

New Brunswick's **Innovation Agenda**

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1 Introduction

The competitive landscape facing the province has fundamentally changed over the past decade. The number of jurisdictions competing with New Brunswick for global investment, talent and ideas has broadened. In order to better compete and win in this new environment, the economic development model in New Brunswick needs to adapt. The New Brunswick Economic Growth Plan features innovation as one of the five pillars of economic development, critical to creating the conditions for growth in our province, along with people, capital, infrastructure and agility.

The goal of New Brunswick's innovation agenda is to foster innovation and boost research and development in New Brunswick, which will help grow the economy and create job opportunities for New Brunswickers. This agenda builds on the strength of the province's highly skilled workforce, world-class education system, internationally recognized research community and an economic growth approach focused on creating the right environment to take opportunities with global potential to the world.

1.1 We need to expand our capacity for innovation and competitiveness

Like the rest of North America and most of the world in the past few decades, the New Brunswick economy has become more exposed to global economic forces. The borders around trade, capital flows and population mobility have never been more fluid than they are today. Technological change will only enhance this globalization of the economy in the years ahead. Very few industries will be immune from increasing global forces. For New Brunswick to compete, we need to have productive and globally competitive firms, attract our share of global capital, and significantly boost flow of talent into our province.

Despite recent improvements¹, the province's economy has grown at an average annual rate of just 0.4 per cent between 2008 and 2016 – well below the long-term target rate of 2-3 per cent per year. Restoring a healthy rate of economic growth and development is central to the New Brunswick Economic Growth Plan. Establishing a strong rate of economic growth in the years ahead will ensure a stable foundation on which our social goals can be met and our communities can thrive.

In order to foster economic growth, New Brunswick needs a much greater focus on innovation – at the firm level and within our institutions and governments. Based on 11 different indicators, the Conference Board of Canada recently ranked New Brunswick among the lowest of the 10 provinces for its innovation capacity. This does not bode well for the province as we respond to increasing global competition.

The New Brunswick Innovation Agenda outlines the role the Government of New Brunswick will play to boost our innovation capacity as a province by growing innovators, boosting research and development, supporting the growth of entrepreneurs, ensuring critical infrastructure is in place, leading the cybersecurity agenda and innovating the way government gets things done.

1.2 New Brunswick's Innovation Agenda – Role for government

It is clear the provincial government has a role to play in fostering an innovative economy. Government can stimulate *early stage research* and *creativity* by fostering an environment where entrepreneurs with innovative ideas can thrive and using government itself as a platform for innovation. We need to foster entrepreneurship and start-ups and accelerate their growth across sectors of our economy, both social and economic.



¹ The average real GDP growth rate in New Brunswick for 2015 and 2016 was 1.8 per cent.

However, government also needs to ensure that *business-driven innovation* is a core component of its strategy moving forward. Tom Jenkins, founding CEO of Open Text, a hugely successful Canadian technology company, has often been quoted as saying “*Canada is so busy inventing, we forgot about innovation*”. Invention converts money into ideas and innovation converts ideas into money. Government needs to continue to focus on the latter part of the formula while encouraging the former.

The New Brunswick Innovation Agenda lays out the six key sub-conditions that together will strengthen the environment for innovation across the economy.

Grow Innovators	Expand innovation-related talent pool in the province, including the number of students at all levels engaged in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
Boost R&D Capacity	Ensure research leveraging ratios remain strong with increased investment. Build competitiveness for graduate student attraction. Encourage research and development (R&D) partnerships.
Commercialize, Start & Scale Enterprises	Increase the number of ‘scale-up’ firms growing beyond 10 employees in key export-based sectors.
Foster Innovation Spaces	Ensure we have the right innovation infrastructure in place – labs, broadband, incubators, etc. to meet our innovation objectives. Increase social enterprises in New Brunswick.
Lead the Cybersecurity Agenda in Canada	Conduct innovative research and continuous improvement to empower Critical Infrastructure organizations to operate and provide services securely and efficiently. Build scale and capacity to support business growth, workforce development & high value career opportunities in cybersecurity.
Become a Smart Province	Be the first digital society in North America.

2 Grow Innovators

2.1 Innovation-ready high school graduates

New Brunswick needs to foster a culture of innovation across society, starting with our youngest residents and potential future innovators. Aligned with New Brunswick's 10-year education plans *Everyone at their Best* and *Donnons à nos enfants une longueur d'avance (Giving our children an edge)*, we will introduce innovation skills like inquiry, observation, experimentation, and design into the education system from Kindergarten to Grade 12, in partnership with leaders from Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), Place aux compétences, Brilliant Labs and more.

