Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance

Gryphon’s LAAIR Program Guide

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GRYPHON’S LAAIR PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This guidance document focuses on program details and the application process for the Gryphon’s LAAIR (Leading to the Accelerated Adoption of Innovative Research) Market Validation and Product Development Grants.

Purpose

The Market Validation Grant aims to support market research to accurately determine the market potential of new research results that appear to have commercial benefits for the Ontario agri-food industry. The Product Development Grant aims to support the creation and optimization of a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) which has strong potential to be commercialized and benefit the Ontario Agri-food industry.

Vision

Gryphon’s LAAIR (GLAAIR) Grants were created by the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance to provide financial support to U of G researchers who have identified an opportunity to accelerate the adoption of new commercially viable technologies developed from previous applied research projects. The goal of these grants is to increase the number of U of G driven technologies adopted for use by the Ontario agri-food industry and to make the Ontario agri-food industry more locally and globally competitive.

Guiding Principles

- Develop new technologies (products & solutions) to make the Ontario agri-food sector more competitive
- Use market-based evidence to determine the commercial value of agri-food research and new technologies, now and in the future
- Remove barriers preventing the adoption of new technologies with commercial potential
Background

Improvement of the Ontario agri-food sector depends on continuous research support that enables new technologies to mature into products that have an economic impact in the marketplace. Market Validation Grants provide support for technologies immediately after the applied-research stage, but before completing any market research. Understanding "product-market fit" is crucial when launching a new product, process, or service and these grants are designed to enable U of G researchers to assess the market potential of an existing, well-developed U of G technology. The knowledge derived from a completed Market Validation project will better position a new technology to secure follow-on funding, such as a Product Development Grant, to advance a technology even closer to market launch or transfer to industry. Product Development Grants provide support after a significant amount of applied research has been completed and the market need for your new technology has been validated. The Product Development funding is used to help remove the current barriers that prevent industry from using or adopting your product.

Market Validation Grants

Market Validation projects conduct primary research, often called Customer Discovery, that reveals the wants and needs of stakeholders from all levels of industry, government, supply chain controllers, and end-users. This involves testing an early-stage concept with potential customers and end-users. This first conceptual product is often called a Minimum Viable Product (MVP). MVPs require support from the time of discovery, often called Technology Readiness Level 1 (TRL 1, see below), to full maturity (TRL 9), when they are launched into the marketplace. The MVP assessment should be supported with objective data gathered from trusted primary and secondary sources that allow the research team to quantify and catalogue market size, customer demographics, regulatory requirements, costing outlook, competitive landscape, and the time and resources required to launch a first product.

Applications should clearly describe the approach, activities, and tools to be used to perform the Market Validation project. Applicants should develop a project plan which aims to answer these key questions:

1. Does a significant problem (unmet need) exist in the agri-food market that is worth developing a practical commercial solution?
2. What do customers want and, more importantly, need to solve their problem?
3. What resources would the research team need to develop a commercial solution (e.g., minimum viable product) that customers are willing to pay for, to solve their problem?

The most important output from a Market Validation project is customer-generated evidence that confirms the problem your technology solves; the market size, the stakeholders, payees, customers, competitors, and the barriers you must overcome to get your technology to market. A successfully completed Market Validation project will greatly improve the probability that your technology gets to market to solve real customer’s problems.

Product Development Grants

Product Development Grants are designed to enable U of G researchers to take proven applied research results, often called new technologies, and develop them into a focused, useable, and practical products that can be tested, improved, and shared with potential customers for feedback and eventual commercialization. A key goal of Product Development funding is to help UofG researchers build and demonstrate their MVP to end-users (customers and industry partners), to obtain feedback for further optimization. Interacting with end-users
will enable researchers and entrepreneurs to obtain objective data from the market that will dramatically increase the probability of launching a successful MVP.

The application should clearly describe the approach, activities, and tools to be used to execute your project plan and, if needed, explain why these activities are better than those not chosen.

Upon completing your Product Development project, you should be in an excellent position to create a launch plan for your MVP or have an industry partner willing to take over the responsibility to bring your MVP to market.

