Des réponses innovantes à de grandes questions

Breakthrough answers to timeless questions

CRSNG NSERC

Conseil de recherches en sciences naturelles et en génie du Canada

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada

Canada

CRSNG NSERC

Alliance Grants Workshop:
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) & Option 2

François Santerre, Senior Program Manager
Sarah O'Neill, Manager
NSERC Research Partnerships

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Please consult:

The presentation on preparing an Alliance application (with notes)
https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/_doc/alliance/Alliance_application_presentation_notes_e.pdf

The Resources tab of the NSERC Alliance Grant internet page
https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Innovate-Innover/alliance-alliance/resources-ressources_eng.asp

Table of contents

- Alliance reminders
- Alliance and EDI
- Alliance Option 2
- Best practices, recommendations, tips and tricks
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This presentation covers:

- **Reminders for the Alliance Grant in general (things to watch out for when preparing any Alliance proposal)**

- **Alliance Option 2 features and peculiarities, submission and evaluation processes**

- **Useful tips and tricks as well as best practices to use when you are preparing an Alliance Option 2 proposal**

Note : Most slides are from the online presentation with notes, from our « Resources » section of the NSERC Alliance website: https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Innovate-Innover/alliance-alliance/resources-ressources_eng.asp

Reminders

Alliance Grants

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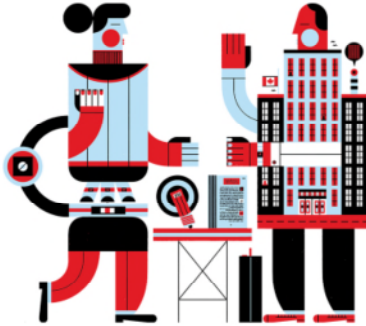
The Alliance Grant is one funding opportunity
But with two very different types of partnerships, two very different Options

These two Options offer different levels of cost-sharing with NSERC, according to specific charateristics / criteria
Option 2 Grants were created to support projects that have unique objectives and for which a higher level of public funding is justified.

> **Specifically;**
> **Project must be driven by unmet <u>societal needs where barriers exist</u>**
> **All key organizations and <u>societal groups must be involved</u>** to ensure significant impact on society, from consultation to implementation
> **Project must have a <u>clear strategy to make the results available to relevant groups</u>**, often beyond the participating partner organizations

Whatever Option you choose, the Alliance grants have:
- **The same general objectives centered around research partnerships and HQP training**
- **The same evaluation criteria for overall merit assessment**
- **Etc. (see items listed above on this slide)**

Grants under both options serve the same academic community and the same types of partner organizations.

The partner organizations involved in an Alliance project must all *actively* contribute to it. Together, they must have a credible plan to exploit the research results and have the capacity to implement the anticipated outcomes.

Amounts here are not annual averages

Annual funding must be within these annual limits, for every year

Alliance and EDI

Context

- Commitment to promoting the integration of equity, diversity and inclusion in research design and practice

- Consideration of EDI in the training plan is part of the evaluation criteria

- Explaining how EDI is considered in the training plan is mandatory

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Items to watch out for in general for Alliance proposals :

- **Merit Indicator 3.2** (indicators and methods for monitoring progress and outcomes)

  - **Instead of events, meetings, dates, documents, deliverables…. NSERC is looking for KPIs that will be used to measure the progress**

- **Merit Indicator 4.2** (EDI in the Training Plan)

Alliance and EDI

Training Plan – EDI

Applicants must describe specific **initiatives**, **measures**, **actions** and **concrete practices** that **will be put in place** in the proposed project to ensure that EDI is **intentionally and proactively supported** in the training plan.

(X)

- Do not provide **vague or generic statements** (e.g., "the university is committed to EDI")

- Do not refer to the **team's current diversity**

- Do not refer to the **university's EDI policy** alone

➡ What specific practices will be put in place – "how" it will be done is important!