Actions:

- Maintain support to innovation partners to deliver local innovation experiences (e.g., Science East, Brilliant Labs, Place aux compétences).
- Support enhanced educational technology integration into First Nations communities.
- Upgrade the information technology (IT) infrastructure throughout K to 8 schools.
- Provide opportunities for exploring coding, technology and cybersecurity in the classroom.
- Increase opportunities that require learners to apply knowledge and skills within and across disciplines to innovate and solve real-world problems.
- Provide all students opportunities to develop, all along their schooling, in learning environments that foster a competency-based approach and allow students to carry out complex, meaningful and context-specific tasks.

2.2 Grow our culture of innovation

We will continue to build and celebrate New Brunswick's culture of innovation, and increase our population's awareness of, and confidence in, our history and future as innovators. We will increase our capacity to inquire, experiment, design and test. During the annual Innovation Week and throughout the year we will curate stories about our history of innovation and our leading-edge innovators and share with every corner of the province. We will partner with organizations like Science East and NBIF in the promotion of New Brunswick's innovative culture. We will ensure accessibility to innovation programming and education for our New Brunswick businesses.

Actions:

- Coordinate a province-wide celebration of innovation annually.
- Celebrate and communicate New Brunswick's history of innovation.
- Ensure youth engagement, partner and regional participation in Innovation Week.
- Support partners in their celebrations of innovators.
- Encourage new and established business to embrace innovation.
- Work with our partners to ensure accessibility for New Brunswick businesses to innovation programming and education.
- Promote New Brunswick's innovative culture and practices.

3 Boost R&D Capacity

Innovation often stems from research and development (R&D). Post-secondary institutions and research institutes are the most significant R&D performers in New Brunswick, conducting well over half of all R&D, by expenditure (CANSIM 358-0001). Their professors, graduate students, research assistants, and research technicians with a mission to expand knowledge create this capacity. They have the ability to attract research investment from the federal government and other sources and provide research capacity to our local businesses, non-profits, and government.

These institutions are more than just performing partners; they are the training grounds for young researchers. For these reasons, we will make investments in boosting R&D capacity so that more research can be done in the province in the future.

3.1 Grow post-secondary-led research

To increase R&D, the province can leverage investments in post-secondary institutions through our best performing research programs. A boost to provincial investment in research should leverage considerable federal government, industry and other dollars. A focus of the New Brunswick Economic Growth Plan is better alignment between R&D investments and strategic growth opportunities, and we will work with stakeholders to do this while maintaining research excellence. This alignment is already happening with new research chairs and investments in cybersecurity, cannabis and smart grid development.

Action:

- Enhance the capacity of post-secondary research institutions and institutes through strategic investments aligned with growth opportunities.

3.2 Grow graduate students in areas of strategic importance

Graduate students are the lifeblood of public research activity and often play a bridging role with industry for the transfer of expertise and technology. Even after graduation, their research experience unlocks great possibilities to contribute to our knowledge economy and, in turn, our research agenda. We currently have 2,192 graduate students enrolled in New Brunswick, and while this is significant, our institutions need ongoing investment and other attractive advantages to continue to compete for the recruitment of top students.

Action:

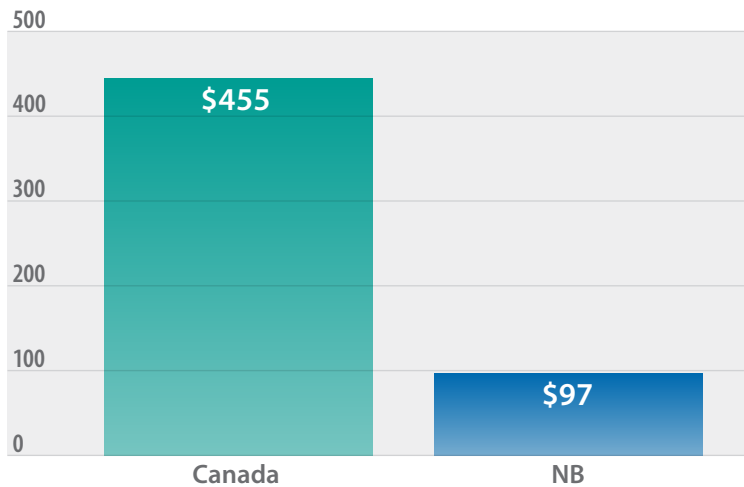
- Increase support for internships, research assistantships and scholarships within the post-secondary education system.