Key Goals

- Accurately and objectively understand how to prepare a technology to be adopted by industry and the barriers that must be removed or managed to do so
- Advance the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of technologies with commercial potential
- Understand why industry is willing or not willing to commit to adopting/developing your technology
- Better understand industry’s needs and the challenges to bring new products and services to the agri-food market in Ontario
- Provide current and substantiated evidence of end-user needs, market size and demand, and viable product features; all of which can be used to secure follow-on funding for future product development of your technology
- To motivate researchers to “get out of the building” (off academic campus) so you can understand how well your technology fits the real needs of the commercial market
- Change, adapt and optimize your MVP to better meet the needs of industry and end users
- Generate data and reports that can be used to secure additional follow-on investment from industry or investors to create/launch a commercially viable MVP

Technology Readiness Level

Please refer to the following scale (developed and used by many governments, funders, investors, and NASA) to determine the current Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of any commercially feasible product, process, or technology according to the definitions below:

**TLR-1 Basic Principles Observed:** The translation of basic scientific research into applied research. This is mostly the exploration of a technology’s basic properties.

**TLR-2 Technology Concept Formulated:** The study of how technologies could be applied in the market. This is the point where the project’s direction takes form.

**TLR-3 Experimental Proof-of-Concept Created:** At this phase, active product development begins and a technological solution is developed. This stage looks at the critical function of the technology and attempts to determine what is required for this technology to meet the end user’s requirements.

**TLR-4 Prototype Validated in the Lab:** The integration and testing of basic components in a laboratory environment. This can be done multiple times during technology development to ensure that the technology is progressing toward its desired purpose.

**TLR-5 Prototype Validated in the Field:** The integration and testing of basic components in a real or simulated field environment. This is done following lab testing and usually involves accessing better testing equipment to identify potential issues in the field.
**TLR-6  Prototype Demonstrated in an Industrial Relevant Field:** Upon completion of the technology’s design, more thorough testing under industrial conditions can commence. This will provide data critical to the commercialization phase for which the technology is applied.

**TLR-7  Prototype Demonstrated under Industrial Operational Environment:** Using the prototype in an operational environment to understand how well it performs in non-simulated testing. Further development and optimization may be required to address performance issues.

**TLR-8  Final Testing and Evaluation:** Upon further testing and commissioning under all predicted operating conditions, the technology has proven itself to be successful.

**TLR-9  Successful Deployment:** The technology, in its final form, is manufactured and deployed to end users for use in real-life conditions.

**Timelines for 2020-21 Gryphon’s LAAIR Programming**

- Program launch: Wednesday, October 14, 2020
- Full proposal submissions deadline: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 at 1:00 pm
- Anticipated award notification: end of February 2021
- Projects start on or after May 3, 2021

**Research Priorities**

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) undertook a new approach to research priority setting in 2019. The 2020-21 OMAFRA Research Priorities for the Alliance Research Programs are aligned within the Ministry’s core businesses and objectives: Protection and Assurance, Stewardship, and Economic Development as illustrated below.

Each of these research priorities has a set of goals and research focus areas, in addition to five cross-cutting focus areas. Research priorities and focus areas are outlined in greater detail in the 2020-21 OMAFRA Research Priorities document. Program applicants must demonstrate that their proposal is within scope of OMAFRA’s research priorities and focus areas.
HOW TO APPLY

Single Stage Call

The Gryphon’s LAAIR Program awards funding annually via a competitive call for proposals process. The application process uses a single stage (Full Proposals only).

Online Application System - Research Management System (RMS)

- All Alliance programming is administered in the RMS. A new RMS platform was launched in October 2019.
- If you have not previously registered in the RMS select “Register” on the login page: https://omafra2.smartsimple.ca (new URL as of October 2019)
- If you have already registered in the new RMS (you have applied to a program in RMS since October 2019 or submitted a report in RMS since January 2020), simply log in.
- If you have previously applied to a program in the RMS but have not applied or completed any reporting since October 2019, you will need to create a new password. Faculty contact records were migrated from the previous RMS system, but for security reasons passwords have not. Please follow these steps:
  1. Select the “Forgot Password” option on the home screen of the RMS login page. Enter your uoguelph.ca email address when prompted.
  2. You will receive an e-mail to your uoguelph.ca email address containing a link to reset your password. Enter a new password at the prompts. Note: Faculty existing within the previous RMS system must follow the “Forgot Password” option to be properly affiliated with their previous projects that have been migrated to the new RMS. It should not take longer than an hour to receive the e-mail for your password reset. Occasionally these e-mails can go to the spam folder.

Please contact rescoord@uoguelph.ca if you experience any difficulties logging in.

To open an application, select the applicable Gryphon’s LAAIR Program and click on “Determine Eligibility”. Confirm your eligibility to apply for funding to access an application.

For the best experience we suggest using the latest version of Chrome, Firefox, or Safari. Internet Explorer will not be supported by the RMS platform provider beyond November 2020.

Lead Applicants and Co-Applicants

The Lead Applicant is the primary award holder and is accountable for project management and compliance with any reporting requirements.