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EDI In the Training Plan is basically:

- **How wide you open the doors to recruit new HPQ, so that every potentially interested individual feels welcomed to apply**

- **How the Team is managed once it is in place, how you ensure the best possible "Research and Training Environment"**

Recruitment best practices can be presented even if you do not necessarily intend to hire during the project

Do not mention current team composition but also do not make commitments for future team composition

Alliance and EDI

Resources

- **EDI in your training plan (help guide)**

- **NSERC's Guide for Applicants: Considering EDI in your application**

- **Best Practices in EDI guide for applicants to the New Frontiers in Research Fund,** including the section on Research team and environment

- University's EDI plan, if applicable

Coming soon: New guide for incorporating EDI into research design (mid summer), new training for external reviewers

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Alliance Option 2

Important Note: Societal need ≠ Benefit to Canada, importance to Canada

It is important to get a good understanding of the three characteristics, especially the societal issue which is AT THE CENTER of any Alliance Option 2 proposal

> If you don't build on a societal issue, if you don't build in order to tackle the societal issue, you will fail on the other 2 characteristics, because you are not able to "make the necessary connections" and are not able to   "broadly   share   the results and outcomes"

If I want to address / resolve a societal issue and produce societal outcomes;

> I will surely have to address many facets of a problem, technological / economical / societal / etc.
> Thus I will have to seek out partners from the entire societal issue's Ecosystem
> This will be reflected throughout the project (objectives, participants, collaborators, activities, deliverables, the way results are shared, etc.)

Alliance Option 2

Characteristic 1: Societal impact

- Focuses on important and unmet needs affecting society or societal groups, regionally, nationally or globally with important impact in Canada

- Removes or lowers the barriers to achieve what would otherwise not be possible in terms of:

  - building capacity to transform a sector and its practices
  - providing evidence for new policies or regulations
  - solving an issue affecting a whole business area
  - creating a new area of the economy

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Societal Impact

If a candidate is tackling a societal issue / problem and is aiming to produce societal benefits / outcomes, then some project activities will be unique and the candidate should make efforts to partner with every relevant partner organization in the societal issue's "ecosystem". This should be reflected throughout the project: from the objectives to participants, activities, deliverables and use of project results towards societal outcomes.

《

The project's outcomes must reach beyond the partner organizations and near-term economic success to **impact & benefit society**.

Alliance Option 2 – Characteristic 1: Societal impact

Alliance Option 2

Characteristic 2: Making connections

- Identify the key stakeholders in the ecosystem or value-chain surrounding the problem.

- Engage all relevant stakeholders beyond the participating partner organizations in the research design and implementation who:

  - bring relevant societal perspectives/skill sets
  - help merge ideas, overcome barriers and find creative solutions
  - ensure the project is need-driven
  - contribute in integrating solutions with decision-makers within and across sectors

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Making connections

Like previously mentioned, societal groups, associations, end users, etc. must participate actively in the project.

NSERC must understand how the various partner organizations participate, collaborate and work together towards Option 2 objectives and Option 2 characteristics (making connections and broad outcomes).

《

Despite limited cash contributions, partners must be **strongly committed & active,** and provide valuable opportunity to connect & share results with other organizations.

Alliance Option 2 – Characteristic 2: Marking connections

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NSERC through the PIVP committee's assessment of the project, has to see the Strategy and also the Action Plan, i.e. how everyone connects and makes the project happen…

Too often we hear PIVP committee members say "We can read that they intend to reach this or that result… BUT we don't understand exactly HOW they intend to get there"

So "Making connections" is not just mentioning that partners are on board and will participate in meetings, etc. It is really also explaining how every participant connects and interacts to get to the results and help disseminate the results…

Characteristic 3: Broad outcomes

- Outcomes/outputs generate benefits beyond the participating partner organizations

- Clear plan to communicate progress and results to the targeted groups:

  - results in formats accessible by all stakeholders in society
  - strategy to raise awareness of the resulting products, services or policies among potential users

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Broad Outcomes

Do not limit dissemination of knowledge and of project results to scientific publications / conferences. Non-specialized audiences (groups and individuals) will most probably also need to adopt project results.

