



COMPETITOR'S GUIDE

Essential information for startup competition participants

JANUARY 22, 2027



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WHAT IS **APEX**?

For 25 years, the **BMO Apex Startup Challenge** has attracted more than 1,200 student entrepreneurs from across Canada to compete in **the largest competition of its kind in Atlantic Canada**. Participants present to a panel of judges, accomplished in the fields of venture investing and entrepreneurship.

Over \$35,000 in non-dilutive funding is available to be won!

The experience extends beyond competitive events, where students and entrepreneurs will engage **networking opportunities with judges, potential investors, future employers, and sponsors**.



The BMO Apex Startup Challenge is organized by the International Business & Entrepreneurship Centre in the Faculty of Management at the University of New Brunswick.





KEY DATES

November 15, 2026	Early Bird Application Deadline (draw for \$250)
December 1, 2026	Application Deadline
December 10, 2026	Final Selections Announced
December 15, 2026	Teams Commit to Attend
January 7, 2027	Virtual Orientation to Apex (1 Hour)
January 15, 2027	Deadline to submit revised executive summary and/or financials (optional)
January 22, 2027	BMO Apex Startup Challenge at UNB Fredericton!

ELIGIBILITY – **STARTUP TYPE**

The BMO Apex Startup Challenge is for new, independent ventures in the pre-seed stage run by students.



Must be a student startup



Startups need not be incorporated



Funding Raised: Less than \$500,000



Revenue: Less than \$250,000



Company Age: Less than 3 years



ELIGIBILITY – TEAM COMPOSITION

- Teams can have one to five members
- Team members may be enrolled in any degree program or discipline
- Teams can be mix of undergraduate and graduate students
- All members must be full or part-time students or recent graduates (graduated after May 1, 2026).
- Teams may be comprised of students from different post-secondary institutions.
- Team members must have personally prepared the presentation, pitch, and any other deliverables.
- At least one member must attend Apex in person for the entirety of the event.



FACULTY ADVISORS



- Teams are encouraged to have a faculty advisor(s), but this is not required.
- Advisors may attend the competition, participate in all events, and sit in on team presentations.
- They may also assist their teams throughout the entirety of the competition.
- Faculty advisors can come in person, or connect with their teams virtually during the event.
- Advisors may be a faculty member or university staff.

DELIVERABLES: **WHAT TO SUBMIT**

Each team is required to prepare 3 deliverables:

- 1 Pitch Deck
- 2 1-page executive summary
- 3 1-page financial projection

1 **PITCH DECK: SUGGESTED OUTLINE**

1. **Title Slide**
2. **Problem:** Key pain point we're solving
3. **Solution:** Our product/service and why it solves this problem
4. **Market:** Size of the opportunity, target market
5. **Competition:** Why we're better
6. **Traction:** Progress so far, sales, milestones met
7. **Team:** Who and why we can execute
8. **Ask:** How we'll use the Apex cash award
9. **Contact:** How to reach us (email, website, LinkedIn)

A good guide for your Pitch Deck: [Sequoia Pitch Deck](#) and this from [Dave McClure](#).



1 **PITCH DECK: DELIVERY**

5-minute slide presentation (5-8 slides) + 7-minute Q&A with judges

- Your final slide deck must be saved in **PDF format on a USB thumb drive**. You will provide the thumb drive to the organizers just before your presentation.
- Presentations will be made on laptops/projectors provided by Apex. A remote control will be provided to advance the slides.
- You are welcome to bring hand-held demonstration items, e.g. a prototype. **Videos NOT allowed.**
- Speaking time may be divided in any way the team chooses. Not all members have to present.
- Teams may change the speakers and order as they progress through the competition.
- Presentations and Q&A will be hard stopped with a countdown timer.
- Judges will score all teams and select winners to go on to the next stage.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- No more than one page (if additional pages are submitted, only the first page will be reviewed by the selection committee and provided to judges)
- Submitted in PDF format
- Half inch margins for printing
- Executive summaries marked confidential cannot be considered!
- The format of the executive summary is flexible, but it must not be more than one page.

Examples to prepare your executive summary: [Syracuse University](#), [Medium](#), and [Rice University](#).



3 FINANCIALS

- No more than one page (if additional pages are submitted, only the first page will be reviewed by the selection committee and provided to judges);
- For a three-year period (annually or monthly);
- Submitted in PDF format
- Half inch margins for printing
- Any format that best demonstrates your venture's financial potential is acceptable. We strongly recommend a simple cash-in/cash-out statement.

