



**narwhal
project**

| 2025

Canada's Narwhals and Scaleups

#narwhallist



Canada's Narwhals - 2025

It is pleasing to see the progress that Canada has made since 2017, the first year that the Narwhal List was published. In 2017, the list was led by two health tech companies, and they made up 50% of the top ten firms in the country. Since then, we have had few health tech companies in the top 10 but that sector now appears to be undergoing some rebirth. The detailed lists of Canadian unicorns as well as leading companies from each of the computer, health, and clean technology sectors, follow: The complete list is also published at <https://www.narwhalproject.org/narwhal-list/>

Rank	Organization Name	Scaleup Rank	Year Founded	Total \$US Funding	City
1	Hostaway	98%	2015	543,222,813	Toronto
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3	LemFi	98%	2020	66,569,812	Toronto
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5	Cyclic Materials	97%	2021	83,600,000	Kingston
6	Abdera Therapeutics	97%	2021	148,325,391	Vancouver
7	Carbon6	97%	2021	81,935,547	Toronto
8	Tailscale	97%	2019	115,480,659	Toronto
9	Alpha9 Theranostics	96%	2019	259,017,545	Vancouver
10	Helius	96%	2022	31,250,000	Toronto

Benchmarking Canada's Scaleups

For nine years, the Narwhal Project has been benchmarking technology firms in Canada. To do this, we have identified the leading Canadian technology companies by measuring the results of all firms in Canada with greater than \$10 million of capital. Complete data were available for 788 of these. When we started this research, there were only 284 companies in our study.

Sector	Number	Average Scaleup Ranking 2023	Average Scaleup Ranking 2023
Entire Funnel	788	45.5%	48.6%
Computer Tech	586	44.7%	49.9%
Health Tech	79	37.6%	37.0%
Clean Tech	84	47.1%	45.5%

For the last few years, we have been benchmarking Canadian firms against all North American scaleups. To do this we compute a scaleup ranking that compares each company to over 17,000 scaling companies in North America. The ranking for each company shows their score as a percentile against these reference companies. This ranking measures each company's ability to acquire capital to fuel growth, their growth rate in personnel and how big they have become in terms of the number of employees. The final number used in ranking is a percentile between 0% and 100%, showing the percentage of companies that any particular company is performing better at in scaling.

Key Findings

Canada continues to make progress at scaling technology companies. The key findings from this study of our scaleups and the creation of the Narwhal list is as follows:

- While the health technology and clean technology sectors improved their scaleup rankings against American firms, the computer technology sector declined somewhat in its competitive position.
- Both health and clean tech scaleups outperformed their US counterparts by having two-year compound average growth rates in employment well in excess of US results. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the computer technology sector which had lower growth relative to US firms.
- Both the computer tech and health tech sectors had increases in the average capital available to scaleups
- Fundraising levels recovered somewhat during the year, particularly in the computer technology sector where the average raise was more than double the prior year. A significant increase was seen as well in the health tech sector and a small decline in clean tech.
- The percentage of firms taking out patents in Canada outscores the US in every sector.
- Narwhal scaleup rankings are virtually flat in the computer sector and improving nicely in health and clean tech.
- The Narwhal employment growth rate has had a slight decline in computer tech and has increased in health and clean tech.

Analysis

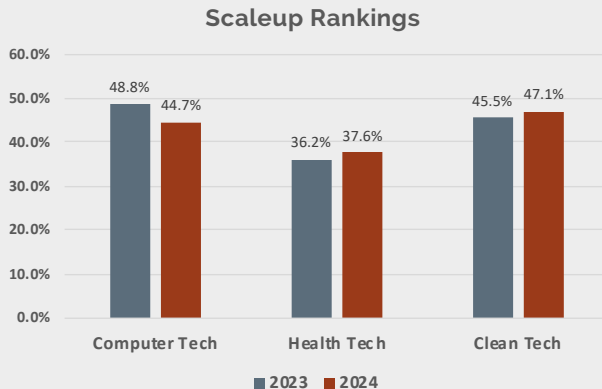
The data for scaleups and Narwhals shows that we are experiencing good results among health tech and clean tech firms. And it shows a small weakness among computer tech firms. The data also shows that for scaleups as a whole, and not including Unicorns, there are a number of ways that the health and clean tech sectors are competitive with the US and the computer tech sector lags a bit behind but not as far behind as one might expect. The results of the Unicorn analysis, included in a separate report tells a different story. The US, which now has over 750 Unicorns to Canada's 27. And they have had 738 exits while Canada has had two of which one was not a success.