3.3 Increase industrial R&D

New Brunswick firms have historically built their business models on a 'low cost' value proposition. Input costs such as labour and real estate were lower than the competition in larger urban centres, so firms were able to use the low-cost model as a competitive advantage. Globalization, inflation, and national competition for a highly-skilled, highly-mobile labour supply are making this business model obsolete when considered alone.

Helping to support business innovation is one potential solution to boost productivity and product/service quality, and to better compete globally. New Brunswick is at the low-end of business-led research spending in Canada. Figure 1 shows the comparison between New Brunswick and Canada for business enterprise R&D spending per capita.

Figure 1: Business enterprise R&D funding per capita (2014)



Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM Tables 358-0001 and 051-0001.

We need to create a fiscal environment that will foster the growth of industrial R&D expenditures in the province through direct and indirect supports to industry and stronger partnerships with post-secondary education. This will lead to industry expanding its R&D footprint in the province.

Actions:

- Enhance support for programs that encourage research institutions to accelerate innovation with, and in, the private sector, improving competitiveness and productivity.

3.4 Increase federal government R&D

In the early 2000s, federal spending on R&D in New Brunswick nearly doubled from \$43 million per year in 2000 to \$84 million in 2007. However, since then, federal spending on R&D has flat-lined in New Brunswick while growing by 13 per cent across the country. The federal government is a key catalyst for research and innovation, spending more than \$5.7 billion in 2017. With federal government support, New Brunswick needs to renew and augment its public R&D infrastructure to ensure that our institutions have the research tools, equipment and innovation platforms (dedicated staff and facilities) to capture federal funding opportunities, drive results for business and attract and retain high-performing researchers and graduate students to our universities and community colleges. Health research in the province needs a defined channel for research opportunities. We will establish clear direction and alignment, along with multi-year support, which will help to strengthen the health research bodies' ability to leverage and grow federal support.

Action:

- Ensure alignment between federal government R&D with provincial government identified strategic opportunity areas.

4 Commercialization, Start-up and Scale-up

4.1 Improve our rate of commercialization

New Brunswickers generate a lot of practical, innovative ideas. Translating these ideas into results has proven more difficult. In this respect, New Brunswick is not alone. While Canada scores high on the level of research and development among OECD countries, our commercialization rate of new-to-market products is among the lowest. In practical terms, this means that businesses and government are not receiving the full value of their investment in R&D in Canada and New Brunswick. Fostering more commercialization by better connecting researchers in our post-secondary institutions and new entrepreneurs to the broader ecosystem of funding, mentoring and market development services will help New Brunswick become a leader in Canada in converting good ideas into commercial products and services. For example, CyberNB, as Canada's epicenter for cybersecurity, is leading the way nationally and globally linking researchers to a world-class business incubation and acceleration centre for cybersecurity startups and small/medium enterprises developing new and innovative products.

Actions

- Enhance availability of resources for new entrepreneurs.
- Increase support for the commercialization of New Brunswick innovations.
- Work with provincial and national partners to better understand the root causes of low rates of commercialization in Canada.

4.2 Strengthen support for start-ups

In the past decade, New Brunswick's start-up ecosystem has expanded rapidly. There are business incubators for local and immigrant entrepreneurs. The province also has post-secondary-based start-up support services. There are mentorship development services as well as expanding start-up and growth capital markets.

After declining from 2011 to 2014, the GDP in New Brunswick arising from the information and communications technology (ICT) sector has expanded by seven per cent, including in strategic opportunity areas, such as cybersecurity and smart grid, where New Brunswick has a national and global leadership position. We need to build on this positive momentum. We will leverage start-ups and the start-up ecosystem infrastructure to boost the number and growth, including exports, of our high potential entrepreneurs.

This includes working with our larger firms to see how they can work with innovative start-up companies. There is growing evidence that the fastest growing start-ups tend to be in the supply chains of large firms rather than providing an end consumer market product/service. We need to encourage our large firms to think about innovating their own business models by using New Brunswick-based start-ups and innovators. McCain Foods is a leader in this area.

