AltoLeap

AI FUNDING FIT CHECKLIST

AI Funding Fit for Canadian Manufacturers

Two quick steps: find the funding lane that matches your project, then check whether you're ready to apply. A no-hype self-assessment for manufacturers weighing spend on AI, automation, or custom software.

STEP 1 · FIND YOUR FUNDING LANE

1. **You're buying a known solution** ERP, CRM, an AI assistant, or a commercial vision or planning tool.
   → **Adoption & readiness:** NGen readiness assessment · BDC LIFT · Ontario Digital Competence Centre

2. **You're buying equipment or automation** A robot cell, sensors, a CNC upgrade, or automated inspection.
   → **Capital & productivity:** BDC LIFT (equipment) · Ontario AMIC · Ontario Made Manufacturing tax credit · EDC if exporting

3. **You're solving a genuine technical unknown** No off-the-shelf answer; real experimentation and risk.
   → **R&D:** NRC IRAP / IRAP AI Assist · SR&ED · Mitacs

4. **You're co-developing and creating new IP** Building something new with a vendor, customer, or university partner.
   → **Collaborative innovation:** Scale AI · NGen challenges · NSERC

5. **You're funding growth for bigger contracts** Capacity and systems to serve larger or export orders.
   → **Scale-up financing:** EDC · your regional development agency · BDC

Adopter or developer? Most headline AI programs (the Compute Access Fund, much of IRAP, SR&ED) are built for companies *developing* AI. If you're buying and using a tool, you're an *adopter*, and your best routes are financing, readiness, and productivity programs.

STEP 2 · BEFORE YOU APPLY: FIT CHECKS

- [ ] We've defined one operational problem and a baseline number (not "we need AI").
- [ ] We meet the basic thresholds for that lane (revenue, size, years, region).
- [ ] If we call it R&D, there's real technical uncertainty, not just setup and configuration.
- [ ] Someone owns the data, the integration, and a basic security and privacy plan.
- [ ] We know which lane the project is in.
- [ ] We haven't signed the contract or started the work yet.
- [ ] We can fund our share and carry costs until we're reimbursed.
- [ ] We can state the outcome in numbers (defects, downtime, quote lead time).

Reading your answers: the more boxes you tick, the closer you are to a fundable project. The most common mistake is chasing a headline before the project is defined. Funding follows a well-scoped project, not the other way around. And remember: a $500M program envelope is not a $500M cheque for one company.

Program names current as of July 2026. Amounts, deadlines, and open intakes change often. Check the live guide at altoleap.com/guides for current terms. This is educational information, not legal, tax, or grant-writing advice.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

1. **Free 20-Min Fit Call**
   A quick, no-pressure call to see if it's a fit.

2. **AI Opportunity Blueprint**
   A focused session that maps scope, risks, and a costed Phase 1.

3. **Phased Implementation**
   We build Phase 1 around what creates value now, architected to grow.

4. **Ongoing Support**
   We support, improve, and evolve the system as you scale.

Book your free 20-minute Fit Call

Scan the code, or visit **calendly.com/lfalconer-altoleap/20-minute-fit-call**

Tell us the process costing you the most time. We'll give you an honest read on whether custom software, an off-the-shelf tool, or nothing at all is the right move.