Alliance Option 2

Characteristic 3: Broad outcomes

Expectations:

- **short term**: strengthening capacity, building relationships and networks

- **medium term**: uptake, use of results

- **long term**: measurable societal impact

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NSERC does not expect every Option 2 project to deliver full results after a single 5 years project

You might want to start with a 2 or 3 years project and aim for short term goals, then build on that and submit a 5 years project in a second stage to really capitalize on the first stage and get to longer-term results… and outcomes

《

All stakeholders must understand and accept the principle that the management of the intellectual property generated through the project **cannot become a barrier** to the use of the results.

Alliance Option 2 – Characteristic 3: Broad outcomes

A PIVP section must be completed

Alliance Option 2

Cost-sharing ratio

Partners are only from the public or the not-for-profit sectors

→

Up to
100%
from NSERC

At least one partner is from the **private sector**

→

Up to
90%
from NSERC

+

At least
10%
from partner organizations

20

Alliance Option 2

Partner organizations

Same sectors
and rules as Option 1

At least 1 must be <u>recognized for cost sharing</u>, even if no cash contributions are required

Should include organizations representing the interested societal groups and end users

Alliance Option 2

Evaluation process

1 Administration assessment

2 PIVP selection committee

3 Peer review

4 Funding decision

Once submitted, the application undergoes an administrative assessment by **NSERC staff** to determine if is complete and meets all our requirements.

If this step is satisfactorily completed, the application is submitted to the PIVP selection committee.

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Alliance Option 2

Evaluation process

1. Administration assessment

2. **PIVP selection committee**

3. Peer review

4. Funding decision
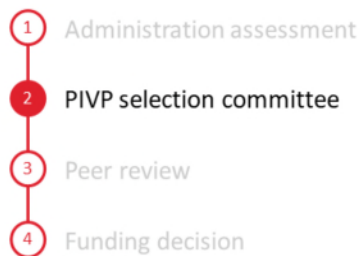
The committee consists of 10 to 15 members who are selected for their broad knowledge and their multidisciplinary and multisectoral expertise and experience.

They **focus on the three-page PIVP section** to determine whether the project meets Option 2's three characteristics, and if a higher financial contribution from NSERC is justified.

The committee may consult the rest of the proposal for broader context, if necessary.

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Alliance Option 2

Evaluation process

① Administration assessment

② PIVP selection committee

→ possibility to resubmit under Option 1

✗

③ Peer review

④ Funding decision

If the outcome of the PIVP is negative, the application will not be funded.

You may rework the proposal, including its budget, and resubmit it under Option 1 if sufficient funds can be secured from the recognized partner organizations.

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Alliance Option 2

Evaluation process

1. Administration assessment

2. PIVP selection committee

3. Peer review

4. Funding decision

If the outcome of the PIVP is positive, the application is sent to external reviewers who are experts in the proposal's area.

The external reviewers evaluate the application using the same evaluation criteria as in Option 1.

The PIVP section of your proposal will not be shared with the external reviewers. ⓘ

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Evaluation process

1. Administration assessment
2. PIVP selection committee
3. Peer review
4. Funding decision

Based on the comments received from the external reviewers, NSERC completes the assessment of the application by assigning ratings to the evaluation subcriteria using the merit indicators, as in Option 1.

NSERC determines applications for funding on a competitive basis, using the applications' merit ratings.

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Alliance Option 2

Do not consider Option 2…

❌

as a replacement for **Engage grants** or **Strategic Partnership grants**

for a **one researcher-one partner** centred project

to **push ideas** as opposed to responding to an existing and well defined societal need (i.e., benefits to society are the driver, not an afterthought)

to reduce the **financial costs of partner organizations** in initiating new partnerships

to offset the cost of research where investments are available or in areas where research is intense and already heavily funded

to reduce the cost of research where the goal is to **develop or improve new products or services for commercialization**

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**Consider Option 2
for projects …**

✓

with important unmet societal need

where societal impact is expected

with barriers that prevent it from happening

that have a need to reach out to participants
beyond the usual comfort zone

where a viable solution can be envisioned to significantly
contribute to long-term societal benefits

where higher NSERC support is key
to enabling these advances

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Best practices, recommendations, tips and tricks