A great example is from Concrete Ventures [here](#) and [here](#).



APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications are made online through the portal at <https://apexchallenge.ca>. One member of your team will be selected as the main contact throughout the event. This team member should complete the online application by:

1. Reading the Apex **Competitor's Guide**
2. Completing the **Application Questions**
3. Uploading your **Pitch Deck, Executive Summary**, and **Financials** (all in PDF format).

There are no fees to apply or to compete. However, teams must cover their own travel costs to attend. For travel support, please refer to the **Appendix: Travel Support**.

& DEADLINES

November 15, 2026

11:59 PM Atlantic Time

**Early Bird Application
Deadline**

All teams submitting their application by the Early Bird deadline will be entered into a draw to win one \$250 prize!

December 1, 2026

11:59 PM Atlantic Time

**General Application
Deadline**

UPDATING YOUR APPLICATION

- **Application:** December 1 (or November 15 Early Bird):

1. Pitch Deck
2. Executive Summary
3. Financials

- Selected teams may update the executive summary and financials you submitted with your application.

Revised documents must be emailed to ibec@unb.ca by January 15, 2027.

- You may update your pitch deck up to and during Apex - we encourage editing based on feedback from judges and your advisors. **Bring the pitch deck you are going to present to Apex!**



SELECTION PROCESS



- Entry into the Apex Startup Challenge is competitive.
- **10 teams** will be selected from all applications to compete at Apex in January.
- **We expect over 150 applications!**
- All applications will go through a screening process where screeners will review and rate the application on a **set of 5 criteria**:
 1. **Product or Service Description**: Is the company solving a real customer need?
 2. **Market Analysis**: Is there a real market for their offering? Is the market sizable?
 3. **Competitive Analysis**: Does this startup have a unique product with a sizable or sustainable competitive advantage over current offerings? If applicable, does the company have IP (patents, etc.)?
 4. **Traction**: Has the company made progress or demonstrated customer validation?
 5. **Team**: Does the founding team appear well-suited to launch this company? Do they have advisors?

★ CONFIRMATION TO COMPETE

DECEMBER 10, 2026

Teams selected to compete in the 2027 BMO Apex Startup Challenge will be contacted by email on **December 10, 2026**, with an invitation to compete at Apex in January. A small number of Teams will be placed on a waitlist and could be invited to participate in January.

DECEMBER 15, 2026

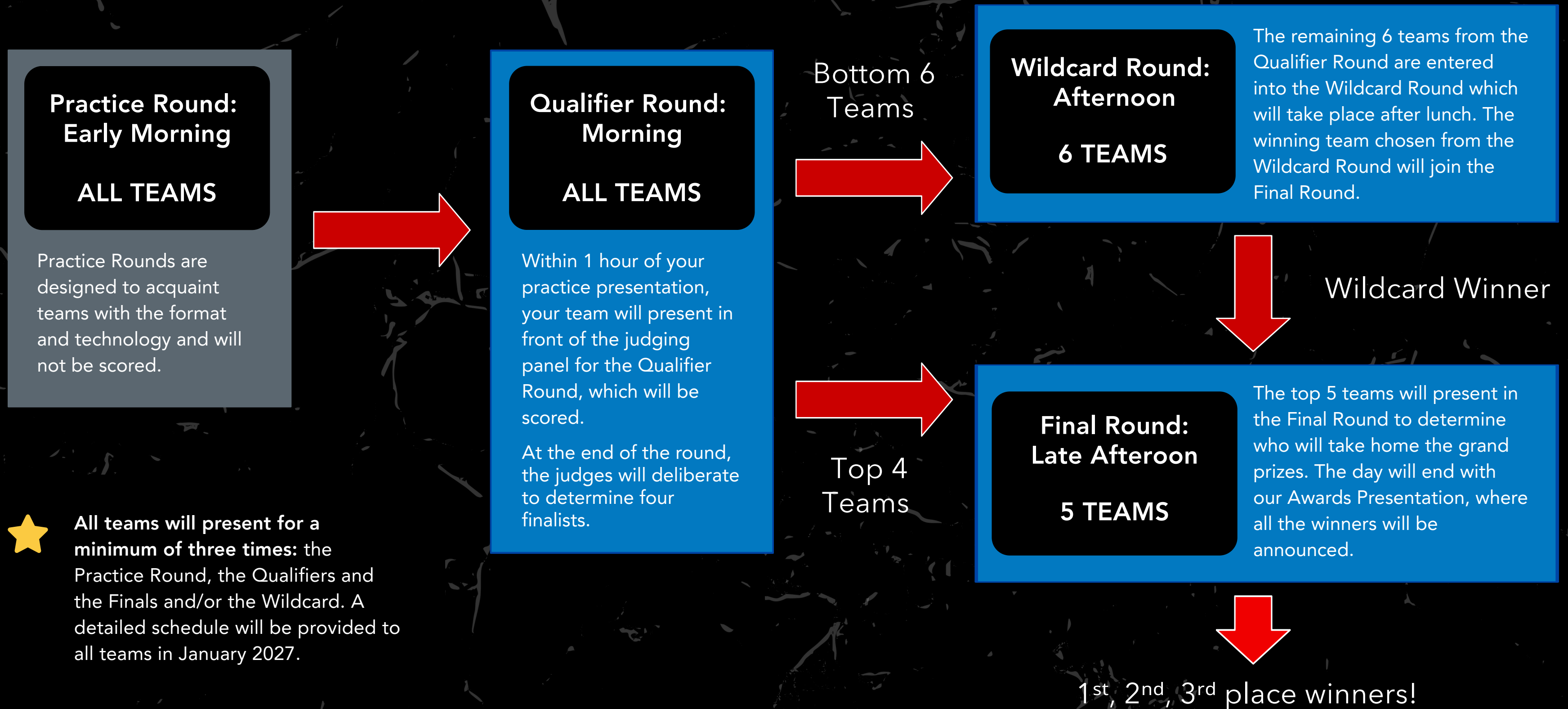
Teams invited to compete will have until **December 15, 2026, at 11:59 PM AT to confirm their participation.** Teams that do not confirm by this day and time will forfeit their invitation, and the invitation will be provided to another Team.