A Co-Applicant (optional) is a researcher or partner that plays an important and ongoing role in the development and implementation of the project. Co-applicants are identified and invited from the Invitations tab in the RMS. There can only be one Co-applicant. Co-applicants share a role in the responsibility for project management and reporting requirements and as such have equal editing capabilities on applications and
reports as the Lead Applicant, with the exception of the ability to invite additional team members to the proposal.

University of Guelph faculty members are eligible to be the Lead Applicant and/or a Co-applicant on any Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance Research Program project. Adjunct faculty members may also apply if they are eligible to hold research funding at the University of Guelph. Non-faculty team members are not eligible to be either a Lead or Co-applicant.

Prior to being awarded any new project(s) under the Alliance, Lead Applicants and Co-applicants must be fully compliant with all reporting requirements for existing projects under the OMAFRA-UofG / Alliance Research Program.

GRYPHON’S LAAIR FULL PROPOSAL APPLICATION

Support for Applicants
The following supports are available to assist researchers in the application process:

- This program guide
- Instructions and tool tips (denoted by 🌐) in the RMS application template
- If you have questions related to the funding program, please contact David Hobson at x58859 or dhobson@uoguelph.ca
- If you experience technical difficulties or need support with the RMS application template, please contact our Research Program Coordinators at rescoord@uoguelph.ca

Gryphon’s LAAIR Application Template
The Gryphon’s LAAIR application consists of several sections that are navigated via tabs across the top of the on-line application in the RMS. All tabs must be completed. A validation process will take place upon submission to ensure all mandatory fields are complete. The majority of the application instructions are provided in the RMS, but some additional guidance is provided below.

Research Priority Selection
Select the Research Priority and Research Focus Area that your project will address from the drop-down lists in the RMS. Researchers are also encouraged to describe how their project addresses one or more of the Ministry’s three core business areas (Protection and Assurance, Stewardship, Economic Development).

Research Team and Invitation process
Team members and Highly Qualified Personnel are identified in their respective tables in the Team tab in the RMS. The research team member invitation process is described in the application template). Co-applicants, Delegates (described below), and all Collaborators should confirm their participation in the project and be registered in the RMS by the proposal submission date. Confirmed Collaborators will have read-only access to the proposal; Co-Applicants and Delegates (both optional) will have the ability to edit the proposal.
A Delegate (optional – limit of one) is an individual whose only role is to assist the Lead Applicant in the creation and editing of the application and progress reports (for awarded projects). A Delegate must be part of your organization. A Delegate, while not formally a team member, is identified and invited from the team member tab in the RMS. Delegates that play an active role in the research project must also be identified and invited as a Collaborator or identified in the HQP table in the RMS (this is important for Alliance programs performance indicator reporting).

There is no limitation placed on the balance of the team composition, but all team members should play an active role as collaborators in the implementation of the project (advisory, researcher or knowledge broker). The team may include individuals from:

- U of G (researchers and other support staff e.g. technicians)
- Other University or research institutions in Canada or globally
- Private businesses
- Industry / commodity organizations
- Non-governmental organizations
- Provincial, federal, or municipal government departments (e.g., OMAFRA staff).

The project team composition should ensure that the appropriate research expertise is assembled to complete the research objective(s) to be addressed. Where applicable, team members responsible for KTT should be identified in the team table.

A new Funding Source field captures the funding source for team members to help support the evaluation of the budget. This field applies primarily for team members working at the U of G who are funded as part of the project, other Alliance/OMAFRA funding, or from partner funds (e.g. Research Technicians, Research Associates, etc.). Select one of the following for each team member as appropriate:

- This project (in whole/in part) – for team members who will be supported directly with project funds. These expenses need to be identified in the budget.
- Another OMAFRA program – for Research Technicians etc. who are supported through other funding from the Alliance (e.g. base funded Technician). They do not need to appear in the budget.
- Another funding source – for team members supported under this project through partner funds. These expenses, and the relevant co-funder(s), need to be identified in the budget.
- N/A - for all other team members (faculty, collaborating researchers etc.)

The FTE (full-time equivalent) you report in the team member table should reflect the average annual time that each individual will contribute to the project. An FTE of 1.0 is a full-time commitment to the project (e.g. 35 hours per week) and an FTE of 0.1 is equivalent to 3.5 hours per week (for a 35-hour week). Documenting FTE contributions are important to support Alliance programs performance indicator reporting. The involvement of all team members (including their estimated actual FTE contributions to the project) will be reported on in annual and final reports.

Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP)

The training and development of Highly Qualified Personnel is an important objective of the Alliance and an Agreement performance indicator. Effort should be made wherever possible to engage HQP in Alliance-funded research projects.
HQP are undergraduate and graduate students or post-doctoral fellows receiving training through the proposed research, regardless of funding source. These HQP are captured separately from team members in the RMS. Please provide details on all HQP that will be involved in the project, regardless of their stipend funding source. Highly Qualified Personnel do not need to be invited. Proposals can move forward without specific persons identified as HQP if the positions are not yet filled. If specific people are not identified, use “TBD” as a placeholder for the first and last name within the HQP table and complete all other fields except for e-mail address. Similarly to the Team Member table, identify the HQP Funding Source as either ‘This project (in whole/in part)’, ‘HQP Scholarship Program’, or ‘Another funding source’.

Ensure that all personnel that will be supported through the project, either through program or partner funds, are clearly identified in the budget.

Supporting Documentation

Supporting documentation should be in PDF format and may include:

- Team Member Supporting Documentation
  - CV’s of the Lead Applicant and Co-Applicant (mandatory)
- Proposal Details Supporting Documentation
  - Relevant articles demonstrating industry needs
  - One-page diagram which illustrates the methods described in the proposal
- Other Supporting Documentation
  - Letters of support
  - Confirmation of leveraged funding (if additional funding is listed as confirmed, a letter of confirmation is required before the project can be Awarded)
  - Award letters to be leveraged with this proposal

OR-5 Form

An OR-5 Form is no longer required to be uploaded to the application. OR-5 fields are completed on-line by the applicant on the OR-5 tab of the application within the RMS. Department and College approval will be obtained electronically following proposal submission. No further action, beyond completing the OR-5 fields, is required from the applicants.

THE RMS BUDGET GUIDELINES

Budget Limits

There are two types of grant applications under the GLAAIR program; Market Validation and Product Development. A total of $350,000 will be allocated to successful proposals across the Market Validation and Product Development Grants.

Market Validation projects have a maximum of $20,000 and duration no more than 12 months, but projects may be extended with appropriate justification.
**Product Development** projects have a maximum of $100,000 and duration no more than three years, but projects may be extended with appropriate justification.

Granted funds must be utilized according to the projected budget and must be used for Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance eligible and approved expenses.

## Eligible and Ineligible Expenses

The following provides a guideline of direct project expenses that are eligible under the Alliance Research Programs eligible for project operating costs. It is not an exhaustive list. Please contact rescoord@uoguelph.ca with any questions regarding eligibility of budget items (either as direct project expenses or as matching contributions).

Eligible project expenses (can also be provided by funding partners):

- Salaries of scientific or technical staff employed on a contract basis or hired specifically for the purposes of this project (including those at U of G if not funded by the Alliance). Value should be based on their FTE contribution to the project.
- Graduate student stipends
- Goods and services necessary for the project (e.g. supplies, disposables, sampling, lab testing, professional analytical services, market research consulting, etc.)
- Equipment purchases (generally not exceeding $10,000 per item). Alliance funding is limited and not intended for significant equipment purchases with a useful lifespan beyond the duration of the project. However, a larger equipment purchase (exceeding $10,000) that is fundamental to the research project may be eligible with a strong rationale. The review committees will consider these purchases on a case by case basis. Please contact rescoord@uoguelph.ca if you have any questions about equipment purchases.
- Publication costs (e.g. page charges for academic journals)
- Travel necessary to carry out the project (e.g. to research stations and field plots)
- Travel to conferences where project information is being presented.
- Matching funds (not exceeding $5,000) for follow-on activities (approved grant from NSERC I2I, IRAP, OCE, or industry managed private grant) which further advances Canadian commercial development of the technology or MVP or expands the outcomes of this project or extends the duration of this project to create greater impact. Please contact rescoord@uoguelph.ca if you plan to expense matching funds because the eligibility criteria is highly variable.

Ineligible project expenses:

- OMAFRA staff time or resources
- Salaries of permanent staff whose compensation is not specifically dependent on on-going research project funding
- Support for meetings/events that would occur regardless of project funding

## Research Station Use and Access Fees

U of G faculty have access to 15 research stations at highly subsidized rates. If you intend to use a research station(s), please ensure this is identified in the ‘General’ Tab and the ‘OR-5’ tab under the Resource Use section in the RMS. This will create a section on the Budget tab where you identify the specific research station services you require. Full instructions are available in the RMS application.
Visit the Research Station Fees [program website](#) for a complete list of Research Stations and Research Station Access Fees.