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So What have we learned so far about Option 2 projects :

- Option 2
    - Are driven by unmet societal needs where barriers exist
    - Involve societal groups, from consultation to implementation
    - Have a clear strategy to make the results available to relevant groups, often beyond the participating partner organizations

- For Option 2 Alliance proposals :
    - societal impact
    - making connections
    - broad outcomes
    - Need for a higher level of investment of public funds

    - Societal need   not equal to   Benefit to Canada, importance to Canada
    - The project is always built on and around a societal issue or problem

    - Usually involve partner organizations outside your comfort zone
    - You must have a convincing strategy, plan and activities
    - Dissemination of knowledge is not limited to scientific publications / conferences
    - Can be limited in scope / can be a modest proposal that aims at short-term objectives

- Addressing a societal issue/problem to produce societal outcomes often implies :
    - Having to address many facets of that problem : technological / economical / societal / etc.
    - Having to seek out partners from the entire societal issue's Ecosystem
    - Involving the partners/participants throughout the project (this will be reflected by the objectives, participants, collaborators, activities, deliverables, the way results are shared, etc.)

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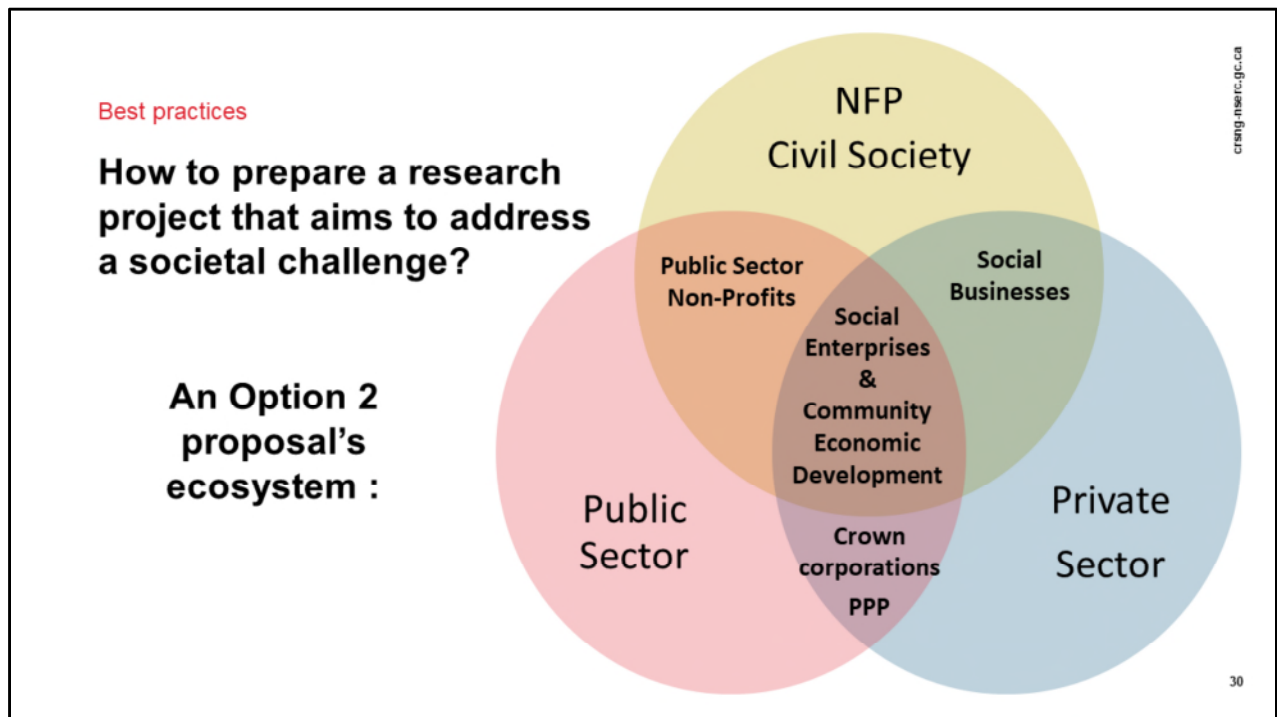
Consider the following framework, displayed as a Venn Diagram, as an illustration of the societal issue's ecosystem.

