

WINNER FINANCIAL CHANGEMAKERS

BMO SME Climate Clinic trains students in carbon accounting while helping SMEs track emissions and move towards decarbonisation.

The BMO SME Climate Clinic is the first programme of its kind in Canada. As the flagship programme for the Centre for Climate and Business Solutions at UBC Sauder School of Business, it trains students in carbon accounting then matches them with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to report on and reduce their carbon emissions for free.

This gives cash-strapped SMEs critical tools for building sustainable practices while preparing students for careers in the green economy, embedding climate skills into the future workforce and making emission reduction business-as-usual.

Training tomorrow's climate leaders

"Small businesses are increasingly being asked to report their emissions by larger clients, but many are intimidated at the prospect and lack the tools, time and budget," says Kookai Chaimahawong, Executive Director of the Centre.

"The BMO SME Climate Clinic addresses this head-on, pairing SMEs with students who can calculate the business's scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions and recommend actionable carbon reduction strategies. Being able to provide carbon reporting can help an SME win new customers or even attract impact investors."

Delivered alongside a course on climate-focused ESG reporting and analysis, the clinic offers a powerful combination of education and application. Students learn the theoretical foundations of ESG analysis, including carbon accounting, and then put that knowledge into practice with a real business in need of support.

"We're training students in climate finance skills and giving them real-world experience while helping under-resourced businesses make tangible environmental improvements," says Caren Lombard, Finance Faculty Lead and Academic Lead of the initiative.



Caren Lombard, Finance Faculty Lead and Academic Lead

“This is more than a classroom exercise – it’s a working model for how climate-conscious accounting can be embedded into the DNA of the next generation of professionals.”

Making an impact

The clinic is already delivering results. It has helped 100 students gain highly employable green finance skills, with several already securing roles in financial institutions' sustainability teams. Whether graduates go on to careers in consulting, finance or forestry, they have the skills to help drive environmental change in their industry.

30 SMEs now have detailed visibility into their emissions, along with actionable recommendations, helping them cut carbon, meet growing customer demands, and stand out to investors.

One of the SMEs to benefit from the programme is Cascadia Seaweed, a sustainable aquaculture company producing products for regenerative agriculture. The company is committed to sustainability and aims to quantify its environmental impact. Students helped calculate a comprehensive emissions profile and quantify their impact from carbon capture to the potential benefits of its kelp-based crop supplements. This analysis provides context for impact

investors and advances Cascadia's commitment to transparent reporting.

Large companies using these SMEs as suppliers also benefit, gaining greater insight into their scope 3 emissions – a notoriously difficult part of emissions reporting. Emissions data from the thousands of small, dispersed suppliers in their value chains is a significant gap in many organizations' disclosures. By beginning to create this data, the clinic helps larger firms move from estimates to evidence-based scope 3 reporting, addressing growing expectations from investors and customers.

Over time, the clinic aims to drive broader systemic change. By building a pipeline of climate-ready professionals, helping SMEs to access analysis they couldn't otherwise afford and creating scope 3 emissions data for larger businesses, the model accelerates the transition to sustainable business practices across the global value chain.

Exponential impact through scalability

The BMO SME Climate Clinic envisions driving systemic change by scaling up their model to reach more SMEs and train more students with the skills to drive environmental change. From a successful pilot cohort working with SMEs located solely in Vancouver, the team now engage with SMEs across Canada and reach more students and businesses.

Its replicable model can be adopted by other universities and business schools across Canada and the rest of the world, multiplying its impact. By making climate education and low-carbon business support more accessible, the clinic offers a blueprint for sustainable growth: one that empowers students, equips SMEs and shows that decarbonisation and business success can go hand in hand.

The judges' view:

"The BMO SME Climate Clinic has created an innovative solution that benefits students, SMEs and the wider business environment. This replicable model empowers the next generation of professionals to drive sustainable change and effectively tackles the 'long tail' of scope 3 emissions – a persistent data gap in the market."

"This programme's dual benefit – teaching carbon accounting while decarbonising SMEs – addresses a real market need and stood out as a replicable model for sustainable business transformation. Most exciting is the potential to scale to universities around the world, making a meaningful dent in carbon emissions across hard-to-reach areas of the value chain."

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