



Report
Staff Report
The Corporation of the City of Brampton
2/26/2025

Date: 2025-02-13

Subject: **Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) Brampton Venture Zone Funding Agreement**

Contact: Devin Ramphal, Sector Manager, Innovation & Technology, Economic Development

Report number: CAO's Office-2025-160

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the report from Devin Ramphal, Sector Manager, Innovation & Technology, Economic Development to the City Council Meeting of February 26, 2025 re: **Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) Brampton Venture Zone Funding Agreement**, be received; and
2. That Council delegate authority to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to execute on behalf of the City of Brampton a second funding agreement with TMU to grant funding in support of the operations of the Brampton Venture Zone (BVZ) in the amount of up to \$1,000,000 per year over a five-year term and to execute any amending agreements, addendums or other documents relating thereto over the term, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the Director of Economic Development and in a form approved by the City Solicitor or designate.

OVERVIEW:

- **Established in 2020, the Brampton Venture Zone (BVZ), operated by Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), is a key member of the Brampton Innovation District.**
- **Since its inception, BVZ has established itself by delivering innovation services to local entrepreneurs and plays a vital role in positioning Brampton as a hub for technology companies.**
- **This report seeks delegated authority to enter into a second funding agreement with TMU to continue BVZ operations, allocating up to \$1 million per year over a five-year term ending December 31, 2029, in support of Brampton's tech entrepreneur ecosystem.**

- **There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.**

BACKGROUND:

The City of Brampton maintains a strong relationship with Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) and has been working extensively with the university in expanding its presence in Brampton, including the upcoming opening of the new medical school.

Brampton Venture Zone

The City is committed to fostering a vibrant and inclusive business environment by supporting innovation, attracting investment and expanding economic opportunities for residents, including youth and newcomers. Through strategic partnerships and initiatives, the City works to create the conditions for business growth, job creation and a resilient, competitive economy. Given the evolving economic relationship with the United States, it is crucial for the City to prioritize the development of a diversified economy.

Over the past five years, TMU has designed, developed and operated the Brampton Venture Zone (BVZ) to advance these goals in collaboration with the City of Brampton, other Innovation District members and partner organizations. During the first agreement term (2020-2024), BVZ has played a key role in strengthening Brampton's entrepreneurial ecosystem. It has mentored, incubated or accelerated 69 companies, engaged 206 new industry partners and delivered 1,731 training and information sessions to local businesses. BVZ's programming has attracted 5,633 individual participants and supported 245 high-potential start-ups and subject matter experts. These achievements underscore BVZ's impact in driving innovation, collaboration and business growth in the region.

The programs developed drew on over a decade of experience from TMU and the founding staff of the Brampton Venture Zone training entrepreneurs and incubating high-potential ventures. The launch of the program during a global pandemic reinforced the need to adapt to changing market conditions, evolving entrepreneurial needs and emerging opportunities.

Over the next five years, programming is expected to evolve, with refinements to existing initiatives and the potential development of new programs to address needs and opportunities. TMU will work with the City of Brampton to regularly assess the program outcomes and City priorities, ensuring continuous improvement in the zone's impact. Additionally, TMU will share best practices developed internally and through its network of partner organizations across Canada, leveraging collaborations with other TMU units where appropriate to enhance support for Brampton entrepreneurs and ventures.

BVZ plays a crucial role in the City's Innovation District, which is anchored in the downtown area. The Innovation District has contributed to downtown revitalization by filling vacant spaces and driving increased activity. Designed as a hub for innovation and

research, the Innovation District fosters collaboration among post-secondary institutions, start-ups and established businesses. This synergy promotes innovation, attracts top talent and strengthens the city's reputation as a dynamic centre for growth and development.