Actions:

- Continued investment in collaborative and results driven incubation and accelerator programming, with an increased focus on start-ups that are aligned with, but not limited to, strategic opportunity areas such as smart grid, cybersecurity, etc.
- Increase access to capital for startups.
- Work with New Brunswick firms to encourage participation in global accelerators.
- Encourage large New Brunswick firms to work with start-ups to solve their innovation challenges.
- Grow the number of New Brunswick startups exporting by launching a new export accelerator program.
- Work with incubator and accelerator programs to enhance market development and global competitiveness sales skills.
- Increase seed funding for qualifying companies within accelerator programs.

4.3 Scale up high potential entrepreneurs

From St. Stephen to Sao Paulo, regardless of where the next generation of New Brunswick entrepreneurs may come from, we want them to be able to thrive and grow right here in our backyard. We want our entrepreneurs to aspire to build products and services in New Brunswick and then take them to the world. These entrepreneurs will be key to bringing the province back to sustained economic growth. To do so, we will create a compelling environment for new and existing entrepreneurs to both establish their businesses here and scale-up.

Actions:

- Increase funding to investment partners to facilitate larger initial and follow-on venture capital investments.
- Work with the federal government to ensure venture capital programs reach New Brunswick scale-up companies.
- Increase sales and management expertise by investing in business skills training for high-growth firms.
- Consider potential roles for government to encourage strategic tie-ups between firms (e.g., mergers and acquisitions).

4.4 Increase productivity

The Conference Board of Canada recently gave New Brunswick a 'D' in labour productivity. According to Statistics Canada, labour productivity in the business sector rose by 4.4 per cent across Canada between 2011 and 2016 which itself is not a particularly good performance. New Brunswick actually witnessed a decline of 1.6 per cent in labour productivity over the same period.

Historically, New Brunswick industries built business models using lower labour costs (wage levels) as a key part of their value proposition. Now with a tightening labour market in the province, increased competition for talent and increased competitive pressure on business costs, we need New Brunswick firms to push harder on productivity. This applies not only to New Brunswick export businesses – it applies to all small, medium and large firms across the province (as well as not-for-profit organizations, government and the institutional sector).

We will endeavor to motivate more firms/organizations to invest in technology, business process improvement and other areas to boost productivity.

Actions:

- Benchmark productivity performance of New Brunswick companies to identify further opportunities to improve productivity and use existing programs and services to improve skills and technology adoption.
- Introduce clean technology adoption incentives in coordination with the Climate Change Action Plan.
- Coordinate with federal government partners to support the development of high potential firms through mechanisms such as the Accelerated Growth Service.

4.5 Fuel innovation through investment attraction (IA) activities

World leading innovative companies have the capacity to build new R&D partnership opportunities with local companies, universities and other innovation oriented organizations. As relationships with education (e.g., training and new curriculum initiatives) and industry suppliers develop, the building blocks of innovation centres will take shape. We will use investment attraction activities to bring world leading innovative companies to serve as growth centers for new and emerging clusters in the province. The Siemens global Smart Grid development centre in Fredericton is an excellent example of a multinational company investing in research here in New Brunswick.

Actions:

- Continue IA activities focused on targeting firms known for innovative technologies and research and, where appropriate, seek to locate these companies in innovation centres that will support cluster development in the province.
- Continue to develop sector strategies building on existing clusters in order to mature their innovation capabilities (e.g. Cyber-NB / cyber security cluster).
- Coordinate with the federal government and other partners/universities/colleges/private industry to support the continued development of innovation through cluster building.

5 Foster Innovation Spaces

5.1 New models of economic and social innovation

In New Brunswick, we want to encourage places, spaces and practices that foster innovation in the private, public and social sectors. New Brunswick is home to dedicated volunteers, non-government organizations and social entrepreneurs that want to harness the power of entrepreneurship to solve some of the world's and our province's biggest social challenges.

We aspire to become Canada's living lab, designing meaningful solutions for our residents, friends and neighbors. Through partnerships with NouLAB, Living SJ, NB-IRDT, NBSPRN and other organizations, we will accelerate this movement and enable a new generation of social entrepreneurs in our province.

Actions:

To foster innovation in the private, public and social sectors to design meaningful solutions to the biggest social challenges we will:

- Provide government challenges and data.
- Expand support for social innovation.
- Accommodate the expansion of Benefit Corporations in New Brunswick.
- Encourage large companies to work with start-ups to solve challenges.
- Explore social financing opportunities.