Considering that any societal issue always has multiple facets (Technological/Technical, Economic, Societal), tackling a societal issue probably means incorporating organizations from multiple sectors / sub-sectors, to incorporates all of the various perspectives and skill sets needed to address these different facets.
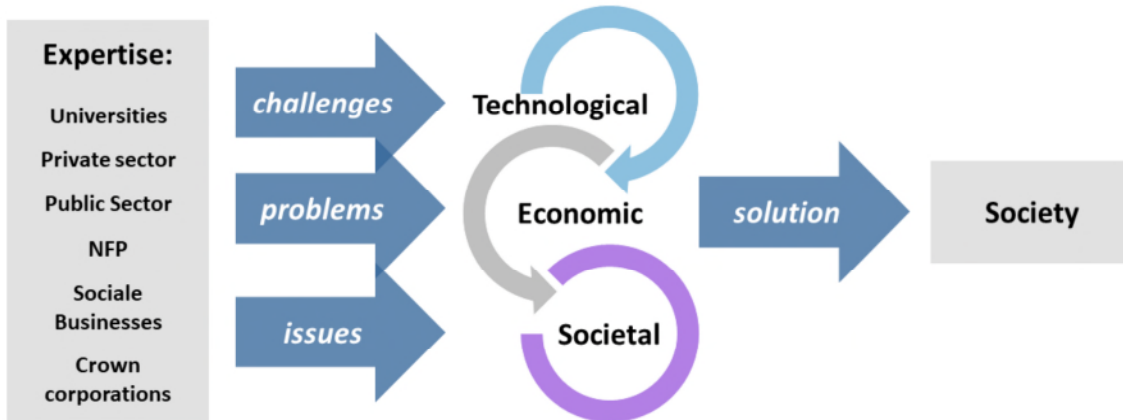
Option 2 projects usually:
- Involve various partners from various sectors
- Involve various skill sets and perspectives
- Mean tackling many facets of a societal issue
- Provide solutions to society, which is ultimately viewed as the client

How to prepare a research project that aims to address a societal challenge?

A few suggestions

- **Avoid jumping too quickly to a solution / approach:** a better way may exist.

- **Explore several possible solutions:** Make a list of organizations working on the problem... Try defining the proposal's ecosystem, the societal challenge's landscape.

- **Identify the stakeholders, the "who does what" in the proposal's ecosystem:** The more different perspectives there are, the better.

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For Alliance Option 2 Grant, an applicant identifies a societal issue that might be addressed partly with the team's expertise. The applicant then scans the societal issue's ecosystem to identify all relevant stakeholders and discusses:

- The various facets of the issue (technological, economic, societal, etc.)
- The various barriers preventing a solution from being developed /funded
- The various ways a partnership / collaboration could help to eliminate barriers
- A research collaboration that could bring relevant results and societal outcomes

Then, having built a plan to tackle the issue, the applicant then develops the project activities, tasks, deliverables... with broad outcomes in mind.

The applicant develops the proposal with the help and input from the various participants and translate this into a convincing PIVP section, with a clear strategy and action plan for societal outcomes.

Successful proposal

How to prepare a research project that aims to address a societal challenge?

National Freshwater community group

Great Lakes community initiative

University

National NFP community org. (test kits)

Fresh / drinking water project (water quality in Canada, citizen mobilization, water quality monitoring)

Federal Department Envir. / Climat

Water Security Agency

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Here we present an example of a successful project, in the area of fresh/drinking water quality monitoring involving citizen mobilization. Many organizations involving civil society and the public sector are present and contribute actively to the project and outcomes.