**IMPORTANT:** Third party funding (non-OMAFRA, such as industry supplied cash funding) is required to cover the non-subsidized portion (8%) of any Research Station Fees expensed to the project.

### Leverage / Partner Funding

Funding partners are individuals or organizations that contribute cash and/or in-kind support to the project. These partners are captured under the ‘Other Sources of Project Funding’ section within the RMS.

In-kind contributions are non-cash contributions providing a direct, tangible benefit to the project. The donated asset or contribution must be essential to the project’s success and if not donated, would need to be purchased and paid for from approved project funds. In-kind contributions must be in lieu of eligible project expenses only.

All in-kind contributions must be fully explained in the budget notes. The value of the assets or services donated must reflect fair market value for the time period it is donated. The eligibility and value of in-kind contributions will be assessed by the review committee.

Although Gryphon’s LAAIR grants do not have prescribed mandatory matching or partner funding requirements, **effort should be made to secure partner cash and in-kind support wherever possible to make your grant application more competitive.** The Review Committee wants to understand how OMAFRA’s funds (investment in this project) will be used to leverage research capacity to create more impact. Demonstrating leverage is a key performance indicator for all Alliance Programs. So, while GLAAIR projects do not require matching funding, securing funding from industry demonstrates real market need and validation of end-user support for the project, which helps build a strong rationale for the research.

> **When documenting your leveraged funding in the RMS, funding partners may have both an Organization and Funding Program (for example NSERC Discovery has the Organization ‘NSERC’ and Funding Program ‘Discovery’). Please ensure you correctly identify these as independent entries (for example do not input the Organization as ‘NSERC Discovery’).**

Review committees will evaluate the level and nature of partner support that could reasonably be expected for a particular project. All partner support, whether cash or in-kind, needs to be fully documented/justified and considered essential to directly carry out the work of the project.

Funding partners can include:

- U of G (Lead Applicant organization) – cash support only from institutional source (e.g. scholarships, start-up funds etc.)
- Federal (including tri-council), provincial (including non-Alliance OMAFRA funding), or municipal governments
- Other universities / research institutions
- Private or public companies and industry organizations or associations
- Non-governmental organizations
- Individual donors, private foundations
Ineligible partner cash and in-kind:

- In-kind support from OMAFRA (time, resources, supplies, materials, etc.)
- In-kind support from U of G including use or provision of existing supplies, materials, and equipment belonging to the Lead Applicant, Co-Applicant, or U of G collaborators
- In-kind support from existing agreements with U of G to provide researchers with reduced cost access to equipment or services (e.g. rental car agreements)
- Salaries for individuals that are ‘regular, base-funded’ positions within the applying or donating organization. These individuals, if involved in the project, should be identified on the ‘Project Team Members’ table and invited to participate in the project.
- Other Alliance funding, including graduate student stipends awarded under the HQP Scholarship Program (however, these HQP must still be identified in the HQP table)
- Alliance-funded Technician time (however, Alliance-funded Technicians must be identified in the team members table to support performance indicator reporting and their funding source should be identified as Other OMAFRA Programs)

If your project is dependent on cash from external sources (any non-Alliance cash support needed as leverage), please ensure you identify this on the OR-5 tab in the RMS

Overhead/Indirect Costs

U of G indirect costs are incorporated into the master Alliance Agreement. No additional indirect costs are required and/or eligible on a project-by-project basis on the amount requested from OMAFRA. The overhead percentage identified in the budget tab should remain at 0%.

Partner Cash Contributions: Indirect costs must be included at the applicable rate on partner cash contributions from government and industry sponsors when those contributions leverage OMAFRA funding. Identify these costs in the ‘Operating-Other’ category in the ‘Cash from Partners’ expenditure table and describe them in the budget notes. More information is available here: https://www.uoguelph.ca/research/for-researchers/funding/apply/indirect-costs

Indirect costs levied by a collaborating institution receiving transfers of Alliance project funds are eligible and must be included in the budget under ‘Operating-Other’ in the ‘Funds Requested from Program’ expenditure table and described in the budget notes (see Collaborative Research Agreement section below).

Building a Project Budget

An Excel version of the budget template is available on the Alliance program website as an OPTIONAL tool to draft and plan your budget. This is for planning purposes only. Please DO NOT upload this Excel budget to your application. You are required to complete and submit the budget outline provided in the application in the RMS.