What this is pointing to is a nuanced interpretation of Canada's challenged technology sector. Yes, we start fewer companies on a per capita basis, but it looks for the most part that they are holding their own as they grow and become scaleups. But we create way fewer Unicorns and the ones we do create don't go on to go public or be sold as often as US based Unicorns. This is undoubtedly causing very poor returns for Canadian venture capitalists.

What we are concluding from this analysis is that Canada doesn't have a scaleup problem, we have a Unicorn problem This will be a feature of further study by the Narwhal Project as we try to figure out why we have a Unicorn problem and what we should do about it.

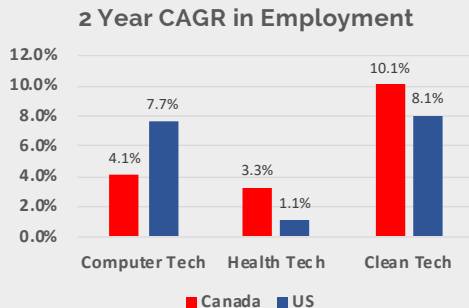
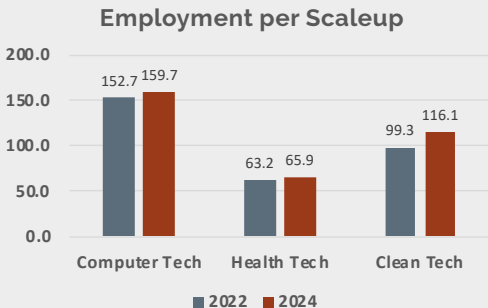
Scaleup Rankings

The average Scaleup Rankings of the three technology sectors show different movement. While the health technology and clean technology sectors improved their standings against American firms, the computer technology sector declined somewhat in its competitive position.



Scaleup Employment

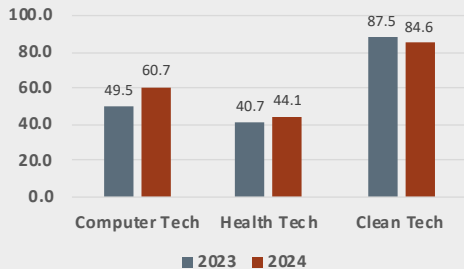
The average employment in firms in these sectors all improved during the year with the computer technology sector having the strongest showing. What is extremely interesting is that both health and clean tech scaleups outperformed their US counterparts by having two-year compound average growth rates in employment well in excess of US results. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the computer technology sector which had lower employment growth relative to US firms. This lower employment growth in the computer sector has been a significant factor in the lower scaleup rankings.



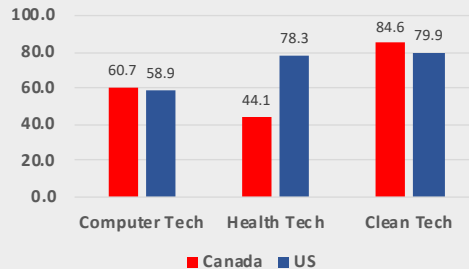
Capital per Scaleup

Both the computer tech and health tech sectors had increases in the average capital available to scaleups. It is puzzling that the amounts in the clean tech sector declined but this may be as a result of one clean tech company being included among Unicorns which are not included in the scaleup rankings so as to not distort results. Comparing to the US is interesting when Unicorns are removed as the computer and clean tech sectors both have more capital per firm than they do in the US, while health tech is significantly lower.

Capital per Scaleup (Millions)

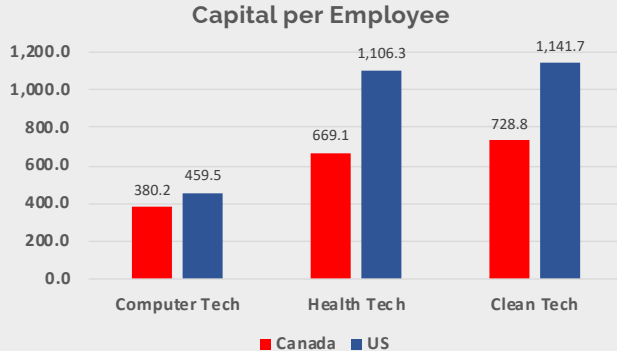


US vs Canada (Millions)



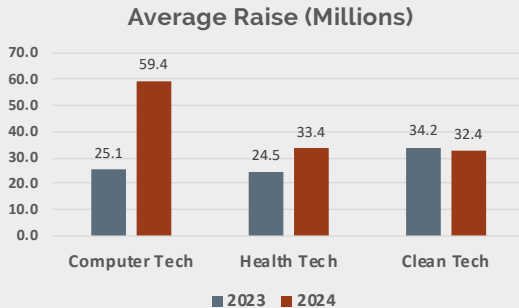
Scaleup Capital per Employee

Measuring capital per employee is one way of looking at efficiency. All sectors in the US have greater capital per employee than Canadian firms have. This would seem to imply that Canadian firms are more capital efficient but since we don't know what revenue levels these firms have, we can't conclude this definitively. There are a number of reasons that capital per employee may be higher in the US. Their firms may pay significantly higher salaries, have more contractors or have greater non-employee-based expenses.