Examples of Brampton founders that have leveraged resources through the Brampton Venture Zone include:

Biofect

Biofect Innovation is a startup that emerged from Brampton, founded by a local entrepreneur with a passion for advancing biotechnology. Founder, Ralph Christian Delos Santos, attended high school in Brampton, and pursued a career in molecular biology at the Toronto Metropolitan University. Soon after, he co-founded Biofect Innovations and joined the Brampton Venture Zone and leveraged mentorship, resources, and the startup ecosystem to accelerate its growth. The company specializes in developing bio-based manufacturing solutions, including its flagship product, a precision fermentation platform that enables sustainable and scalable production of high-value biochemicals. In 2023, Biofect Innovations participated in the InvestBrampton Startup Island at the Collision Conference. In 2024, Biofect was a pitch finalist at the Collision 2024 Start-up Pitch Competition.

Medaki

Medaki is a health-tech startup working towards transforming patient care through digital solutions. The company's platform leverages AI-driven technology to streamline patient management and enhance healthcare delivery. As a client of Brampton Venture Zone, Medaki benefited from mentorship, networking opportunities, and a supportive ecosystem that helped accelerate its growth. Medaki has participated in events and programs organized by the Brampton Innovation District ecosystem, most recently as a mentor in the City's BramHacks Hackathon, where 150 post-secondary students tackled local transportation issues by developing innovative solutions using technology and data-driven approaches.

CURRENT SITUATION:

In 2020, Council directed staff to enter into a five-year \$5 million funding agreement to establish the Brampton Venture Zone ([C410-2019](#)). This agreement concluded on December 31, 2024. Economic Development's Council-approved 2025 budget allocates up to \$5 million over another five-year term for a second funding agreement with TMU to continue BVZ operations.

Under the second funding agreement, BVZ will focus on five key start-up priorities:

1. **Early-stage Incubation** - Programs like *Brampton INNOVATOR* (sector agnostic, 4-6 weeks, in person) to support emerging entrepreneurs

2. **Market-Ready High-Potential Start-ups** – Initiatives like *BVZ LAUNCH* (sector-specific, 4-5 months, hybrid) to attract and accelerate start-up activity.
3. **Community Engagement** - Events such as the annual BVX Fest (1-2 days, in-person, conference/trade show style) to foster local entrepreneurship.
4. **Corporate and Institutional Connections** - Strengthening relationships among established Brampton companies, start-ups, academic institutions, corporate partners and support organizations to drive business growth.
5. **Integration into Broader Networks** - Leveraging TMU's regional, national and international incubation networks to embed BVZ within the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The intent is for TMU to be in a position to sustain BVZ operations beyond the second funding agreement without requiring further City funding. To support this goal the Agreement allows up to \$100,000 of unspent funds to be retained by TMU at the expiry of the agreement, conditional upon TMU providing evidence relating to the continuance of such operations, such evidence to be acceptable to the City in its sole discretion, failing which TMU must return those funds.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

There are no financial impacts resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report. The total five-year funding commitment of up to \$5 million is included in the City's 2025 budget and financial forecast, with an annual allocation of up to \$1 million, subject to Mayor's consideration in future years. The first-year allocation has been approved as part of the 2025 budget and is available from the following source:

Project	Project Description	Available Funding
251209-001	Brampton Venture Zone	\$1,000,000

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA:

This report aligns with the City's Focus Area of Growing Urban Centres and Neighbourhoods and the Strategic Priority of "Stimulate Innovation, Create Jobs & Grow Investment" by strengthening partnerships with post-secondary institutions to foster entrepreneurship, innovation, and workforce development.

It also supports the Strategic Priority to "Invest in Strategic Growth Areas (Unlock Downtown and Strategic Growth Areas)" by advancing the Brampton Innovation District and positioning downtown as a hub for business growth and collaboration.

CONCLUSION:

This report recommends delegated authority to enter into a second funding agreement with TMU, providing up to \$1 million per year over a five-year term ending December 31, 2029, to support Brampton's growing tech entrepreneur ecosystem.

Authored by:

Reviewed by:

Devin Ramphal
Sector Manager, Innovation &
Technology
Economic Development

Paul Aldunate
A/Senior Manager
Economic Development

Approved by:

Approved by:

Denise McClure
A/Director
Economic Development

Marlon Kallideen
Chief Administrative Officer