WHEN YOUR TEAM IS CONTEMPLATING ATTENDANCE, PLEASE CONSIDER:

- **Will your team be able to attend the whole competition, from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM on January 22?** At least one team member must attend Apex in its entirety to be eligible for awards.
- **Will you have the funds to cover attendance at Apex?** This can include travel costs (hotel, airfare, car, and meals). A Travel Subsidy may be provided for certain student teams (please see Appendix).
- **Are you able to take the necessary time off to attend and compete? Do you have any conflicting classes, tests, papers, meetings, etc. that would prevent you from going? Can you reschedule them if necessary?** Apex can provide participants with a general letter that can be used to request to be excused from classwork to attend.

Team Withdrawal Policy: Any confirmed attending team that withdraws from the competition on or before January 22, 2027 will result in their university being deemed ineligible to participate in Apex the following year. A formal communication outlining the withdrawal and its implications for the institution's future participation status will be sent to the Dean and relevant faculty advisor(s). Delays or absences caused by flight disruptions, weather events, or other circumstances beyond the team's control are exempt and will not affect future participation eligibility.

COMPETITION **FORMAT**



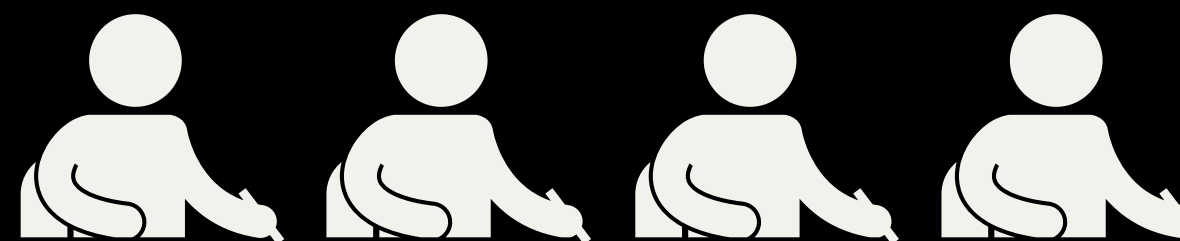
EVALUATION & JUDGING



During the official presentations, judges will evaluate teams using a **standard scoring guide**.

The finalists will be chosen by the judges in private at the end of each round. Team will be evaluated on the team presentation, executive summary, financials, and venture viability.

The judging scoresheets will be provided to teams in advance, but completed scoresheets are confidential and will not be provided to participants.



AWARDS



Judges will select the most plausible and promising ventures and award cash awards to the successful teams. Thanks to our sponsors, we can offer **over \$35,000 in cash awards!**

Awards will be presented at the Awards Ceremony on Friday evening.