Based on what we've presented previously, one can propose that, when developing an Option 2 project / proposal, it is useful to:

- Start with the societal issue / problem
- Identify all of the relevant partners / stakeholders in the problem's ecosystem
- Build your team
    - Applicant, co-applicants
    - Partner organizations, collaborators
- Develop the proposal with the help and input from the various participants
- Build the project activities, tasks, deliverables…
- With a clear strategy and plan for broad outcomes
- Then build a winning proposal and PIVP section

Funded project: Option 2 example

Evaluation of micro- and nanoplastics in Canadian drinking water

- **Project**: to examine the concentration and characteristics of micro- and nanoplastics in untreated and treated water. The research team will then work to fill the knowledge gap associated with the potential health impacts related to consumption of these contaminants in drinking water.

- **Value**: $388,200 over 4 years from NSERC
  All partners providing essential in-kind support

- **Applicant**: PI with 25 years of experience in the evaluation of drinking water treatment processes and distribution systems

- **Partners**: 2 public utilities, 2 municipal governments

Value added by Alliance

Enabling partner organizations to research a topic that otherwise may not have been studied due to funding and technical gaps

Bringing together different organizations to work towards a common goal to benefit society

Tapping into expertise and facilities at a local university

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Beyond the partnership: PI and partners will work with various stakeholders like the Ontario Drinking Water Advisory Council and Health Canada to seek guidance and share results

When preparing an application

You can follow the Template questions, while making sure not to forget merit indicators

Template vs Merit Indicators

Option 2

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TEMPLATE ITEMS - PUBLIC IMPACT VALUE PROPOSITION
1. Describe the issue the project aims to address.
2. Explain the societal impact the project results will have.
3. Describe the new technical knowledge that will be generated.
4. Describe the current barriers impeding a solution.
5. Describe the proposed novel strategy for addressing the issue.
6. Explain why and how the research team and partner organizations are positioned to address the challenge.
7. Describe how the project is designed to take into account the needs
8. Outline the project's plan to involve groups in your partner org results and impact.
9. Explain how the project outcomes will reach beyond the partner or
10. Describe the ways in which interested individuals or groups will be services or policies that stem from this research.
11. Justify why a higher level of investment of public funds is required

MERIT INDICATORS – Option 2 characteristics

1. Societal Impact

Your project should result in both new technical knowledge and societal impact. The research may tackle national priorities or global issues also affecting Canada, or generate societal benefits such as improving quality of life, health and safety, public goods and resources, prosperity and/or sustainability. Public benefits can be realized in any sector — private, public or not-for-profit. But such benefits must be more than improvements to a product or a service for increased profit; the project must aim for impacts beyond near-term economic success. Your project may build capacity to transform a sector and its practices; it may provide the evidence base for new policies or regulations; it could solve an issue affecting a whole business area or create a new area of the economy. The main principle is that the outcomes will reach beyond the partner organizations to impact society.

2. Making Connections

Like all Alliance projects, there must be a meaningful partnership. Your collaborative project must be defined by working with end-users and implementers to ensure it is use-driven and needs-driven. The approach should bring together academic, partner organization and societal perspectives and skillsets throughout the collaboration to merge ideas, overcome existing barriers and find creative solutions. Results and impacts are stronger when the project makes connections among actors in your partner organization's network, creates new relationships or leverages existing efforts and integrates solutions with decision-makers within and across sectors. These non-academic organizations understand the challenge and have the potential to contribute to solving it, although they cannot resolve the problem on their own. The partner organizations need not always provide a share of the monetary support but instead might advance the project through other important functions. Despite a limited financial contribution, your partner organizations must demonstrate a high level of commitment and participation. They must also show how the project is a valuable opportunity to connect with others and must be committed to sharing results beyond their own organizations.

3. Broad Outcomes

Your project must aim for outcomes that do not simply benefit the partner organizations. The results will be shared in various ways, including technical formats, such as publications, and broad channels and formats, such as open guidelines. Your proposal must explain how all interested individuals will both learn about and use the products, services or policies that stem from this research. Any intellectual property management appropriate for these projects should be decided by you and your partner organizations through a plan that ensures that any interested individuals can access the promised outcomes.

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For Option 2 also!

