

# Columbia University partners with Cetos Water to commercialize award-winning water innovation

*GPIW 2024 winner now developing full-scale pilot to deliver sustainable desalination*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, August 7, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A breakthrough desalination technology developed at Columbia University and recognised at last year's Global Prize for Innovation in Water (GPIW) is now moving toward commercialization through water tech pioneer [Cetos Water](#).



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*Dr Ngai Yin Yip*

Led by Dr Ngai Yin Yip, La Von Duddleson Krumb Associate Professor in Columbia's Department of Earth and Environmental Engineering, the [research lab](#) won GPIW awards in 2024 for both its pioneering technology and its

long-term impact in water innovation. Now, just months later, the innovation is being fast-tracked for real-world deployment through a commercial partner, Cetos Water.

"It's a huge leap from lab experiments and theoretical models to what could soon be a full-scale, commercial desalination proposition," said Dr Yip. "Winning GPIW gave us validation and visibility, and Cetos Water is helping make commercial rollout a reality."

Cetos Water CEO, Shannon Knee, attended the 2024 GPIW awards in Saudi Arabia, where early conversations with global water leaders, academics and startups led to strategic connections and pilot planning opportunities. Since then, Cetos Water has made significant progress in fundraising and is actively developing its first pilot site.

"Desalination has been beset by approaches that are limited at best," said Shannon Knee, Cetos Water. "Dr Yip and his team have put together a compelling solution and we are proud to be helping them bring that fully to life."

Dr Yip's lab has spent years exploring innovative new approaches to water purification, including desalination, aiming to overcome the persistent limitations of established methods like reverse osmosis. GPIW was one of the first international platforms to recognise the innovation.

In 2024, GPIW - managed by SWA (Saudi Water Authority) - saw around 540 entries received from 56 countries and over 80 universities and research institutions.

"The GPIW programme has been an incredible experience," continued Dr Yip. "Even beyond the award, it created opportunities to meet other innovators, potential collaborators, and global decision-makers. It is incredibly challenging to address the issues the world is facing around water – nature does not give up its secrets easily – so it is supportive and empowering to meet other people also trying to help. I'm already planning to submit another project in 2025."

Dr Yip and his team entered the 2024 programme via Innocentive, the open innovation crowd that is part of the Wazoku innovation eco-system. Innocentive has more than 700,000 expert solvers, comprising academics, entrepreneurs, engineers and more, which are set challenges by brands and that can win cash prizes for delivering solutions to those challenges.

The [2025 Global Prize for Innovation in Water](#) is now open for entries until 14 September 2025. Funded by the Saudi Water Authority, GPIW supports breakthrough ideas with a \$1.8 million prize pool, global exposure, and pilot funding.

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