Awards are NOT an investment in the venture. Teams may do whatever they wish with their award monies.

PAYMENT PROCESS:

- Winning teams will be contacted after the event to process these transfers. Completion of the paperwork and performing the transfer can take up to four weeks.
- Incorporated startups must be incorporated in Canada.
- Payments must be made to a Canadian bank account. For unincorporated startups, awards are paid to all registered team members equally, or for corporations, directly into the corporation's bank account.

INVESTMENT PITCH AWARDS



First Place: \$20,000



Second Place: \$10,000



Third Place: \$5,000

Several theme-based cash awards will also be provided to teams in addition to the above awards

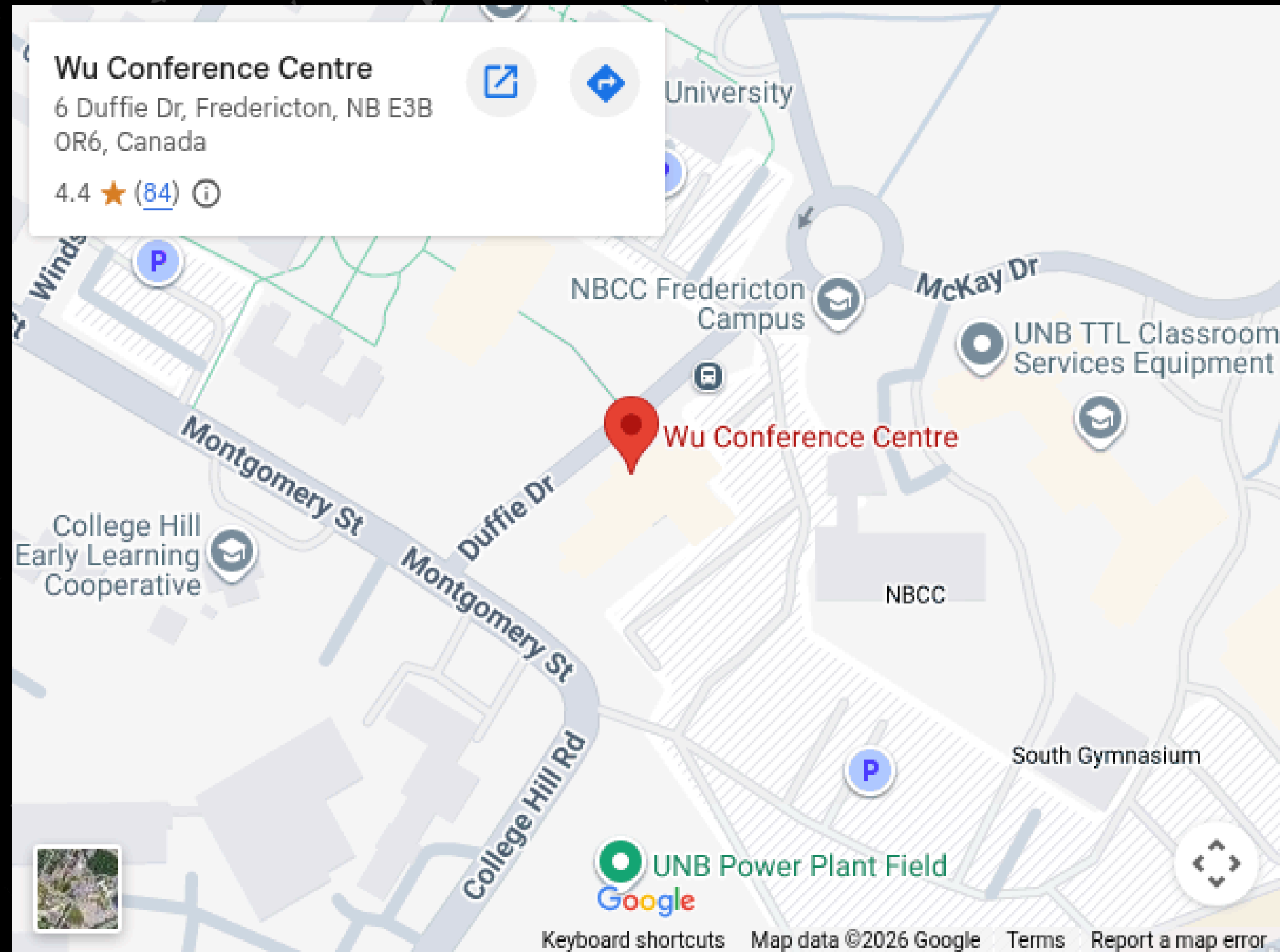


All awards are paid in Canadian Dollars and are subject to relevant taxes.