1. Sources of Project Funds includes the funding requested from the program as well as the cash and in-kind support from partners. If you have indicated there are other sources of funding for the project, click ‘ADD Funding Source’ under the ‘Other Sources of Project Funding’ section within the Budget tab and provide the details requested for each Funding Partner supporting the project.
2. **Expenditures of Project Funds** – There are three tables to be completed in the Budget tab (will appear in a pop-up window):

- Request from Program
- Cash from Partners (if applicable); and
- In-kind Support from Partners (if applicable)

The use of research stations requires cash support from partners to cover the portion of station access fees that is not subsidized by OMAFRA.

Use of program and partner funds should be allocated across budget categories and fiscal years. Each row in the budget corresponds to a U of G fiscal year (May 1 – April 30) that the project will take place. E.g., A 3-year project beginning October 1st would require 4 budget periods (fiscal years) – the first and last periods covering 6 months only.

*Use of project funds must be fully explained/justified in the text boxes provided. Your notes help reviewers determine whether your expenses are eligible, commensurate with the nature of your proposed research, and valued appropriately.*

**Budget for Collaborating Researchers**

**Sub-Awards (for U of G Collaborating Researchers)**
If a significant part of the project budget will be managed by a collaborating U of G faculty team member(s) a sub-award with a separate FRS tracking account number can be set up upon request. U of G Researchers in the same Department are expected to manage their project spending collaboratively.

- A separate budget worksheet which provides the details of the sub-award must be uploaded with the proposal. The budget worksheet is available on the Alliance program website.
- In addition, a *Letter of Agreement for Internal Transfer of Funds* will be required at the time of award.
- It is the Lead Applicant’s responsibility to report on all project activities, including the work of collaborating team members.

**Collaborative Research Agreements (for non-UofG Collaborating Researchers)**
Alliance project operating funding awarded for an approved project can be transferred to another institution for use by a team member via a Collaborative Research Agreement (CRA). CRAs are created post-award.

- Any *overhead/indirect costs* levied by the receiving institution on such fund transfers of OMAFRA-U of G project support must be included in the amount identified and budgeted for transfer, as there is no other mechanism by which such indirect expenses can be paid. The maximum overhead rate allowed will be 25%.
- If a CRA is required, a separate budget worksheet which provides the details of the budget for the CRA must be uploaded with the proposal. The budget worksheet is available on the Alliance program website.

*It is the Lead Applicant’s responsibility to report on all project activities, including the work of collaborating team members.*
APPLICATION CHECKLIST AND POST AWARD PROCESSES

Full Proposal Checklist

- Attend the Gryphon’s LAAIR Program Virtual Town Hall (program information session).
- Develop project concept.
- Discuss your preliminary proposal with the Research Innovation Office and get feedback on your work plan, barriers you plan to remove, and potential industry partners.
- Develop the proposal by completing all tabs in the RMS. Ensure the proposal is complete and well-written.
- Append all required documents (e.g. Lead Applicant and Co-Applicant CVs) and other supporting documentation as described above.
- Submit your Full Proposal in the RMS by the submission deadline (December 15, 2020 at 1:00 pm).

Full Proposal Decision Notification and Award Phase

- Researchers will be notified of the outcome of the review and approval process via the RMS.
- If applications are “Conditionally Approved”, applicants must address any conditions in the offer described in the notification email through the RMS. All leveraged funding must be confirmed with a letter of support prior to final approval.
- **New for 2020:** A Data Management Plan will be a condition of funding for all approved projects (see below).
- Award Agreements are issued for projects once the response to conditions of funding have been addressed and approved by reviewers. Execution of Award Agreements will occur by an online ‘DocuSign’ process. The Lead Applicant and the Department Chair will receive notification via email that there is an Agreement to sign.

Data Management Plans

The Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance is committed to fostering sound data management practices to facilitate new agri-food and rural research. As of 2018, researchers awarded funding through the Alliance research program must complete a data management plan (DMP) for their awarded project(s). A DMP summarizes how data generated over the course of a research project will be stored, shared and maintained. It can help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of a research project as well as help prepare data for preservation and sharing.

Upload the DMP to the “Data Management Plan” filed under the Documentation tab.

*Data Management Plans will be a condition of funding for projects funded in 2021. All DMPs must be reviewed by the U of G Library (lib.research@uoguelph.ca) prior to submission to the Alliance.*
Post-Award Reporting

- Annual Progress reports are due 30 days after the anniversary of the project start date (with budget reporting for each fiscal period) and should include reporting on sub-award and/or CRA activities related to the project.
- Annual reports will be reviewed and approved if acceptable or revisions may be requested. Funding for the following year of the project (if applicable) will only be released once the report has been approved.
- Final reports are due 60 days following the conclusion of the project. They are critical to the success of the Alliance. Some of the summary fields will be published publicly.
- Reports are reviewed and approved on completeness and merit by Alliance staff and OMAFRA Research Analysts.
- Any changes to the start and end dates, objectives, deliverables, or budget in an awarded project must be requested and approved by OMAFRA through the amendment request process.
- If you have any questions about the amendment or reporting process, please contact rescoord@uoguelph.ca.