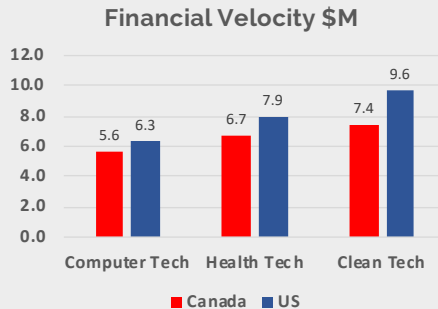
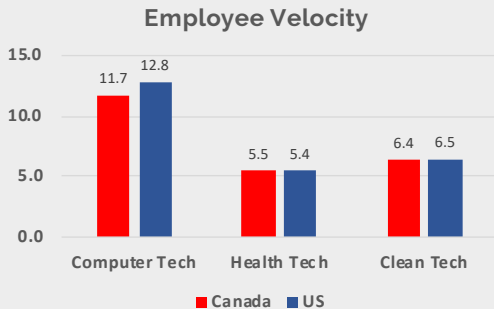
Scaleup Average Raise

Fundraising levels recovered somewhat during the year, particularly in the computer technology sector where the average raise was more than double the prior year. A significant increase was seen as well in the health tech sector and a small decline in clean tech.



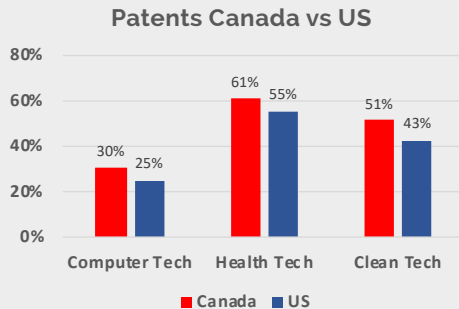
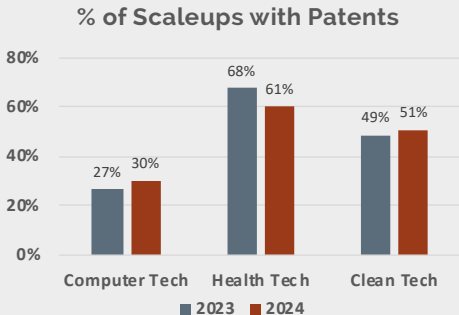
Scaleup Velocity

Velocity is designed to measure the number of employees hired per year or the amount of capital acquired by year. Employee and financial velocity are thus proxies for the rate at which firms are increasing in size over the long term. The much higher employee velocity in computer tech is reflected in the higher scaleup rankings of the firms in this sector. One interesting finding is that the US firms score a bit but not radically higher than Canadian firms, particularly in employee velocity. This analysis excludes Unicorns and in several statistics in this report we have seen results for US firms that are not radically in excess of results for Canadian ones.



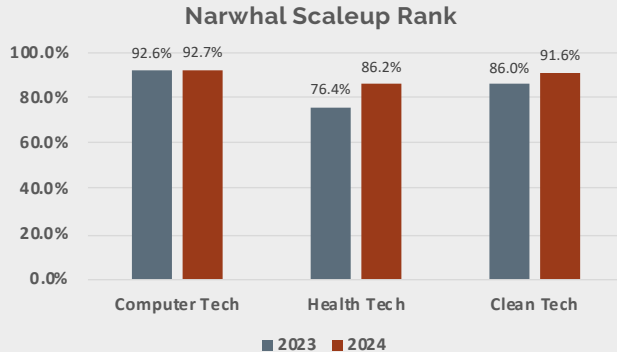
Scaleup Patents

Despite the Canadian government's fixation on patents, these statistics show that putting money into patenting programs is solving a problem that doesn't exist. The rate of patenting is increasing in both the computer and clean tech sectors. But the most unexpected finding is that the percentage of firms taking out patents in Canada outscores the US in every sector. And yet we continually lag US results in scaling. (One can only conclude that taking out patents isn't the way to create a more competitive technology sector in Canada.)