5.2 Innovation-enabling infrastructure

Under our Strategic Infrastructure Initiative (SII), we will be significantly boosting our investment into infrastructure that enables new innovation including university and public college-based research institutes, as well as other R&D-focused organizations.

Actions:

- Invest in research institutions, to ensure accessibility, modern equipment and talent.
- Ensure high speed internet access and affordability in all parts of the province.
- Ensure infrastructure funds are directed toward projects aligned with our strategic opportunity areas.

6 Lead the Cybersecurity Agenda in Canada

6.1 Empower critical infrastructure protection in the province and beyond

Mitigating against major attacks, particularly on critical infrastructure, is a central challenge facing the world today. New Brunswick will be at the forefront of developing a comprehensive approach to cybersecurity in critical infrastructure. The province has an impressive critical infrastructure ecosystem, developed over years of successful development of our roads, ports, energy grid, power stations, and hospitals. Building off this success, and aligned with the cybersecurity demands of all organizations operating to provide services to our province and its citizens, we are working with industry, federal and provincial organizations, as well as academia, to lead the agenda on cybersecurity in Canada. With close proximity and a long history of success in working with our Canadian Armed Forces in New Brunswick, the province is well positioned to lead in operational excellence, policy development and training the best cybersecurity minds for the nation's toughest problems – protecting our critical infrastructure.

Actions:

- Grow the cybersecurity cluster in New Brunswick by attracting top companies in Critical Infrastructure today; including financial services, digital health, power generation, military & defense, with growth in staffing requirements for years to come.
- Improve collaboration and innovation for all partners in the critical infrastructure protection agenda by strengthening ties between industry, academia and federal government agencies.
- Enhance the cybersecurity capacity of existing New Brunswick ICT firms; increasing the number of products and services that these firms are able to offer as well as improving their ability to operate in or expand in external markets.

6.2 Build scale and capacity to support business growth, workforce development & high value career opportunities in cybersecurity

The Government of New Brunswick is building a world-class collaboration between academia, industry and government to develop curriculum and provide training in cybersecurity. Critical to the successful growth of business in New Brunswick is the future ability to resource positions in support of anticipated cybersecurity business growth. Whether this is the increased digital literacy programs in New Brunswick classrooms or certificate programs at New Brunswick universities or colleges, the province is rising to meet future needs of business and industry, while striving to provide opportunities for students to remain in the province and become top candidates for high value positions in cybersecurity.

Actions:

- Work closely with EECD and provide the support needed to reach more students in the classroom and increase student awareness of available career paths to high-value jobs in the province by accelerating the implementation of digital literacy in our school systems from K-12, Anglophone and Francophone.
- Promote the world class programs at New Brunswick's universities and colleges, in particular the thought leadership and industry involvement of UNB's Canadian Institute for Cybersecurity
- Align with academia and industry to ensure the future rate of graduates in cybersecurity can supply capable New Brunswick qualified personnel to compete and win the large number of cybersecurity positions forecast in the years ahead.
- Increase internal labour mobility and effectiveness by developing and implementing cybersecurity training standards for the New Brunswick industry. Standards allow companies to easily align the province's labour pool with their requirements, this action would increase the appeal of New Brunswick as a destination for foreign direct investment.

7 Smart Province

New Brunswick once held a clear national and international leadership role in public sector innovation. The innovative telecommunications company, NBTel, and with the creation of Service New Brunswick in the early 2000s, led to better services for citizens and a wave of success for our technology partners. The Government of New Brunswick is committed to “Move New Brunswick forward” with a focus on job creation and establishing a smarter, innovative and more efficient government. We will continue to build on the Smart Province initiative that is based on these 3 objectives:

Open Government – data is available to the public and private sectors which will encourage innovation

Digital Services – citizens and businesses will be able to access information anytime, anywhere, on any device

Innovation and Job Creation – partnerships with businesses will find opportunities for new products/applications.

To support these objectives and assist in attaining the vision of becoming *the first digital society in North America* three key projects were initiated: an Open Data Portal, a Digital ID and the Digital Lab. The Digital ID and Open Data projects will provide platforms upon which private sector companies and provincial departments can build new, agile, digital products and services. The Digital Lab acts as an enabler for innovation across all sectors.

7.1 Data driven

Open Data

The Open Data Initiative will make the wealth of government data and information available to all citizens, municipalities, universities, community colleges and the private sector, while respecting privacy, confidentiality, security and legal restrictions. Open Data will fuel the creation of innovative solutions for our citizens, and will demonstrate government’s commitment to transparency and accountability while encouraging greater participation, and collaboration with citizens.

