

Grid Catalyst Cohort Application

Frequently Asked Questions - Updated October 3, 2021



What is Grid Catalyst

Grid Catalyst is the first Midwest clean energy accelerator focused on scaling innovative solutions for northern climates by supporting and promoting entrepreneurs and startups. The platform was established to elevate Minnesota's leadership in climate action and innovation, while also expanding and diversifying the clean energy workforce.

Is Grid Catalyst a nonprofit organization or a for-profit company?

Grid Catalyst was formed as a program of Clean Energy Economy Minnesota, (CEEM), an industry-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit, with a proven track record of advancing clean energy businesses and workforce. The partnership creates the opportunity to advance and grow the clean energy economy in Minnesota by attracting and supporting startups with emerging technology solutions.

Does Grid Catalyst have an Advisory Council?

Yes, Grid Catalyst has a seven-person Advisory Council formed in 2021. Members will be announced later this fall.

What Impact Does Grid Catalyst Hope to Make with Its Programming?

Grid Catalyst is focused on three areas of impact:

- 1) Establishing a process to commercialize more clean energy technologies by establishing demonstration projects with major partners who can accelerate the path to commercialization.
- 2) Increasing opportunities for diverse entrepreneurs and leaders, shifting the systemic lack of representation and influence in the energy industry. This work will be co-developed with the Center for Economic Inclusion.
- 3) Create a clean energy innovation hub to recruit, mentor, and launch more clean energy entrepreneurs and startups in Minnesota.

What Programming Does Grid Catalyst Offer?

Grid Catalyst is launching their first program cohort in 2022, with a focus on developing demonstration projects with late-stage startups. The application for this program is open from October 4, 2021 to November 5, 2021. Cohort selection will take place from November-early January with announcements

anticipated for late-January 2022. More about the cohort and experience is noted on our [application page](#).

How Many Startups Will Participate in the Year-1 Cohort?

Up to 6 startups will be selected to develop and deploy projects in 2022.

When Will the Next Program Cycle Open?

Program managers will examine the options for future cycles after the first cycle is selected. Announcements about another rolling selection or cohort will be announced after February 2022.

Will All Cohorts Be Focused On Demonstration-Ready Startups?

Grid Catalyst anticipates providing support and services to earlier stage startups beginning in 2022. It is to be determined whether this will include formal cohorts or other types of programming.

Does My Startup Have To Be Incorporated to Participate?

For the 2022 Demonstration Cohort, yes. Future programming may allow for earlier stage ventures.

Does My Startup Have to Be Headquartered or Doing Business in Minnesota?

No, there will be spots for companies based outside of Minnesota in the 2022 Demonstration Cohort. However, preference may be given to Minnesota-based companies. Also, companies from out-of-state must explain how they can manage a project in Minnesota, including how they will plan for time at project sites and working with partners. Companies must be legally eligible to do business in Minnesota, including necessary licensure and permitting requirements.

Are Service-Based Companies Eligible to Apply?

Yes, services are also a crucial way that we can address climate change. However, the service must be an emerging solution that is new-to-market and would benefit specifically from our program structure. If the service requires software, that software must have a prototype in place for a 2022 project.

How Developed Must My Solution Be to Participate in the Cohort?

If the solution is a product or technology (rather than a service), there must be a working prototype. Future cohorts will consider earlier stage ventures. The company is not required to have an existing demonstration or commercial project.

Are Certain Types of Technologies of Greater Interest?

All emerging clean energy technologies that address climate change are eligible. The team will need to consider the impact and viability of certain categories, particularly those with longer development cycles and permitting and regulatory requirements. High-potential technology categories: grid advancement and adaptation, renewable thermal, building electrification, EV charging, energy efficiency, small-scale batteries, and controls and metering.

Who are the Demonstration Project Hosts?

Projects will be co-developed and hosted by a member of the [Innovators Network](#), businesses, utilities, higher education institutions, nonprofits, and cities.