You can follow the Template questions, while making sure not to forget Option 2 characteristics*

***As well as the needed justification for a higher level of public funding.**

PIVP selection committee review instructions

Societal impact

Review answers to these PIVP questions	To determine if application meets the following Option 2 requirements for *societal impact*	Does not meet

Describe the issue the project aims to address and explain the societal impact the project results will have. Describe the new technical knowledge that will be generated.
 	
Describe the current barriers impeding a solution and the proposed novel strategy for addressing the issue. Explain why and how the research team and partner organizations are positioned to address the challenge.
 	
Justify why a higher level of investment of public funds is required for this project.
	• focuses on relevant and important regional, national or global issues or opportunities that could affect or benefit Canada
	
	AND
	
	• removes or lowers the barriers to achieve what would otherwise not be possible in terms of:
	
	   ○ Improvements to a category of product or service that has potential to transform a sector; or
	   ○ providing the evidence needed to support new policies or regulations or to improve them; or
	   ○ solving an issue affecting an entire sector; or
	   ○ creating a new area of the economy
	
	AND
	
	• outlines the new knowledge to be generated by the project
		• Primarily focuses on partner's specific priorities
		
		OR
		
		• primarily focuses on partner's own long-term goals, such as increasing profitability, market share, efficiency, visibility, reputation, etc.
		
		OR
		
		• marginal or incremental improvements to a knowledge, a product, service or process
		
		OR
		
		• Failure to demonstrate that project cannot be funded through alternative sources of funds ✔

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Please make sure to consult The "Option 2 public impact value proposition (PIVP) selection committee review instructions".

You will find interesting elements to address to ensure that your proposal will meet the Option 2 model.

Here, instructions refer to the "Societal Impact" characteristic

PIVP selection committee review instructions

Making connections

Review answers to these PIVP questions	To determine if application meets the following Option 2 requirements for *making connections*	Does not meet
Describe how the project is designed to take into account the needs of end-users and implementers. Outline the project's plan to involve groups in your partner organizations' network to achieve optimal results and impact. Describe the current barriers impeding a solution and the proposed novel strategy for addressing the issue. <u>Explain why and how the research team and partner organizations are positioned to address the challenge.</u>	• brings together the most relevant academic, partner organization and other organizations in the collaboration AND • outlines a specific plan among actors in the partner's network and integrate solutions with decision-makers through a demonstrated commitment from partner(s) to sharing project results beyond the partner organization to reach end-users and implementers	• partner and researcher fail to demonstrate connections with key end users and implementers ✔ OR • project shows insufficient opportunities to connect beyond one partner organization OR • inadequate evidence of consultation with relevant groups and limited input and commitment from them ✔ OR • low degree of participation from partner organizations and unclear intent to share results beyond the project's partner organizations ✔

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Please make sure to consult The "Option 2 public impact value proposition (PIVP) selection committee review instructions".

You will find interesting elements to address to ensure that your proposal will meet the Option 2 model.

Here, instructions refer to the "Making Connections" characteristic

PIVP selection committee review instructions

Broad outcomes		
Review answers to these PIVP questions	**To determine if application meets the following Option 2 requirements for *broad outcomes***	**Does not meet**
Explain how the project outcomes will reach beyond the partner organizations to impact society. Describe the ways in which interested individuals or groups will be able to learn about and use the products, services or policies that stem from this research.	• project shares outcomes in various ways including broadly accessible technical publications or open guidelines AND • explanation of how all interested individuals will both learn about and use the products, services or policies that stem from this research	• project outcomes flow to partner organizations only OR ✓ • knowledge mobilization beyond partners is solely through journal articles OR ✓ • no plan to transfer the knowledge to the relevant groups OR • Provides an IP management plan that would limit access to the outcomes ✓

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Please make sure to consult The "Option 2 public impact value proposition (PIVP) selection committee review instructions".

You will find interesting elements to address to ensure that your proposal will meet the Option 2 model.

