

# INNOVATION NORTH



## Who We Are

Innovation North is a research-practice initiative focused on tackling complex management challenges using a systems-based approach. Our team is made up of researchers from the Ivey Business School at Western University in London, Ontario. Because we work as researchers rather than consultants, we're able to think bigger—moving beyond the immediate, surface-level solutions people often gravitate toward to uncover deeper, systemic opportunities for change.

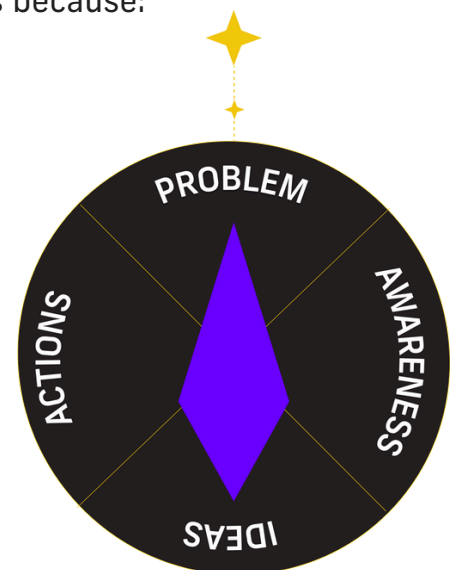
Innovation North was founded in 2019 by Dr. Tima Bansal with a \$2.5M Partnership Grant from the Government of Canada. Since then, we've collaborated with leaders from 30 Canadian organizations to co-create the Compass, the innovation tool that now guides our work.



## Our Approach

Systems thinking encourages innovators to consider how their actions shape long-term outcomes for both their organization and society. This approach leads to stronger innovations, more effective organizations, thriving communities, and a healthier planet. Much like a physical compass helps explorers navigate unfamiliar terrain, Innovation North's Compass helps organizations chart a course through growing complexity and disruption. It is unique from other innovation approaches because:

- An organization's long-term purpose and near-term goals are the starting point and kept in sight throughout.
- It encourages multiple perspectives, including those not often seen as directly involved.
- It is highly iterative. Start by spending time in each of the Compass spaces, then move back and forth among them until a clear set of actions emerge.
- It does not generate a single solution; instead, it generates an ecology of actions that can be applied now, in the near future, and in the distant future.



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## What We Do

### Innovation Projects

In our Innovation Projects, we co-create solutions to complex challenges by combining our partners' deep, context-specific expertise with our global, systems-level perspective. Together, we generate novel ideas and build lasting capabilities within organizations that endure beyond the project.

We've collaborated with organizations across business, government, and the non-profit sector in industries such as insurance, finance, agriculture, and construction. Projects usually span 6 months or more and start at \$50k, depending on scope and complexity.

### Student Challenge

Each year, Innovation North partners with a leading Canadian organization to deliver a Student Challenge. The aim is to bring together students from across Canada to learn about systems thinking through a real world, complex challenge.

In 2025, more than 250 students spanning various disciplines and academic levels were selected to participate. Twelve finalist teams travelled to Toronto where they presented their ideas for tackling the growing loneliness epidemic. Now in its third year, the Challenge continues to grow and we hope to expand our reach internationally.

### Resources & Publications

Innovation North publishes resources related to systems thinking on our website ([innovationnorth.ca](http://innovationnorth.ca)) and on social media. Articles about Innovation North and our projects have been featured in media such as *Forbes*, *Financial Times* and *Harvard Business Review*, and our team of researchers regularly publishes in academic journals such as *Journal of Management Studies*, *Business & Society*, and *Strategic Organization*.