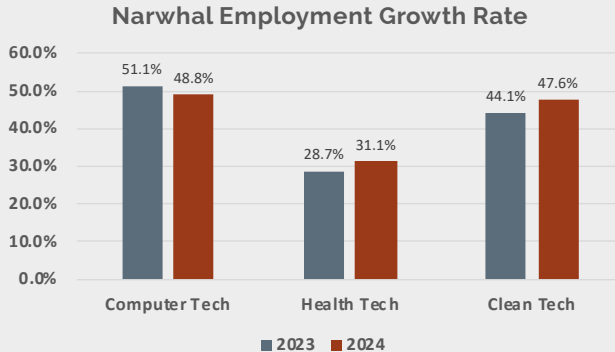
Narwhal Scaleup Rank

Where the average Unicorn two years ago had a Scaleup Rank of 74% last year, it fell to 70% this year. But the story is not the same for Narwhals. Narwhals, being the leading non-Unicorn scaleups are on average improving where Unicorns are in decline and other scaleups are improving in health and clean tech and holding their own in computer tech. This nuanced picture of growth follows a trend we have seen throughout these numbers. Canada doesn't so much have a scaleup problem or a Narwhal problem as it has a Unicorn problem.



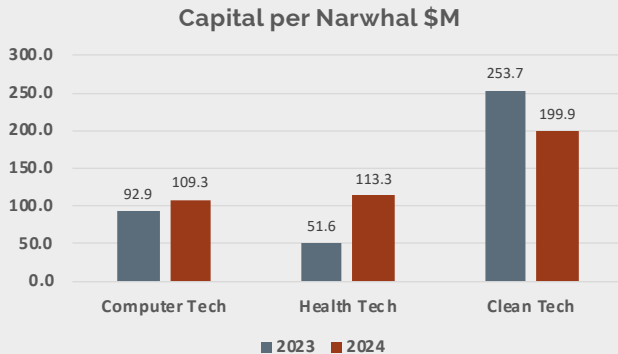
Narwhal Employment Growth Rate

Mirroring all sorts of other stats in this report is the decline in employment growth rate in the computer sector but increase in the health and clean tech sectors.



Capital per Narwhal

And finally, we can see the capital available to Narwhals has increased in the last year in the computer and health tech sector but declined in the clean tech sector.



Computer Tech Narwhals

Toronto continues to dominate the top of the computer tech segment of the Narwhal List with nine. Unfortunately, the stats are showing a decline in the Scaleup Rank caused by a declining growth rate. But these results are not dramatic enough to be a cause for concern.

Rank	Organization Name	Scaleup Rank	Year Founded	Total \$US Funding	City
1	Hostaway	98%	2015	543,222,813	Toronto
2	UniUni	98%	2019	135,000,000	Richmond
3	LemFi	98%	2020	66,569,812	Toronto
4	Waabi	97%	2021	282,553,410	Toronto
5	Carbon6	97%	2021	81,935,547	Toronto
6	Tailscale	97%	2019	115,480,659	Toronto
7	Helius	96%	2022	31,250,000	Toronto
8	Motion	96%	2021	42,000,000	Toronto
9	Relay	96%	2018	51,608,517	Toronto

Computer Tech Narwhals – Cont.

Rank	Organization Name	Scaleup Rank	Year Founded	Total \$US Funding	City
11	KOHO Financial	96%	2014	547,478,612	Toronto
12	CentML	96%	2022	30,305,612	Toronto
13	Doodles	95%	2021	54,000,000	Vancouver
14	CookOut	95%	2022	14,000,000	Toronto
15	Float	95%	2019	71,740,171	Toronto
16	Orennia	95%	2021	25,000,000	Calgary
17	Photonic	93%	2016	99,341,014	Vancouver
18	Parallel	93%	2021	85,000,000	Toronto
19	Betty	93%	2022	10,508,970	Toronto
20	EV.com	93%	2022	20,200,000	Toronto
21	ZayZoon	93%	2014	80,404,032	Calgary
22	Arteria AI	93%	2020	40,941,260	Toronto
23	Spare	92%	2015	66,868,535	Vancouver
24	Nesto	92%	2018	161,354,383	Montreal
25	Protexxa	91%	2021	10,214,626	Toronto