Here, instructions refer to the "Broad Outcomes" characteristic

	Exceeds	**Meets**	**Does not satisfy**
Societal impact	Novel strategy and convincing activity plan to address a societal issue. Clear synergy between partner organizations	Project lowers barriers to achieve a solution that otherwise would not have been possible. Well positioned partner organizations	Marginal or incremental improvements to a product, to knowledge, to a service or process. Focus on partner's specific priorities or goals
Making connections	There is a convincing plan for active engagement of ecosystem partners and relevant societal perspectives/skill sets from across sectors	Project brings together the most relevant academic experts, key stakeholders and/or end users and implementers	Project shows insufficient opportunities to connect beyond one partner organization. Limited input and commitment from relevant groups
Broad outcomes	Project outcomes will reach beyond partner organizations to impact society. Clear appropriation of results by societal groups and society	Project shares outcomes in various ways including open or broadly accessible publications. Interested individuals will both learn about/use the results	No plan to transfer knowledge to the relevant groups beyond journal articles. IP plan may limit access to the outcomes
higher level of public funds	Multiple barriers to funding, clear need for higher public funding due to the presence of a high risk project and/or long term outcomes	Some barriers to funding, fragmented or non-existent ecosystem around the societal issue	Failure to demonstrate that the project cannot be funded through alternative sources of funds

IMPORTANT NOTE: This is an example given to illustrate what could constitute examples of good PIVP content relative to Option 2 characteristics and the justification for a higher level of public funding. This table should not be considered as official NSERC reference material and is provided solely as an example.

You can definitely build for yourselves a document similar to the one posted on the Resources page of the Alliance Grant for merit indicators, and presented on slide 33.

Here, an example is proposed, based on available NSERC material relative to Alliance Option 2, that lists Option 2 characteristics and the justification for a higher level of public funding.

NOTE: This is an example given to illustrate what could constitute examples of good PIVP content relative to Option 2 characteristics and the justification for a higher level of public funding. This table should not be considered as official NSERC reference material and is provided solely as an example.

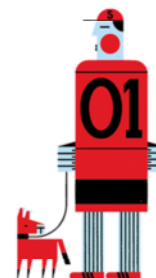**Please consult the Option 2 overview pamphlet**
https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/_doc/alliance/Option_2_two-pager_e.pdf

Option 2 overview pamphlet

Projects supported under option 2 grants will:

- address a <u>societal challenge</u> resulting in new NSE knowledge and societal impact

- bring together academic, partner organization, and <u>societal perspectives and skill sets</u>

- demonstrate how <u>all interested individuals</u> will learn about and use the products, services or policies that stem from the research
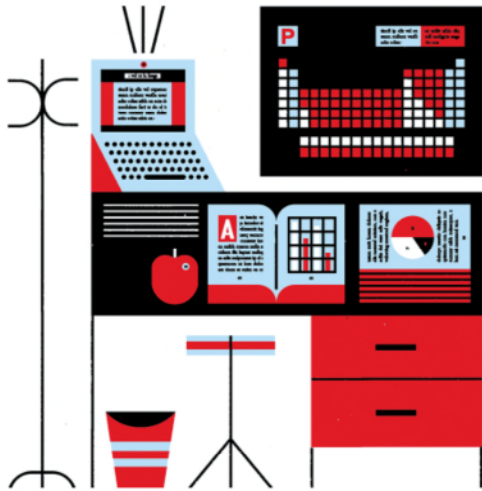
Please consult the Option 2 overview pamphlet
https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/_doc/alliance/Option_2_two-pager_e.pdf

Conclusion

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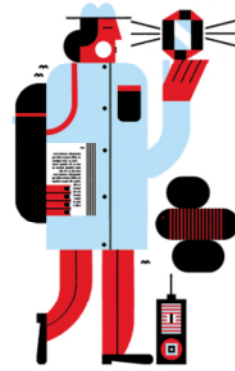
Questions?

NSERC Alliance Grants

1-613-995-1111 - Research Partnerships
1-877-767-1767- Regional Offices

alliance@nserc-crsng.gc.ca

Francois Santerre
francois.santerre@nserc-crsng.gc.ca
514-808-7920

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nserc-ontario@nserc-crsng.gc.ca

nserc-pacific@nserc-crsng.gc.ca

nserc-prairies@nserc-crsng.gc.ca

crsng-quebec@nserc-crsng.gc.ca