LOCATION

The BMO Apex Startup Challenge will be held at the **Wu Conference Centre** at the University of New Brunswick, 6 Duffie Drive, Fredericton, NB E3B 0R6.

This event is an in-person event only - there are no virtual or online portions.



ATTENDANCE

At least one member of each team must attend Apex in Fredericton in its entirety. Teams must arrive by 8 AM on Friday, January 22 and not make plans to leave until after 6 PM on Friday, January 22.

DRESS CODE

The dress code for Apex is **business casual**. Most competitors wear a business suit, but this is not required.



DISCLAIMERS

Media

- By participating in Apex, you agree to have your photo/video taken and used for public promotion purposes by the organizers.

Confidentiality

- Participating teams are responsible for protecting any information about their business shared with organizers, judges, mentors, team members, audience members, fellow participants of the competition, and others. UNB's BMO Apex Startup Challenge takes no responsibility for unwanted disclosure in these instances. **Ultimately, the protection of sensitive materials is the sole responsibility of the teams participating in the competition.** Note that final presentations and the elevator pitch competition are open to the general public. It is recommended that teams exclude highly sensitive and proprietary information from their business plans and presentations if they are concerned about the confidentiality of the material. The organizers or judges will NOT be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA).

Intellectual Property

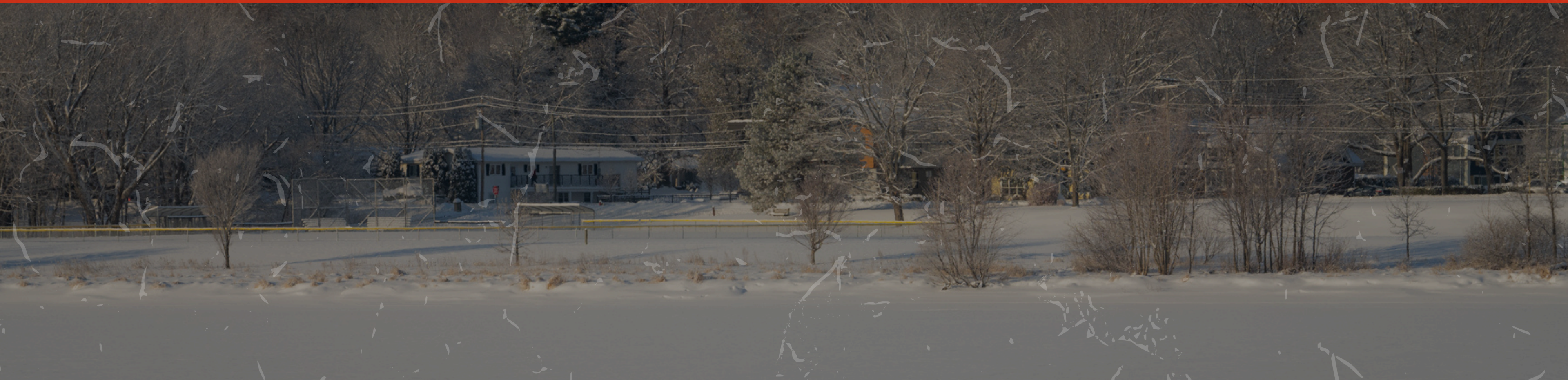
- Any disclosure of patentable details of the intellectual property (IP) in your application or presentations could be considered a public disclosure. If protection is at all a consideration, or if you are at all worried about disclosing specific details about your IP in the application or at the competition, please consider discussing this with your advisors and mentors, or legal counsel.

Acknowledgement

- All participants are required to acknowledge via the official application that they have read, understood, acknowledge, and agree to the terms and conditions laid out in this document. Submissions will not be considered without this acknowledgement.



Appendix: Travel Support



TRAVEL SUPPORT



Aoex teams get preferred rates on a downtown Fredericton hotel. We also provide Travel Subsidies of up to \$1,000 to teams traveling from outside Fredericton. The cash subsidies can be used to cover travel expenses including airfare, hotels, meals, fuel, and car rentals.

The Travel Subsidy is provided only to students currently enrolled in a part-time or full-time program in Canada. The travel subsidy amount is provided by the team, regardless of the number of members.