Rank	Organization Name	Scaleup Rank	Year Founded	Total \$US Funding	City
26	Keep	91%	2021	10,675,474	Ottawa
27	Durable	90%	2021	26,500,000	Vancouver
28	Clutch	90%	2017	370,295,894	Toronto
29	OneVest	90%	2021	16,694,855	Calgary
30	Fullscript	90%	2011	267,000,000	Ottawa
31	PayFacto	89%	2018	119,512,389	Verdun
32	Spellbook	89%	2018	32,376,629	Toronto
33	Hootsuite	88%	2008	299,900,000	Vancouver
34	Pine	88%	2021	21,305,856	Toronto
35	Solink	88%	2009	94,080,212	Ottawa
36	Darwynn	88%	2021	20,000,000	Scarborough
37	PocketHealth	88%	2016	55,500,000	Toronto
38	Maxa AI	88%	2019	23,830,265	Montreal
39	AutoLeap	88%	2019	54,250,000	Toronto
40	Fullscript	90%	2011	267,000,000	Ottawa

Health Tech Narwhals

Canada's health technology sector continues to be rebuilding and this year, significant progress has been made. Seven Narwhals raised an average of \$65 million whereas last year only three raised an average of \$10 million. This has increased the average Scaleup Rank from 76.4% to 86.2%.

Rank	Organization Name	Scaleup Rank	Year Founded	Total \$US Funding	City
1	Abdera Therapeutics	97%	2021	148,325,391	Vancouver
2	Alpha9 Theranostics	96%	2019	259,017,545	Vancouver
3	Kardium	91%	2007	219,971,108	Richmond
4	Borealis Biosciences	92%	2024	180,000,000	Vancouver
5	Nomic	88%	2017	60,025,686	Montreal
6	Congruence Therapeutics	88%	2021	64,581,196	Montreal
7	Aspect Biosystems	81%	2013	81,067,874	Vancouver
8	Radiant Biotherapeutics	79%	2020	45,100,000	Toronto
9	Puzzle Medical Devices	76%	2018	35,044,233	Montreal
10	Flosonics	74%	2015	40,175,000	Sudbury

Clean Tech Narwhals

There has been substantial change among Canada's leading Clean Tech Narwhals in the last year as five of the ten leading firms raised an average of \$72 million in the year. In addition, several of these firms have had significant employee growth rates which increased their rankings in the year.

Rank	Organization Name	Scaleup Rank	Year Founded	Total \$US Funding	City
1	Cyclic Materials	97%	2021	83,600,000	Kingston
2	Eavor	96%	2017	504,267,721	Calgary
3	WorldEnergy GH2	95%	2022	94,271,254	Stephenville
4	GHGSat	95%	2011	147,314,207	Montreal
5	EverWind Fuels	93%	2021	147,500,000	Halifax
6	Hydrostor	92%	2010	322,000,000	Toronto
7	Summit Nanotech	89%	2018	65,734,794	Calgary
8	Entropy	88%	2021	389,272,362	Calgary
9	Heliene Inc	88%	2010	225,450,000	Sault Sainte Marie
10	Elysis	84%	2018	20,000,000	Montreal

Background and Methodology

The objective of the Narwhal List is to identify those Canadian companies experiencing success at scaling up. We have used publicly available data to assess firms' scaling ability so that any firm anywhere can be rated similarly. To accumulate the data used to prepare these lists, a search was performed on Crunchbase and LinkedIn. Companies had to be active and private in a technology business headquartered in Canada to be eligible. The investigation identified those 788 companies on Crunchbase with over \$10 million of capital.

- Employee growth has been measured by the increase in the number of employees over the last two years.
- The company's Financial Velocity equals the total cash raised divided by the years
- The company's size is measured by the number of employees.

Measurements for these three data points are then compared with the data from over 17,000 North American firms that are also scaling. For each data point, a percentile ranking is computed, the three rankings are averaged, and an overall scaleup ranking is determined.

This Scaleup ranking can be used in several ways:

- To determine a firm's competitiveness when it is seeking capital.
- To quickly assess firms in a portfolio
- To compare firms to each other.

narwhal project

The Narwhal Project was established to create strategic and financial benchmarks for use by scaling companies. Our objective is to understand how companies can accelerate their growth and how companies and government can identify and adopt best practices in technology commercialization.

We use benchmarks to help companies figure out where they sit versus their competition and how to scale efficiently. We provide companies with the analytical tools to make strategic decisions that will fuel efficient growth. We help them figure out the best markets to serve, how to differentiate effectively, ensure product market fit, improve unit economics and raise capital.

Charles Plant

Charles Plant is Co-CEO of ExactBlue Technologies, a nanotechnology company that has developed the world's fastest and most sensitive tests for the detection of microbial contamination in water. He is also the founder of the Narwhal Project.

Charles has been an officer or director in more than 20 emerging technology companies including Synamics a telecommunications software firm which he co-founded and was CEO of for 15 years. He has worked in investment banking and venture capital. He has an MBA in marketing, is a CPA/CA and has a PhD in economics.

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