ACKNOWLEDGING ALLIANCE RESEARCH FUNDING

Recipients of funding must acknowledge Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) support in all public communications products, including news releases, web copy, magazine stories, public-facing reports, interviews, journal articles, conference posters and oral presentations. More details on how to acknowledge OMAFRA funding are available on the Alliance website.

APPEAL PROCESS

To ensure the transparency and rigour of the processes involved in the review and selection of Full Proposals, the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance Research Program has established a policy to guide the appeals process.

The primary purpose of the appeal is to correct errors, omissions or mistakes made by the Review Committees during the review of the Full Proposal. These errors are rare, however, in order to maintain fairness and equity to all applicants, the Program does permit appeals under the specific circumstances outlined below.

Appeals are heard only where the researcher demonstrates that an error of fact or process, or inadvertent omission of information has been made by the Review Committees. A researcher who has had a Full Proposal rejected, or an active project terminated prior to its normal end date, may request a review or appeal of the specific process used in the evaluation or assessment of the proposal or project. All researchers are entitled to receive a written communication indicating the decision regarding the approval or decline of the funding for their Full Proposal or active project, which will include the rationale behind that decision.

A written request for a review/appeal must be submitted within 30 calendar days from the date of the documented notification of decision and must include written evidence of error in the evaluation or assessment process. The request for appeal should be addressed to the Associate Vice-President, Research (Agri-Food Partnership) (AVPR).
The AVPR will determine if sufficient evidence exists for a formal appeal. Once a determination has been made to proceed with an appeal hearing, the AVPR will, in collaboration with the other co-chair of the Research Program Management Committee, convene a meeting of an appropriate Appeal Committee as per the following:

1. The AVPR will Chair the Appeal Committee.
2. The Appeal Committee may consist of one or more of the Research Program Directors (RPDs) and up to two (2) OMAFRA representatives as appropriate. This committee will not include the Research Program Director(s) of the priority area(s) where the project fits.
3. All relevant written materials generated concerning the project in question, prior to the date of the request for review, will be supplied to the Appeal Committee at least 5 business days in advance of the meeting.
4. The RPD of the relevant priority area will present an oral report to the Appeal Committee summarizing the process followed and actions taken pertaining to the decision in question. The RPD will then be excused from the balance of the appeal proceedings.
5. The Appeal Committee will then receive evidence from the researcher concerning the project in question, specifically addressing the errors or omissions which have been alleged to have occurred.

The Appeal Committee will then determine, by consensus, a recommendation on the Appeal which will be presented to the Executive Committee for a final, binding decision on the matter. A written decision communicating the Executive Committee’s decision will be presented to both the researcher and the Research Program Director. No further appeals will be permitted within either the University or OMAFRA systems.
APPENDIX 1: ADDITIONAL MARKET VALIDATION PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. Tips for Creating a Winning Market Validation Proposal

The following questions are the most common knowledge gaps experienced by academics and other entrepreneurs wanting to develop technologies into commercial products. Your work plan should clearly indicate how you plan to obtain objective, relevant, and customer-validated data to answer the following key questions:

- What problem(s) does the customer want/need to solve?
- How big is the problem; where does it occur; and how often?
- Who is currently looking for a solution to the problem and what are they willing to pay to solve it?
- How does your technology (i.e., solution) address the customer-identified problems and who will pay for the solution? Likewise, where does your technology fall short of satisfying customer needs?
- Why hasn’t this problem been solved already?
- What barriers exist now (or in the foreseeable future) that obstruct the use or implementation of your technology to solve the problem? How can you overcome the barriers?
- How is your technology (i.e., solution) different than existing solutions and why will someone choose your solution over another?

B. Helpful Hints

- To help clarify and communicate the expected benefits delivered by your technology, it is highly recommended that you review the YouTube video on the Value Proposition Canvas. This video may help you create a well-articulated explanation of how the fully commercialized technology will eventually help industry and/or end-users.
- Researchers who need advice on what tools and resources exist to help them gather customer and consumer insight are encouraged to contact the Research Innovation Office for direction.
- A portion (20%, or up to $5K) of the funds may be used to hire professional services or be used as leverage for additional grants (such as I2I) related to market validation or commercialization of early-stage technologies.