Current members of the Innovators Network - 3M, Clean Energy Resource Teams, Connexus Energy, City of Duluth, Ever-Green Energy, Great River Energy, Launch Minnesota, City of Minneapolis, Otter Tail Power, Science Museum of Minnesota, the City of Saint Paul, and the University of Minnesota.

Each partner will go through an exploratory matchmaking exercise to see if there is a startup in the cohort applicants that fit the priorities and feasibility requirements for the hosts. If there is a match, the host and the startup will go through a due diligence process to finalize moving forward with a 2022 project. Any agreements related to this will be between the startups and the hosts.

What is the Selection Criteria?

Startups will be selected based on their ability to demonstrate an emerging and impactful clean energy technology in 2022 in Minnesota. And the effective matching with a host partner from the Innovators Network. Selection preference is being given to organizations led by diverse founders and leaders, particularly people of color, women, and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Additional selection criteria is outlined on the application overview page - <https://gridcatalyst.org/apply/>

What Are the Benefits of Program Participation?

- Visibility for the startup companies, including storytelling, media, and connection to the Grid Catalyst and Clean Energy Economy Minnesota networks.
- Facilitation support for project implementation, including navigating the initial exploratory phase with host partners, advisory support during the planning phase, assistance with developing a project monitoring and data collection approach, and developing post-implementation growth and marketing strategies.
- Connection to a pool of mentors with a wide range of business and industry experiences.
- Opportunities to connect with and pitch to investors.
- Connection and collaboration with other innovators and entrepreneurs in clean energy and climate tech.

Will Startups Be Paid to Participate in the Accelerator?

No, cohort members will not receive stipends for participation, but funds will be offered to advance project implementation. Funding will be determined by the type of technology and scale and scope of the project.

What Is Involved in the Application Process?

The application process has

What Is the Timeline for the Cohort, Including the Application Process?

- October

- Applications open - October 4
- [Grid Catalyst Launch Event](#) - October 12
- November
 - Applications close - November 5
 - First and second round screening of candidates
- December
 - Technical and financial review and interviews with screening committees
 - Grid Catalyst program managers will begin the matchmaking discussions between finalists and the Innovators Network to determine fit for demonstration projects.

*Final cohort selection is dependent on finding a project host for 2022 implementation. This may require additional due diligence that could affect the program schedule provided here.
- January 2022
 - Cohort members will be notified of their status
 - Public announcement of cohort selection
- Q1 2022 – Initial planning and development conversations with project host and program partners
- Q2 2022 – Project implementation initiated, including necessary activities for permitting, regulatory requirements, and detailed engineering
- Q3 2022 – Project installation and construction, as needed
- Q4 2022 – Finalize project installation and proceed with commissioning and data collection activities
- End of 2022 – Startups advance from the cohort program and are asked to consider serving as program mentors for future programs

Why Is Demographic Information Requested in the Application?

Grid Catalyst is committed to advancing equity and access through the accelerator platform. This includes providing preference to applications from companies led by individuals from underrepresented demographics, including people of color, women, and LGBTQIA+. The demographic questions help us understand who is leading the work of cohort applicants, which is information used for selection and to help us better understand the community of clean energy startups.

If you have any questions about filling out the demographic information, or other application elements, please reach out to program staff to discuss - info@gridcatalyst.org.

How Can I Find Out More About the 2022 Cohort?

Information Sessions will be hosted throughout October to learn more about the program and application process.

Session #1 (October 8): 1:00 PM – [Register](#)

Session #2 (October 13): 8:30 AM – [Register](#)

Session #3 (October 14): 6:00 PM – [Register](#)

Session #4 (October 19): 2:00 PM – [Register](#)

Additionally, prospective applicants and founders can reach out to Nina Axelson to schedule a 30-minute informational interview about the program and future plans for developing our clean energy innovation hub. Reach out to info@gridcatalyst.org to schedule and learn more.