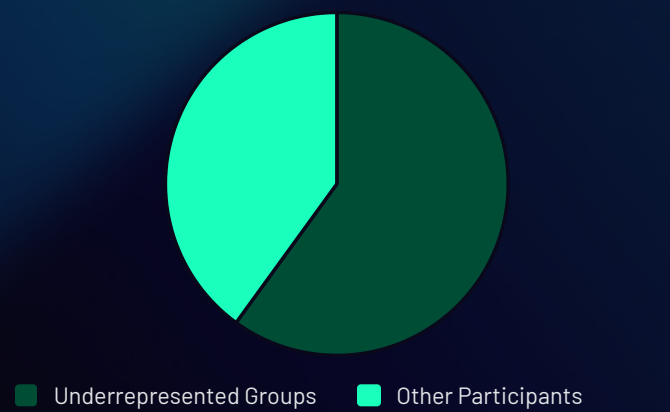
CUSTOMER FACTORY
Make happy customers



CUSTOMER FORCES
Understand customer behavior

Diversity & Inclusion Impact

In Q4, Sandbox Centre made significant strides in fostering an inclusive environment, reflected in our participation demographics and tailored programs.



This represents a notable increase in diversity compared to historical baselines. Within the underrepresented groups, we observed:

- Women entrepreneurs: ~40% of program participants
- Newcomers (immigrants/new Canadians): ~15% , however increase in private membership percentage
- BIPOC entrepreneurs: ~10%

Programs Driving Inclusion:

Female Founder Accelerator, Female Investment Readiness Course	New Roots, New Routes and NOVA Accelerator (Newcomer program)
Early Stage Business Accelerator and Round Tables	TARA Talks conference series

Ecosystem Engagement & Activity

Q4 Activity Metrics:

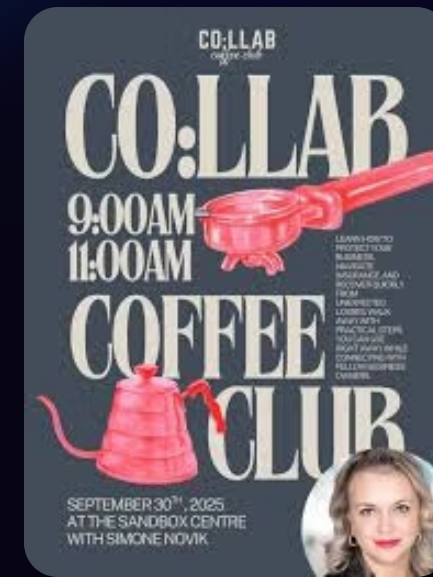
- 38+ activations hosted (workshops, peer circles, networking events, conferences)
- 700+ participant-visits recorded
- 30% increase in foot traffic for RIC programming (despite construction challenges)

Major Events:

- TARA Talks 4.0: 120 attendees (largest turnout yet)
- TARA Talks on Tour - Orillia expansion
- Founders' Roundtable events
- Scale-Up Cohort programming

Network Impact:

- Nearly 50% of clients gained new customer leads, investor contacts, or partnerships through Sandbox
- Increased referrals from local organizations (SBEC, members, ecosystem partners)
- Supporting founders in attending conferences and critical showcases



Academic Partnerships & IP Commercialization

Lakehead University

STEM Campus co-location (opening 2026)

Georgian College

Henry Bernick Entrepreneurship Centre collaboration

Student Placements

Multiple high school co-op placements and internships facilitated

IP & Commercialization Support:

- IP development and commercialization support through Georgian College partnership
- Projected expanded support through upcoming Lakehead University collaboration
- Technology transfer and patent application assistance
- Commercialization pathway guidance for research-based startups

Academic Collaboration Benefits:

- **Grant Multipliers:** Co-developed proposals with post-secondaries win larger NSERC, Mitacs, and provincial grants.
- **Commercialization Pathways:** Faculty expertise and applied research projects accelerate startup product validation.
- **Regional Credibility:** Partnerships with colleges & universities strengthen RIC outcomes and attract private investors.
- **Mutual Impact:** RICs deliver commercialization metrics; post-secondaries expand applied research and student success.

Future:

Lakehead STEM Hub will create unique co-location model – RIC within same facility as university and HBEC/ Georgian College

Facility & Infrastructure Challenges

Addressing our current facility and infrastructure needs is crucial for supporting our ongoing growth and planned academic partnerships. Several key considerations impact our operational environment and future planning.

Lease Considerations:

- The existing lease terms, established prior to our RIC status, create complexities in financial forecasting and provincial budget submissions due to their misalignment with our new operational fiscal year.
- We are proposing a strategic alignment of our lease agreements with the provincial three-year funding cycles to enhance financial stability and streamline planning.
- Seeking proactive mitigation strategies to minimize potential operational disruptions and maintain service continuity during periods of adjacent construction.

Looking Ahead: FY 2025-26 Strategic Priorities

Regional Expansion:

- Virtual Cohorts and Programs to support founders across our region.
- TARA Talks on Tour - Muskoka Edition (September 2025)

New Opportunities:

- Dual Use -Defence Technology Accelerator (pending TICP or Fed Dev funding approval)
- Continue to build partnership with Georgian, and potential for new partnership with Lakehead.
- Potential for several million in additional funding

Program Scaling:

- Commercialization Accelerator cohort which includes Global Leaders (Fall 2025)
- Female Founder Accelerator twice yearly
- NOVA newcomer scale-up program launch
- Scale up Cohort January 2026
- Community Business Accelerator Programs

Ambitious Targets for Next Year:

100+

Startups Supported

Distinct companies receiving our
assistance

\$5M+

Capital Raised

Funds secured by client companies

100+

New Jobs Created

Facilitated through our programs

Conclusion: Strong Return on Investment

Municipal Investment Impact:

- City's initial support and ongoing partnership enabled provincial RIC designation
- \$25,000 proposal development investment, in conjunction with Sandbox investment of 60k+ supported our successful RFP
- Below-market lease arrangement helped us sustain while privately funded, and with current program and RIC costs, has helped support \$3.2M+ in capital raised by local companies with projection of growth for economic growth in our region

Economic Development Outcomes:

- Barrie positioned as innovation hub with anticipated potential to strengthen relationship with our northern RIC partners
- Local talent retention and attraction
- High-growth companies choosing to scale locally rather than relocate
- Regional ecosystem connectivity strengthening Central Ontario, with new partnerships in Toronto

Key Success Metrics:

250+

Active Members

Distinct individuals engaged

\$3.3M+

Capital Raised

By client companies in Q4 alone

60%+

Participation

From underrepresented groups

50%

Clients Gained

New business connections

Next Steps: Continue building on momentum with expanded programming, regional outreach, and strategic partnerships

Thank you for your continued support of innovation in Barrie