Research Data

Part of our data focus will be connecting provincial administrative data with researchers to better use that data to make more informed social, health and economic policy decisions. To accomplish this, we will work with the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT). An Act Respecting Research received Royal Assent in May 2017. This expands the range of data that can be made available for research purposes to include not only health but social, education, environmental, immigration, transportation, etc. This positions NB as the first in the country in terms of the richness and depth of data available to researchers.

Actions:

- Establish an Open Data Portal and program to create a single point of discovery and access for government data while improving transparency and public trust.
- Recruit publishers or contributors of data to broaden availability of public data while reducing duplication, level of effort and cost of access to data custodians.
- Release data sets rapidly and regularly to support public participation and engagement while continuously improving the culture of open data across GNB.
- Provide operational support for the NB-IRDT as required to enhance research, science and innovation through the use of anonymous and aggregated research data.

7.2 Digital ID and services

To support the development of new applications, products and services for citizens, we will establish a single, secure, Digital ID for citizens. This is an electronic representation of a person, used exclusively by them, to receive valued services and carry out transactions with trust and confidence on line. Through the creation of a secure Digital ID, and an investment in the creation of new digital services, citizens and businesses will be able to access digital information and services anywhere, anytime, from any device.

Actions:

- Establish the technical environment needed for single, secure Digital ID for citizens.
- Launch the new Digital Identity Program to citizens over a five year period.
- Establish an SNB Digital Identity Program to support the rollout.

7.3 Digital Lab

The role of the Digital Lab is to be an enabler which supports public and private sector innovation and the development of new applications to improve access to government services for NB citizens. The Lab brings together expertise from the public and private sector to act as a catalyst to engage and attract some of the best and brightest minds to work on current problems. The Digital Lab will support the development and testing of new high value digital services and provide a safe technical environment for experimentation and proof of concepts.

Actions:

- Support the growth of participation in the Digital Lab to enable the development of high-value digital services for our citizens.
- Foster business development opportunities by bringing together expertise from various sectors and providing access to government applications in a protected environment.
- Improve the operating model to accelerate projects to support public and private innovation and the development of new government services.

To accomplish the Smart Province long term objectives, we will enable citizens and businesses that are increasingly mobile to access government information and services anywhere, anytime, on any device. This ability requires technology that is designed for interoperability and openness, as well as providing quality services at a lower cost. We will enable business to access the rich wealth of Government data and information that can be used to create innovative business solutions, unique applications, and enhanced services. We will provide support to research and potentially create jobs while we manage applications and data in a smart, secure and affordable manner, eliminating inefficient, costly and fragmented practices and building a sound governance structure.

7.4 Grow the GNB innovation talent pool

Developing a culture of innovation in GNB requires new perspectives, new tools and new ways of working. Training GNB staff on new ways of working, new and emerging tools and techniques, and developing new partnerships will be critical to building GNBs innovation capacity. New post-secondary graduates will be given an opportunity to intern with various GNB departments with a focus on strategic areas of development such as: open data & data visualization, systems thinking, human-centred design, citizen engagement and facilitation, prototype design & experimentation, and agile project management.

New interns will bring in a fresh perspective to help address departmental challenges or opportunities and will be provided with mentorship and support to help instill an entrepreneurial mindset within GNB. Through partnership with NouLAB, interns and GNB staff will be provided with training opportunities to develop and apply these skills to opportunities and challenges requiring strategic innovation.

Action:

- Expand GNB innovation capacity by:
 - developing a network of innovators.
 - training GNB employees in innovative practices with partners such as NouLab.
 - establishing a GNB internship program.

8 Conclusion: Expanding our Capacity for Innovation

We know the competitive landscape facing the province has fundamentally changed over the past decade. The number of jurisdictions competing with New Brunswick for global investment, talent and ideas has broadened.

The 2018-2023 Innovation Agenda addresses the role government will play to help meet these challenges by focusing on boosting our innovation capacity as a province by growing innovators, boosting research and development, supporting the growth of entrepreneurs, fostering innovation spaces, leading the cybersecurity agenda and innovating the way government gets things done.

The agenda has actions that will strengthen New Brunswick's position to compete on a global stage, helping to grow the economy and create job opportunities for New Brunswickers.