C. Examples of Potential Projects

- Focus groups with customers and suppliers
- Demonstration trials to obtain customer feedback
- Trade show attendance and networking among end users to build relationships and identify new customers or market segments
- Product development surveys
- Interviews with customers and suppliers
- Producing materials and information necessary to conduct concept testing with customers
D. Market Validation Grant Evaluation Criteria

Project proposals will be scored on the merit of supporting the following factors using a five-point scale: Poor or absent (1); Below Average (2); Average (3); Above Average (4); Excellent (5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Weight %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Market Problem Solved by the MVP</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>How well do the researchers understand the industry or consumer problem that needs to be solved?</td>
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<td>2 Industry's role in the project</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the degree of involvement of industry partners, stakeholders, and end-users in the execution of this market research project?</td>
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<td>4 Research Team</td>
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<td>How relevant is the experience and capability of the project team, collaborators, and service providers?</td>
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APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. Tips for Creating a Winning Product Development Proposal

Proposals must identify and quantify a clear commercial need for the MVP or technology. If the need is not well supported, then you are not ready to apply for a Product Development Grant.

It is very important that you thoroughly understand the Value Proposition of your MVP. To help you clarify and communicate these benefits we recommend you review the YouTube video on the Value Proposition Canvas. This video may help you create a well-articulated explanation of how the fully commercialized technology will eventually help industry and/or end-users.

Proposals to develop early-stage technologies (TLR 2-4) should focus on building a first prototype, testing it under field conditions (proof of relevancy) or completing pilot studies with the prototype to determine the product market fit of your first MVP.

Proposals to develop later-stage technologies (TLR 4-6) should be focusing on interacting heavily with industry partners and end-users to improve your MVP to a level that is commercially desired and can be evaluated in the field. Later-stage MVPs should have a higher probability of getting to market due to the previous completed research to de-risk the MVP or technology.

Project efforts must focus on reducing barriers or filling knowledge gaps that are impeding the adoption of the MVP by industry; If customers strongly desire your MVP, then why are they not buying or using it? Find and eliminate those barriers.

Proposals should clearly define the specific barriers you plan to remove, and which barriers are the most important roadblocks that need to be removed at this time in the maturity of your MVP. The most obstructive barriers should be removed first. For example, there may be several less important barriers that can be easily removed in the future but unless a major barrier is removed (such efficacy level, risk vs reward ratio, return on investment, cost of implementation, regulatory approval etc.), customers will not even consider trying or adopting the MVP.

Proposals must build on an existing research project, past research or a recently developed technology that has significant potential to become a commercial product. You should be able to demonstrate your past experience and expertise in the research field specific to your proposal.

The MVP can be a process, product, platform technology, service, or management practice (method) that has the potential to significantly improve the competitiveness of the Ontario agri-food sector.

Budget requirements should match the intended deliverables for the project. Requesting more funds dictates the delivery of greater value of the outputs, therefore many proposals may require less than the maximum allowable $100K. Budget according to your current need. In all cases, the project outputs must be justified and commensurate with the level of funding requested and have clearly stated deliverables and follow a set of date specific milestones events. Funding for larger proposals (over $35K) will be delivered in tranches linked to the achievement of your milestones.

B. Examples of Potential Projects

The following are a few examples of eligible Product Development projects, but many more exist:
- Beta-testing an early-stage technology before transferring it to industry
- Preliminary or full clinical trials of new drugs or vaccines
- Field testing prototypes/devices that have never been used outside the lab
- Evaluating a significant advancement to an existing product, process or service;
- Enabling pilot plant demonstrations or supporting the scale up of industrial processes in development;
- Evaluation and testing of late stage technologies to support a regulatory approval submission;
- Exploring and advancing the certification of a product or process by a reputable association;
- Testing or improvement of a potentially disruptive technology;
- Improving an unproven technology considered too risky to attract funding from other agencies;
- Demonstrating Proof of Relevancy using a prototype made within the cost constraints determined by the market;
- Develop a new product for animals or agriculture based on technology for humans or non-agricultural purposes;
- Generate more data (proof of concept) from a novel technology to support filling a stronger patent application;
- Conduct customer discovery with a prototype to increase industry’s awareness of the technical merit and value proposition of a new technology;
- Create an academic-industry research centre at an industry partner’s site to co-develop and implement process improvements directly applicable to industry;
- Determine the technical merit, feasibility, and commercial potential of a technology by conducting public demonstrations (field trials) for key stakeholders
C. Product Development Grant Evaluation Criteria

Project proposals will be scored on the merit of supporting the following factors using a five-point scale: Poor or absent (1); Below Average (2); Average (3); Above Average (4); Excellent (5)

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