



Press Release

For Immediate Release

New FEAST Hub Program Offers Commercial Kitchen Access, Funding, and Mentorship for Food Startups

Kenora, Ontario, July 22, 2026 — Together in partnership, the **Northwestern Ontario Innovation Centre (NOIC)** and **Seven Generations Education Institute (SGEI)** are launching **FEAST** (Food Enterprises Advancement and SME Transformation), a nine-to-twelve-month business accelerator designed to help food entrepreneurs in the Kenora and Rainy River region grow from farmers' market vendors into scalable, full-time operations.

FEAST supports entrepreneurs who have validated their products and are ready to scale. Each cohort consisting of six participants will receive:

- Access to SGEI's Kenora Campus commercial kitchen (10 hours/month) with storage
- Mentorship and networking with other food entrepreneurs
- Guidance on food safety and regulatory compliance
- Up to **\$5,000 in reimbursement funding** (50% cost-share) for eligible expenses

The program is open to start-ups, existing businesses, and Indigenous communities across Northwestern Ontario producing value-added food products such as baked goods, preserves, sauces, and prepared foods. Participants must commit full-time for the program duration. A one-time fee of **\$225** applies.

“FEAST is about giving local food entrepreneurs the tools to grow. Many have proven their products at the farmers’ market but lack access to kitchen space, regulatory support, and capital to scale. This program helps close that gap and strengthen our regional economy,” said **Richard Gemmill**, Executive Director of NOIC.

“Through this partnership, we are facilitating connections between entrepreneurs and the resources, facilities, and support networks essential for their business growth,” said **Brian Kozak**, Campus Director at SGEI’s Kenora Campus. *“By providing access to our commercial kitchen, classrooms, meeting spaces and training opportunities, our goal is to empower local entrepreneurs as they venture into the food manufacturing sector, equipping them with the tools they need to succeed.”*

Applications are open until **August 12, 2026**. Interested entrepreneurs can apply by emailing chathura@nwoinnovation.ca

About FEAST

FEAST is a business accelerator delivered by NOIC in partnership with SGEI Kenora Campus, with funding from FedNor. The program helps food entrepreneurs transition from small-scale production to commercial growth.

About NOIC

The Northwestern Ontario Innovation Centre supports innovative businesses through advisory services, funding access, and growth programming across the region.

About Seven Generations Education Institute

Seven Generations Education Institute (SGEI) is an Indigenous-led educational organization that provides secondary, post-secondary, training for employment and other programming to all Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the Treaty 3 area and beyond. With main campuses in the Rainy River District and Kenora and secondary education classrooms in more than 20 communities in northwestern Ontario, SGEI aims to provide culturally enriched community-based and student-centred learning opportunities for everyone. For more information, visit 7generations.org.

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