Teams must collect and provide travel and related receipts. Reimbursement is up to the subsidy amount based on actual spending. This amount will be divided by the number of team members who travel 100km or more from outside Fredericton.

Payments can only be made electronically to a Canadian bank account. Reimbursements are deposited into each qualifying individual's bank account or to the company account.



TRAVEL SUBSIDY AMOUNTS

PROVINCE THE TEAM IS TRAVELLING FROM	REIMBURSEMENT MAXIMUM - PER TEAM
New Brunswick (100km outside Fredericton)	\$150.00
Nova Scotia	\$350.00
PEI	\$350.00
Newfoundland & Labrador	\$600.00
Quebec	\$600.00
Ontario	\$800.00
Manitoba	\$800.00
Saskatchewan	\$800.00
Alberta	\$1,000.00
British Columbia	\$1,000.00
Northwest Territories	\$1,000.00
Nunavut	\$1,000.00
Yukon	\$1,000.00



The Apex subsidy is only provided after any subsidies your university provides. E.g., if your whole trip is covered by your university, you cannot claim the Apex Travel Subsidy.



TRAVEL SUBSIDY APPLICATION

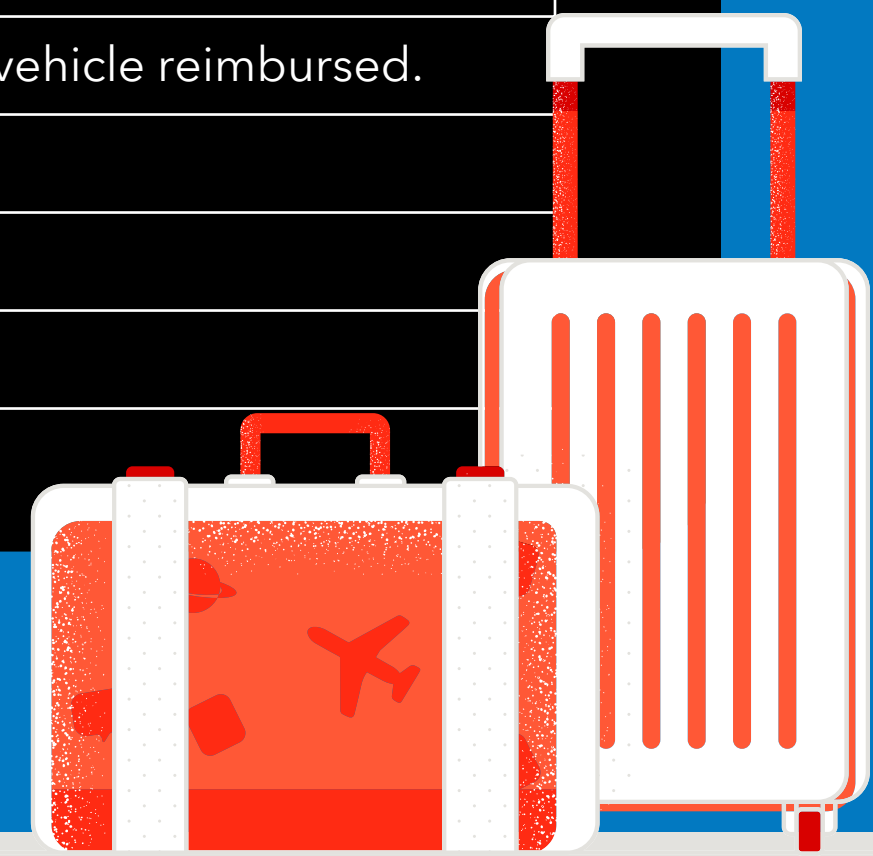
Apply for the Travel Subsidy at the time you apply to compete in Apex. If your application is successful and you are invited to compete at Apex, your team will receive a confirmation in December regarding your status on the Travel Subsidy. You will be contacted after Apex to submit the receipts and claim your reimbursement.

LIMITATIONS

Lodging	Hotels, Airbnb, etc. Provide receipt. Eligible overnight dates: Jan. 21, 22
Fuel	Based on direct route using Google Maps from home city. Only one vehicle reimbursed.
Meals	No meals are reimbursed.
Airfare	Direct flight from home city to Fredericton.
Incidentals	No incidentals are reimbursed.



The Apex subsidy is only provided after any subsidies your university provides. E.g., if your whole trip is covered by your university, you cannot claim the Apex Travel Subsidy.





CONTACT US

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